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### A Study in the Theology of Carl Fr Wisloff with Particular Focus on Faith and the Means of Grace in the Bestowal of Salvation

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## **List of abbreviations**

AC	Augsburg Confession
AE	Luther's Works, American Edition
Bek. Schr.	Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche
EA	Erlangen Ausgabe
FC	Formula of Concord
LK	Luthersk Kirketidende, Oslo
MF	Menighetsfakultetet, The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration
TTK	Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke, Oslo
WA	D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 61 vols.

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Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things has done, In whom his world rejoices,  
Who from our mothers' arms Has blest us on our way,  
With countless gifts of love And still is ours today.

Oh, may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us,  
And keep us in his grace And guide us when perplexed,  
And free us from all harm In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God The Father now be given,  
The Son, and him who reigns With them in highest heavens,  
The one eternal God, Whom earth and heav'n adore;  
For thus it was, is now, And shall be evermore.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Lutheran Worship* Prepared by The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 443.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### The Problem

The general topic for this work is the relation of faith and the means of grace in the bestowal of salvation. The Lutheran Church from her beginning has believed, confessed and taught that we are saved by grace through faith alone. This is stated briefly in the *Augsburg Confession*, Article IV.

1 Our churches also teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith 2 when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven on account of Christ, who by his death made satisfaction for our sins. 3 This faith God imputes for righteousness in his sight (Rom. 3-4).<sup>1</sup>

She has also confessed that God delivers this salvation through the external means of grace.

As the *Augsburg Confession* Article V states:

1 In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. 2 For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel. 3 That is to say, it is not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ that God justifies those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ's sake. Gal. 3:14, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." 4 Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.<sup>2</sup>

The *Small Catechism*, as it relates specifically to baptism, gives a very similar teaching.

How can water produce such great effects?

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, editor and part translator, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 30. Latin text.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. Latin text.

Answer: It is not [the] water that produces these effects, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on the Word of God connected with the water. For without the Word of God the water is merely water and no Baptism. But when connected with the Word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul wrote to Titus (3:5-8), "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. This saying is sure."<sup>3</sup>

Thus we have two sides, the objective means of grace and the subjective receiving of the bestowed gifts through faith.<sup>4</sup> The *Augsburg Confession* and Luther bring both sides together in a right and biblical relationship.

The nature of each of these two sides and their relationship to each other have been issues of discussion and concern since the beginning of the Reformation. According to Girgensohn, "in the history of Christianity there has been a recurring necessity to give special emphasis to one side or the other of this relationship and frequently enough men have then succumbed to the temptation to depreciate the other side."<sup>5</sup> When the divine act of baptism is emphasized to the loss of human response it becomes an *opus operatum*.<sup>6</sup> This results in failure to receive the delivered Gospel. When human response is emphasized to the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 349. Brackets added to indicate that "the" is not in the German text.

<sup>4</sup> We have used this way of saying it even though Herbert Girgensohn has expressed reservations about it that should be kept in mind. "The one side, the act of God, has often been called the objective side, which is given before any human response is made and is independent of man's reaction; and faith, the human response, has been called the subjective side. This way of expressing it is not altogether accurate. What is important to remember is that the Word of God is not a thing, not an objective datum; on the contrary, in the Word of God is the whole living claim of the merciful God whose will it is to take possession of this person's whole existence. The person cannot disregard this claim without sinning against God, his Creator and Redeemer. Consequently, what happens in baptism is not dependent upon the subjective attitude taken by the person; on the contrary, God's attitude is the primary and decisive thing in the event. It is a tension-charged process that starts with God and is enacted between two poles: the Word of God and faith, the living God and a living person." *Teaching Luther's Catechism II* Translated by John W. Doberstein. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

depreciation of the divine act of baptism, baptism becomes an *opus operantis*, a work that man does.<sup>7</sup> This results in the loss of the objective Gospel being delivered.

These approaches often take place as reactions, for “when the church threatens to fall into the false peace of *opus operatum* the constantly disturbing reaction sets in, and the reaction in turn runs into the danger of demanding a legalistically prescribed activity on the part of man.”<sup>8</sup> Girgensohn believes that when they fail “to give full value to the total effectuality of the assurance of the Word of God, in which the embattled person can really come to rest, then almost automatically there appear all the numerous attempts to gain this end by human actions and attitudes, which in the end are failures anyhow.”<sup>9</sup> Inevitably, “all work-righteousness is by inner necessity inexhaustibly inventive in finding new ways to achieve this goal.”<sup>10</sup>

Francis Pieper (1852-1931) in his *Christian Dogmatics* has pointed out that as the Reformation progressed externalism unfortunately “had become rampant in the Lutheran Church and made an *opus operatum* of the use of the divinely appointed means of grace.”<sup>11</sup> That Luther saw this problem is clear from his comments on Mark 16:16, “...it makes it a matter of every man's conscience to realize that if he is to be saved he must believe and not

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics* 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953) 3:174. Pieper was a church leader and systematician in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He taught for 53 years at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. For an excellent biographical sketch see David P. Scaer, “Francis Pieper” in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians* Edited by Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 40-53.

pretend that it is sufficient for a Christian to be baptized."<sup>12</sup> Luther steered a course between the papists and the fanatics.

Pietism sought to address this externalism. Pieper concluded that in responding to this problem, instead of confining themselves to condemning the misuse of the means of grace on the part of the carnally secure, some of the pietists "impugned also the right use which the contrite sinners were to make of those means."<sup>13</sup> Thus the solution to externalism was found in warning against seeking grace and salvation in the means of grace and instead directing people to locate their assurance of salvation in their inner state.<sup>14</sup> The means of grace are stripped of their saving content, as scripturally given, and if this approach is consistently followed the Gospel and all true comfort is lost. This happened because they belonged to the class of reformers who did not know how to bring about a true reformation of the church.<sup>15</sup> Pieper notes that "the finding of the correct position over against the Reformed, Pietism, and the 'experience theology' is indeed facilitated by the clarity of Holy Writ, but to cling to the true doctrine in practice is a difficult task."<sup>16</sup> This "is a matter which no Christian can ever finish learning in this life."<sup>17</sup>

American Lutherans today are faced with the need to find the correct position for we live in a context where the influence of a form of the pietistic, awakening (revivalism) type of Christianity is increasingly being felt through the presence of Evangelicalism. This milieu in which American Lutherans live was well described by Martin Marty some years ago by what

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<sup>12</sup> *Concerning Rebaptism* (1528), AE 40:241.

<sup>13</sup> Pieper, 3:174.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 3:175.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 3:174.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3:143.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

he called “baptistification,” “the most dramatic shift in power style on the Christian scene in our time, perhaps in our epoch.”<sup>18</sup> The “making baptist” involves helping to “lead individuals or groups to take on a baptist *style* of Christian life, whether or not this means joining a Baptist Church or communion.”<sup>19</sup> This movement puts the focus on faith, decision and experience and is known by such names as: evangelicals, pietists, Methodists, revivalists, awakeners.<sup>20</sup>

The Evangelical historian Nathan Hatch has observed through his study of evangelical Protestants in America the tensions Lutherans “face between the traditional orientation and rhythm of Lutheran church life and the sometimes contagious influence of evangelical forms of worship, evangelism, singing, and piety.”<sup>21</sup> They also occur “between church life organized to preserve orthodoxy and a Christian lifestyle that focuses on evangelism and conversion.”<sup>22</sup> He notes that “the whole tradition of revivalism is one that tends to discard church tradition and tends to downplay sacramentalism in its strong appeal to the human will.”<sup>23</sup> This “populist impulse is ongoing and very powerful in America,”<sup>24</sup> and thus calls for teaching.

We turn now to the one whose theology will be the focus of our study. Carl Fr. Wisløff (1908- ) has been considered one of this century’s outstanding representatives of

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Marty, “Baptistification Takes Over,” (*Christianity Today*, September 2, 1983): 33.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> Nathan Hatch, “The Appeal of American Evangelicalism” (Concordia Seminary Monograph Series Symposium Papers, Concordia Seminary, 1993, Number 2), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 16.

evangelical Lutheran Christianity in Norway and Scandinavia. The Wisløff name and family is not unknown among Norwegians or Americans of Norwegian heritage who are familiar with church life.<sup>25</sup> Johan Martin Wisløff (1873-1944), an uncle to Carl Fr. Wisløff, was a pastor and also active in the free organizations. Johan had two sons, Hans Edvard (1902-1969) and Fredrik (1904-1986) who were also pastors and active in the free organizations. Fredrik taught for a year (1929) at Augsburg Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota and pastored Trinity Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, New York during 1930. Both have written and some of their books have been translated into English. Fredrik has authored *I Believe In The Holy Spirit, Rest a While, On Our Father's Knee, and Streams of Gladness*.<sup>26</sup> H. E. Wisløff has published in English *Quiet Moments on the Way Home, and Heaven*.<sup>27</sup>

Carl Fr. Wisløff served as a pastor from 1932-1947. He taught at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology,<sup>28</sup> Oslo, Norway, from 1947 until his retirement in 1975 where he was rector of the Practical Theology Department from 1947 to 1961 and Professor of Church History from 1961-1975. Wisløff has been a very active preacher, scholar, and writer. Pål Repstad says about him, "few have as he [Wisløff], combined an academic position with

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<sup>25</sup> Biographical data on these Wisløff families can be found in Olaf Kortner, Preben Munthe, Egil Tveterås *Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske leksikon* Bind 14 (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 2. Utgave, 5. Opplag 1994), 562.

<sup>26</sup> Fredrik Wisløff, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* Translated by Ingvald Daehlin (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1949), idem, *Rest a While* Translated by J. Melvin Moe (Oslo: Nordstrand Books, 1963), idem, *On Our Father's Knee* Translated by the author (Oslo: Nordstrand Books, 1966), idem, *Streams of Gladness* Translated by B. H. J. Habel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1958).

<sup>27</sup> H. E. Wisløff, *Quiet Moments on the Way Home* Translated by A. E. Windahl (Fergus Falls, MN: Faith and Fellowship Press, 1993), idem, *Heaven* Translated by A. E. Windahl (Fergus Falls, MN: Faith and Fellowship Press, 1996)

<sup>28</sup> The official international name of Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet, literally translated "The Theological faculty of the Congregations" is The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology. It is also commonly known as MF, The Independent Theological Seminary, and The Free Faculty. We will use The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology.

a broad popular appeal – and that essentially without having any special popular form.”<sup>29</sup> Egil Sjaastad sees that this appeal concerns first and foremost preaching. He says, “preaching has been Wisløff’s main concern the whole way and the care for the Christian congregation’s preaching is still what Wisløff in the end is most taken up with.”<sup>30</sup>

His writings include many theological essays, a doctrine book, an ethics book, a homiletics book, and three major works on the history of the church in Norway. His doctoral dissertation for the University of Oslo, *Nattverd og messe*,<sup>31</sup> on Luther’s understanding of the mass, has been translated into German<sup>32</sup> and English.<sup>33</sup> His works also include a devotional book, collections of sermons, a book on Luther’s theology, and many articles in various periodicals including numerous book reviews. For many years he has been a leading figure in the *Norwegian Evangelical Student Movement* and the *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students*.

Wisløff was born into the heritage of Scandinavian Lutheran pietism, a heritage that he personally embraced saying: “We are some Christian people in our country who have what one readily calls an evangelical, pietistic and low-churchly faith-view.”<sup>34</sup> He also says, “I am

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Egil Sjaastad, *I samtale med Carl Fr. Wisløff* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1982), 74. <<Få har som han (Wisløff) kombinert en akademisk posisjon med en bred folkelig appell, - og det egentlig uten å ha noen spesiell folkelig form.>>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Forkynnelsen har vært Wisløff’s hovedanliggende hele veien, og omsorgen for den kristne menighets forkynnelse er nok det Wisløff til syvende og sist er mest opptatt med.

<sup>31</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe. En studie i Luther’s teologi* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1957).

<sup>32</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Abendmahl Und Messe: Die Kritik Luthers am Messopfer* (Berlin und Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1969).

<sup>33</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion: Luther’s Controversy with Rome on Eucharistic Sacrifice* Translated by Joseph M. Shaw (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964). Reprinted in the Concordia Heritage Series, 1984, by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO.

<sup>34</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *En grunn å stå på - en kurs å følge*, Bilag til Utsyn, juni 1972, 22. For more on Wisløff’s understanding of and identification with pietism see: idem, “Har

a Lutheran clergyman and professor of theology in that church, and of personal conviction I want to remain faithful to the *Augsburg Confession*.”<sup>35</sup> He asserts that the “best beginning point to understand the Lutheran teaching is found in the so-called Reformation principles namely, (1) The formal principle: Scripture alone, and (2) The material principle: Justification by grace through faith alone.”<sup>36</sup> Wisløff acknowledges that even though this terminology itself is of a later date the thought still belongs to the Reformation.<sup>37</sup> This way of speaking first said that “‘Scripture alone shall set forth dogma, and nothing else not even an angel’ (Luther). No churchly or theological authorities in old or in new times can be placed along side of the Scriptures.”<sup>38</sup> Wisløff quotes from the *Formula of Concord* on the authority of Scripture.<sup>39</sup> In his dissertation on the eucharistic sacrifice Wisløff adds a “third basic idea of the Reformation, namely, the priesthood of all believers.”<sup>40</sup> It also forms a point of departure in the controversy concerning the sacrifice of the mass.<sup>41</sup>

He lived out this heritage in the context of and with much awareness of the tension between the two fronts of externalism (sacramentalism) on the one hand and enthusiasm

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Pietismen noe å gi oss i dag?” (*Credo* 26, no. 3 april 1958), 4-5, 12-13, 15; and idem, “Orthodoksien og Pietismen” (*Fast Grunn* 40, no. 4, 1987), 251-254.

<sup>35</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “The Church, Its Nature And Mission,” (*Evangelism Alert*, 1972), 155.

<sup>36</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfunn* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1975), 53. Det beste utgangspunkt for å forstå den lutherske lære finner en i de såkalte reformatoriske prinsipper, nemlig (1.) det formale prinsipp: Skriften alene, og (2.) det materiale prinsipp: Rettferdigjørelsen av nåde ved tro alene.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. <<Skriften alene skal oppstille trossetninger, og Ingen indre, ikke en gank en enkel>> (Luther). Ingen kirkelige eller teologiske autoriteter i gammel eller ny tid kan settes ved siden av Skriften.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 53-54. It appears to be from the introduction to the *Formula* (FC Epi. Part I, 2).

<sup>40</sup> Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe*, 84. Vi skulle i videre kunne si at også en tredje grunntanke i reformasjonen, nemlig det alminnelige prestedømme, danner et utgangspunkt for kontroversen messeofferet. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion*, 73.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

(spiritualism) on the other. He said,

Luther fought on two fronts. He must not only defend the New Testament teaching about salvation by grace through faith against the pope and his people – but also against enthusiasts (*svermerne*). And to this day the Evangelical Lutheran Church stands in the same fight on two fronts. It can be thought that there is a great difference between the enthusiasts of the Reformation era (*svermere*) and today's reformed sects. But the differences are not as great as they appear.<sup>42</sup>

Wisløff also speaks of two streams within Lutheran Christianity in his work *Kristne*

*kirkesamfunn*.<sup>43</sup> Of the various kinds of piety the most glaring distinction is between the orthodox and pietistic types.<sup>44</sup> For Wisløff,

orthodox Lutheranism puts decisive emphasis on the true teaching. It emphasizes baptism as a washing of regeneration, and in an exclusive manner: Regeneration happens in baptism and in no other place. The churchly office's administration of the means of grace carries the Christian life, and the Christian's life is a life in the church and in vocation. The Christian up-bringing<sup>45</sup> is given great emphasis, but awakening<sup>46</sup> is regarded from a certain distance.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 20. Luther kjempet på to fronter. Han måtte ikke bare forsvare den nytestamentlige lære om frelsen av nåde ved tro mot paven og hans folk – men også mot *svermerne*. Og til denne dag står den evangelisk-lutherske kirke i den samme kamp på to fronter. Det kan riktignok synes å være stor forskjell mellom reformasjonstidens svermere og nåtidens ytterliggående reformerte sekter. Men forskjellen er ikke så stor som det ser ut til. See also idem, *Vår luthersk arv* (1945), 38. "It is a characteristic fact that the Lutheran Church from the beginning has stood between two fronts. On the one side the Catholic Church. On the other side the Reformed fellowship. ... Luther turned not only against the pope. He turned also against enthusiasts ('*svermerne*'). After him our church has constantly had to do the same." Det er en eiendommelig kjensgjerning at den lutherske kirke fra første stund av har stått mellom to fronter. På den ene siden den katolske kirke. På den andre siden de reformerte samfunn. Luther vendte seg ikke bare mot paven. Han vendte seg også mot <<svermerne >>. Etter ham har vår kirke stadig måttet gjøre det samme.

<sup>43</sup> Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfunn*, 70.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. He is not using the words "orthodox" and "pietistic" with reference to the historical periods such as the time of orthodoxy that immediately followed the Reformation and pietism which comes as a new period after 1675 but rather as designations for a particular kind of piety.

<sup>45</sup> Oppdragelse.

<sup>46</sup> Vekkelse.

<sup>47</sup> Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfunn*, 70. Den ortodokse lutherdom legger avgjørende vekt på den sanne lære. Den betoner dåpen som gjenfødelsens bad, og det på en eksklusiv måte: Gjenfødselen skjer i dåpen og intet annet sted. Det kirkelige embetes nådemiddelforvaltning bærer kristenlivet, og den kristnes liv er et liv i kirken og i kallsarbeidet. Kristen oppdragelse blir tillagt stor vekt, men vekkelsene blir betraktet med en viss distanse.

In contrast,

the pietistic direction states that there are ‘two means of regeneration, baptism’s washing and the word of the Gospel.’ (Gisle Johnson). ‘Every awakening to a new life is a new birth,’ says Pontoppidan; one such regeneration happens in baptism, but if the baptized fall from the covenant of baptism, he can be awakened to a new conversion, and then be reborn by the word of the Gospel. The Lutheran Confessional writings say: to be ‘converted, come to faith and be reborn through the preached and heard word’ ( FC, SD, Article II, 5; See also the *Apology*).<sup>48</sup>

He expresses the concerns of the two directions as follows. “Those who connect regeneration one-sidedly to baptism are afraid that the pietistic awakening preaching will weaken the understanding of baptism’s fundamental importance for the Christian position.”<sup>49</sup> On the other hand “the pietistic preachers have another worry. Gisle Johnson says, ‘There is hardly anything more certain to hinder awakening than the continuous impressing on people that all the baptized are still God’s children.’”<sup>50</sup> This worry was intensified when the “restitution movement” of the so-called new-Lutheranism represented by men such as Wilhelm Löhe (d. 1872) and Th. Kliefoth (d. 1895) “sought above all an objective anchoring of the Christian faith and found it in the church and sacraments. The clerical office was strongly emphasized; the pastor’s position carried on from generation to generation, by calling and ordination, and this is the office’s concern, not the congregation’s.”<sup>51</sup> Wisløff adds that this view found its

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 70-71. Den pietistiske retning hevder at det er <<to gjenfødellesmidler, dåpens bad og evangeliets Ord>> (Gisle Johnson). <<Enhver oppvekkelse til et nytt liv er en ny fødsel>>, sier Pontoppidan; en slik gjenfødsel skjer i dåpen, men om den dømte faller fra dåpspakten, kan han vekkes opp til ny omvendelse, og blir da gjenfødt ved evangeliets ord. De lutherske bekjennelsesskrifter taler også om å bli <<omvendt, komme til troen og bli gjenfødt ved det forkynte og hørte ord>> (Konkordieformelen. Likeså Apologien).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 71. De som knytter gjenfødselen ensidig til dåpen, er redd for at den pietistiske vekkellesforkyndelse skal svekke forståelsen for dåpens grunnleggende betydning for kristenstanden.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Men pietistiske predikanter har en annen bekymring: <<Det er neppe noe mere skikket til å hindre oppvekkelse enn den stadige innprenten av at alle dømte fremdeles er Guds barn>>, sier Gisle Johnson.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Menn som Wilhelm Löhe (d. 1872) og Th. Kliefoth (d. 1895) søkte frem for alt etter en objektiv forankring av kristentroen, og fant den i kirken og sakramentene. Det geistlige

way to the Norwegian pastors through W. A. Wexels' book on pastoral theology.<sup>52</sup>

The subject we have chosen is at the heart of Wisløff's theology and concern. The readings in Wisløff and conversations with him and many of his former students have confirmed this. He said in a lecture in 1939, "All preaching should answer the question of the heart: How shall I become a child of God?"<sup>53</sup> In a series of lectures on baptism given in 1943 he said, "There is one question that is more important than any other in the Christian life: How does a person come to faith? There is nothing so great as this."<sup>54</sup> The ultimate purpose for writing his book on preaching was "to get across that God calls each individual into a personal, conscious relationship with Jesus."<sup>55</sup> A study of his theology and in particular as it relates to faith and the means of grace will therefore represent a response to the issue from the Lutheran pietistic awakening tradition.

## The Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide an introduction to the American reader of the life and theology of Carl Fr. Wisløff with particular focus on the relationship of faith and the means of grace in the bestowal of salvation, in order to discover Wisløff's understanding of the nature and place of the means of grace in a person's faith relationship with God. We

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embete ble sterkt betonet; prestestanden fortsetter fra generasjon til generasjon ved kallelse og ordinasjon, og dette er embetets sak, ikke menighetens.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

<sup>53</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (Norsk Søndagsskoleforbunds Forlag, 1939), 3. All forkynnelse, både for barn og voksne, skal gi svar på det hjertesporsmål: Hvordan skal jeg bli et Guds barn ?

<sup>54</sup> Wisløff, *Dåpen*, (1943), 5. Der er et spørsmål som er viktigere enn noe annet i kristenlivet: Hvordan kommer et menneske til troen? Der er ingenting så stort som dette.

<sup>55</sup> Sjaastad, 86. Ellers ville jeg gjerne i den boken få fram at Gud kaller hver enkelt inn til et *personlig, bevisst* forhold til Jesus. Det må forkynneren vite å formidle.

will give consideration to Wisløff's doctrine of faith. We will study his teaching on the means of grace. In what way does Wisløff, adhering to the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Small Catechism*, steer a course between the two fronts of sacramentalism and spiritualism as he confesses the doctrine of faith and its relationship to the means of grace in the bestowal of salvation? Wisløff belongs to the heritage of the Scandinavian Lutheran pietistic awakening stream of Pontoppidan (1698-1764), Hauge (1771-1824), Johnson (1822-1894), Rosenius (1816-1868), and Hallesby (1879-1961), and is at the same time a Luther scholar, a student of the writings of C. F. W. Walther (1811-1877) and of Francis Pieper (1852-1931). We will attempt to see how Wisløff, who was trained in the pietistic Hallesbyian tradition confesses Lutheran confessional theology (i.e., what he has learned from Rosenius, Pieper, Walther, Luther, and the Lutheran Confessions) in the context of the pietistic Hallesbyian tradition on the one hand and the growing influence of Leiv Aalen (1906-1983) on the other. Given his emphasis on awakening, conversion, the need to be born anew, how does he avoid the anthropocentrizing of faith? In what way can Wisløff be of help to the Lutheran Church as it is threatened by sacramentalism and spiritualism today? The dissertation will therefore contribute to the ongoing research into Lutheran orthodoxy and pietism in this very crucial matter of faith and the means of grace in the bestowal of salvation. Does Wisløff have a way of putting the streams of Lutheran orthodoxy and Lutheran pietism together so that nothing of the Lord's gift gets lost? Does anything get lost of the sacraments? This study has relevance for American Lutherans today who live in a context where the polls of externalism and enthusiasm are very real.

## The Sources and Method

The most important material is the writings of Wisløff himself. We will make use of those that most directly deal with and relate to our topic. He has written two books that will serve as basic resources: *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror*<sup>56</sup> and *Ordet fra Guds munn*.<sup>57</sup> A third book was originally given as lectures in English and later edited, *Do The Work of an Evangelist: The Theology of Lutheran Evangelism*.<sup>58</sup> Wisløff has given a number of lectures that bear directly on our theme and that were later published in written form. These will be an important resource as well. Most of them range between 1939 and 1961. This study will not deal with everything he has written but rather with the material that relates most directly to the topic. Since most of Wisløff's works are only available in Norwegian, the writer will translate all citations into English.

The writer has had many interviews with Professor Wisløff and conversations with theologians in Norway who have had him as a teacher and in some cases later worked with him as a colleague at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology. These conversations will not be quoted extensively. They have served as an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with Wisløff and his context. This has been of great assistance in the reading of Wisløff and the other material necessary for this study. Also several months have been spent in Norway collecting primary and secondary source material.

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<sup>56</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* (Bergen: Lunde Forlag, 1946). This book has been revised several times. There are also two different English translations available. All citations will be translated by the author of this dissertation.

<sup>57</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1951). There is an unpublished translation of this work available. We will consult it but the translations given in the dissertation will be our own.

<sup>58</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Do the work of An Evangelist: The Theology of Lutheran Evangelism*, edited by Robert L. Lee and Francis W. Monseth. (Minneapolis: AFLC Seminary Press, 1990).

The study will attempt to hear Wisløff and set forth what he says in his way of saying things. Chapter 2 will give a brief historical overview of the Norwegian theological background especially as it relates to the topic. This will assist the American reader in understanding the various streams of thought that impact Wisløff's context. Chapter 3 will be a biographical section to acquaint the American reader with Wisløff's theological life and times. This will enable us to see what Wisløff received and what he has given out. We will consider the main contributions of his activities especially as they relate to our topic. In chapter 4 we will give an overview of the basics of his theology. We will go into some detail because this is so fundamental to his understanding of faith and the means of grace. The goal will be to present the big picture. We will consider the source of his theology and how he explicates the message of the Bible. We will also summarize his doctrine of salvation. More attention will be given to his teaching of Law and Gospel because they are so significant to faith and the means of grace. When discussing them Wisløff always puts them within the framework of Law and Gospel. Chapter 5 will be devoted to setting forth his doctrine of faith. Consideration will be given to understanding faith in terms of Law and Gospel, the nature of faith, the object of faith, and the various ways that the understanding of faith has gone wrong. The means of grace will be the focus of chapter 6. It will set forth how Wisløff defines the means of grace, and explication of the various means, and how the various means relate to each other. Chapter 7 will consider the relationship of faith and the means of grace. It will seek to show the place of the means of grace in the various aspects of the believer's faith relationship with God. Careful attention will be given to the manner in which Wisløff confesses these doctrines, the Scriptures that he draws from, and to a certain extent his

consistency of doing so throughout his life and in the various types of writing, i.e., doctrinal, sermonic, devotional, etc.

A summary will be attempted in chapter 8. We will also seek to evaluate Wisløff on his own terms. Did he follow through in what he said he was committed to? What appears to have prevented him from following through? The dissertation will also include an extensive bibliography of Wisløff's works.

## The State of the Research

As of this writing no major work has been done on the life or theology of Carl Fr. Wisløff. However, some smaller studies of his theology called "*Special-avhandlings*"<sup>59</sup> have been produced. They include a range of topics and indicate some of the aspects of Wisløff's theology that have been of special interest in Norway. We will give an overview of these studies.

Erik Noddeland has written on "The Relationship between Baptism and Conversion in Carl Fr. Wisløff's Theology."<sup>60</sup> In regards to the baptized child he notes that Wisløff believes that there must come a break-through to a faith consciousness during the time of adolescence. Noddeland believes that this is based more on psychology than theology.<sup>61</sup> This indicates a tendency to dogmatize certain developmental psychological experiences.<sup>62</sup> Noddeland points out that Wisløff can say, "A child lives in its childhood faith so long as it knows itself

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<sup>59</sup> These are major papers written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Candidate of Theology degree. They range in size from about thirty to forty pages.

<sup>60</sup> Erik Noddeland, *Forholdet mellom dåp og omvendelse i Carl Fr. Wisløff's teologi* (Spesialavhandling Til Teologisk Embetseksamen Ved Menighetsfakultetet, Våren 1981).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

connected to God in its conscience such that it must confess its childhood sins to God and receive forgiveness for Jesus' sake."<sup>63</sup> The child is no longer an infant but has consciousness about God's will in the Law and forgiveness. It can be asked according to Noddeland, if it is still necessary to emphasize the transition to a still more conscious life with God and a still more personal stand in desiring to live as a Christian.<sup>64</sup> "The child already lives in daily conversion, even if it cannot remember when this started."<sup>65</sup> The purpose for this emphasis in Wisløff says Noddeland, is "because it is not enough to be baptized, if one does not believe and live in daily contrition and repentance. And he knows from experience that an adult person does not go on to live this life without having consciousness of it."<sup>66</sup> Noddeland says critically that "the preaching of such an awakening's experience to the young who live in faith and confession of sins, can lead to a 'quasi-awakening,' a conversion that is not grounded in contrition over sin, but on the lack of experience."<sup>67</sup> In his study of Wisløff's understanding of conversion and regeneration in relation to baptism, Noddeland "found that conversion was more strongly underscored for the adult than was baptism. Typical of this is Wisløff's statement: 'Practice baptism, preach conversion.'"<sup>68</sup> Noddeland also concluded that Wisløff

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. This citation in Noddeland is from Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Det kristne livet*, (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1977), 66. Et barn lever med Gud så lenge som det vet seg knyttet til ham i sin samvittighet, slik at det må bekjenne sine barnesynder for Gud og ta imot forlatelse for Jesu skyld. See also idem. *Det kristne livet* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1987), 67-68.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Det lever jo allerede i daglig omvendelse, selv om det ikke kan huske når dette tok til.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Wisløff's hensikt med å tale om en slik omvendelse er klar for det er ikke nok å være døpt, hvis en ikke tror og lever i daglig anger og bot. Og han vet av erfaring at det for en voksen tenkende person ikke går an å leve dette livet uten å ha bevissthet om det.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 22-23. Forkynnelsen av en slik vekkesopplevelse overfor unge som lever i tro og syndsbekjennelse, kan føre til en "kvasivekkelse", en omvendelse som ikke er grunnet på anger over synd, men på mangel av opplevelse.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 23. Vi har i behandlingen av omvendelse og gjenfødelse i forhold til dåp, i hovedsak funnet at omvendelsen blir sterkere understreket for den voksne enn dåpen blir. Typisk i så

weakens baptism's lasting effect by his emphasis on preaching conversion to the baptized that already live in the new life. Instead, Noddeland says "we should preach to the continual walking in baptism which is to live in daily conversion."<sup>69</sup> By this approach "the old Adam in us, shall be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and die together with all sins and evil lusts, and ... a new man shall come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence' (SC, IV, 12)."<sup>70</sup> The *Confessio Augustana* 9, 2 "has a stronger emphasis on baptism's lasting effect for these young people than we find in Wisløff."<sup>71</sup> This is because "baptism is an active sacrament that is fundamental for the whole Christian life, not only until they come to be young people."<sup>72</sup> Noddeland also asserts that "it is not the adult's Christian life that is idealized in preference to the child's but it is possible to maintain on the basis of Luke 18:17 that – 'unless you become as children you will not come into God's kingdom.'"<sup>73</sup> Also *Confessio Augustana* 5 and 12 have "a more powerful underscoring of baptism's meaning for the converted fallen than we find with Wisløff. The converted should

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måte kan Wisløff's uttalelse være: "Prakteriser dåp, forkynn omvendelse." (Taped recording)

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 29. Men vi skal forkynne til en stadig vandring i dåpen som er å leve i daglig omvendelse.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Der "den gamle Adam i oss skal druknes ved daglig anger og bot og dø med alle synder og onde lyster, og .. et nytt menneske daglig skal stige fram og stå opp og leve evig for Gud i rettferd og rennet."

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Ved dette får vi en sterkere markering av dåpens varige virkning for disse gudfryktige unge enn vi finner hos Wisløff.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Dåpen blir et virksomt sakrament som er grunnleggende for hele kristenlivet, ikke bare inntil de kommer i ungdomsalderen.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Dessuten blir ikke den voksnes kristenliv idealisert framfor barnets, men det blir mulig å holde fram Luk 18, 17 – "uten at dere blir som barn skal dere ikke komme inn i Guds rike."

not build their Christian life on or out from their conversion but on baptism's promise, the Gospel."<sup>74</sup>

Edgar Fredrikson has dealt with the topic "The View of Regeneration in Leiv Aalen and Carl Fr. Wisløff."<sup>75</sup> The central reference for Wisløff's teaching on regeneration lies in the Scriptures. But it must be added that he often goes to Luther and the Confessions. He shows that Wisløff believes that it is Biblical and important to connect regeneration to the moment the person comes to faith, and that it is misleading to speak as if an unconverted person is reborn.<sup>76</sup> Wisløff's basic understanding is that regeneration is God giving faith, thus regeneration is then *donatio fidei*.<sup>77</sup> This regenerating faith is created and given both through the Gospel Word and baptism whereas Leiv Aalen (1906-1983)<sup>78</sup> limits regeneration to baptism.<sup>79</sup> Fredriksen concludes that Wisløff does not fall into the ditch of making one's day of conversion central so that one's Christian life turns into living on this experience.<sup>80</sup> Wisløff stands against the new evangelicals as well as the Baptists and Reformed. Fredriksen also concludes that Wisløff puts at least as great an emphasis on the preaching of conversion in the sense of repentance as Leiv Aalen. But, he is not guilty of the criticism Aalen directs against pietism in regards to conditions for the appropriation of grace for Wisløff says that

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 30. Vi har her en kraftigere understrekning av dåpens betydning for den omvendte frafalne enn den vi finner hos Wisløff. Den omvendte skal ikke bygge sitt kristenliv på eller ut fra omvendelsen, men på dåpens løfte, evangeliet.

<sup>75</sup> Edgar Fredriksen, *Synet på gjenfødselen hos Leiv Aalen og Carl Fr. Wisløff* (Spesialavhandling i systematisk teologi ved Det teologiske Menighetsfakultetet, Våren 1981).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>78</sup> Leiv Aalen was dosent (1 September, 1945-1957) and later professor of Systematic Theology (1 March, 1957-1976) at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology. He was therefore a colleague of Wisløff. More will be said about him in the next chapter.

<sup>79</sup> Fredriksen, 17-20.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 28.

there is no speck of condition to be found in the Gospel.<sup>81</sup> Thus there exists this unresolved tension within the Norwegian conservative theology.

Asgeir Sele has studied the theme “Wisløff: His View of the Bible and The MF Tradition.”<sup>82</sup> Sele discusses the various aspects of Wisløff’s view of the Bible and relates it to the views that were held by the faculty that founded The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology and those teaching in the 1970’s. He seeks to determine what role Wisløff’s view of the Bible had in causing him to retire three years early. He also discusses other possible tensions that may have contributed to it. Of special interest to us is Sele’s brief discussion of tension at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology between pietism and Lutheranism. Ole Hallesby who had retired in 1952 gave a lecture at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1958) in which he expressed concern about the teaching that the church was the gathering of the baptized which was being spread by the faculty. This teaching would wobble the Christian preaching of baptism, awakening, conversion and sanctification. Directly addressing the faculty he said, “If MF weakens here, then it has not only lost God’s blessing, then it has also lost its reason to exist.”<sup>83</sup> Sele states, “It was now completely clear to all that it was no longer the conservative experience theology (*erfaringsteologien*) that ruled basically at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology. Ole Hallesby’s successor as professor, Leiv Aalen (1906-1983), had set forth the confessional Lutheranism which was now dominating.”<sup>84</sup> Sele concludes that the conflicts between Wisløff and the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>82</sup> Asgeir Sele, *Wisløff sitt bibelsyn og MF-tradisjon: Carl Fr. Wisløff sin avskjed i 1975 i perspektiv* (Spesialavhandling i Kyrkjestorier ved Menighetsfakultetet. 1992 II).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 13. Skulle MF svikta her, så hadde det ikkje berre mista Guds velsigning; då hadde det også mista sitt eksistensgrunnlag.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Det var no heilt klart for alle at det ikkje lenger var den konservative erfaringsteologien som rådde grunnen ved Menighetsfakultetet. Ole Hallesby sin etterfølgar

majority of the The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology present in 1972 involved both his view of the Bible and his tension with the kind of confessional Lutheranism being promoted at the school.<sup>85</sup> Since Wisløff could no longer in good conscience vouch for the school, he resigned.<sup>86</sup>

Svein-Arne Theodorsen did a critical analysis on the topic “Carl Fr. Wisløff’s View of the Church.”<sup>87</sup> Theodorsen “shows that the sacraments stand central in Wisløff’s theology. We have seen that he underscores that the means of grace have the same ‘power’ and ‘give the same gift.’”<sup>88</sup> At the same time he points out that “we miss the sacraments at some places in Wisløff’s literature. After having looked at the occurrence of “baptism” and “communion” in parts of Wisløff’s sermons, we would maintain that Wisløff’s principal view on the sacraments does come through clearly in all of his literature.”<sup>89</sup> Theodorsen believes that Wisløff accents the personal side of the church at the expense of the institutional. Wisløff’s church political interests contributes to this. This lack of balance between the two elements in

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som professor i dogmatikk, Leiv Aalen (1906-1983) hadde utvikla den konfesjonelle lutherdomen som no var dominerande.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Svein - Arne Theodorsen, *Carl Fr. Wisløffs kirkesyn en kritisk analyse* (Spesialavhandling i systematiskteologi ved Det teologiske Menighetsfakultetet, 1981 II).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 22. Etter vår mening viser behandlingen at sakramentene står sentralt i Wisløffs teologi. Vi har sett at han understreker at nåde midlene har samme “makt” og “gir den samme gave.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 22. Som tidligere påpekt savner vi sakramentene enkelte steder i Wisløffs litteratur. Etter å ha sett på fopekomsten av “dåp” og “nattverd” i deler av Wisløffs prekenlitteratur, 196 [(Carl Fr. Wisløff. *Ordet om korset* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1973) and *Lyset skinner i mørket* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1976)] vil vi hevde at Wisløffs prinsipielle syn på sakramentene ikke kommer like klart fram i all hans litteratur.

the understanding of the church is due in part to a reduced understanding of *Confessio Augustana* 7 together with an inadequate stress on the concept of *church*.<sup>90</sup>

Karl Hjelmeland studied “Carl Fr. Wisløff’s View of the Scripture’s Authority.”<sup>91</sup> The question he tries to answer is: “How does Wisløff justify the Scripture’s authority, and how does he think we as Christians should relate to the Scripture’s authority?”<sup>92</sup> He concludes that inspiration, understood from the orthodox development of verbal inspiration, is the main fundamental for the authority of Scripture in Wisløff. He also concludes that Wisløff’s meaning of inspiration’s *modus* and his talk about the error free original manuscripts indicate a rationalistic tendency. He believes that Wisløff’s view of the Bible is in danger of weakening the value of the external clarity and historical character of the Bible. However he does not find this happening in Wisløff. Even though Hjelmeland cannot accept Wisløff’s view he believes that it should be allowed its place.<sup>93</sup>

Tom Olaf Josephsen has written “Carl Fr. Wisløff’s Use of Scripture Alone in the Norwegian Scripture-View Debate.”<sup>94</sup> This is a study of Wisløff’s understanding of *Sola Scriptura* and its consequence for deciding issues in the church. Josephsen concludes that when Wisløff speaks of *Sola Scriptura* it involves his complete understanding of inspiration including the inerrancy of the Scriptures. His view of Scripture is crucial for his approach to

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>91</sup> Karl Hjelmeland, *Carl Fr. Wisløffs syn på skriftas autoritet: framstilling og vurdering* (Spesialavhandling i systematisk teologi ved Det teologiske Menighetsfakultetet, Våren 1982).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 1. Spørsmål vi vil prøve å få svar på er: Korleis grunnlegg W. Skriftas autoritet, og korleis meiner han at vi som kristne skal stille oss til skriftautoriteten?

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>94</sup> Tom Olaf Josephsen, *Carl Fr. Wisløffs bruk av sola scriptura i norsk skriftsyndebatt* (Spesialavhandling i systematisk teologi ved Det teologiske Menighetsfakultetet, Våren 1981).

the historical-critical method, ecumenical activity, women pastors, and the remarriage of the divorced. Josephsen further concludes that Wisløff does not have the strength to be consistent in all matters in the face of this *Sola Scriptura* understanding. This is in spite of the fact that he begins with “Scripture alone.” Josephsen believes that the examples he has looked at indicate that both political and churchly views have dominated over *Sola Scriptura*.<sup>95</sup>

Ragnar Johannessen did a work on “A Critical Study of Some of the Arguments in the Debate between I. P. Seierstad and C. Fr. Wisløff in TTK 1937 and 1938 on the View of the Bible.”<sup>96</sup> In this comparison of these two theologians the point comes down to inerrancy. To what extent is the Bible without error? For Seierstad the Bible is without error in matters that pertain to salvation. Wisløff on the other hand says that each word is God’s Word therefore the whole is without error. Johannessen is not satisfied with either view thus he presents an approach that lies somewhere between them.

Knut Ree has written about the place of baptism in the preaching in Norwegian devotional literature from 1880 to the present.<sup>97</sup> He found that Wisløff, as one of the preaching theologians who has had especially the ear and confidence of the believing lay people, is clear in his speaking of regeneration in infant baptism.<sup>98</sup> In his writing Wisløff names many of the gifts that baptism gives: forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, resurrection with Christ and living fellowship with Jesus.<sup>99</sup> He concludes “baptism’s

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>96</sup> Ragnar Johannessen, *En kritisk undersøkelse av noen av argumentene i debatten mellom I. P. Seierstad og C. Fr. Wisløff i TTK 1937 og 1938. om bibelsynet* (Spesialavhandling i systematisk teologi ved Det teologiske Menighetsfakultetet, 1978).

<sup>97</sup> Knut Ree, *Dåpen i forkynnelsen: spadestikk i norsk oppbyggelseslitteratur fra 1880-årene og opp til vår tid* (Oslo: Verbum, 1991).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

regeneration is not spoken about very often” and that “just as often regeneration appears to be spoken of in connection with adults, as regeneration through the Word.”<sup>100</sup> Wisløff does speak of baptism’s covenant but regeneration is the term that is nevertheless the most comprehensive expression for baptism.<sup>101</sup>

Ree notes that among the professional theologians, who are also known preachers, Professor Carl Fr. Wisløff occupies a relatively big place. For Wisløff “when it involves baptism’s meaning for the apostate, it is emphasized that baptism’s covenant from God’s side stands sure. But a new birth through the Word has a similarly big place; such an understanding is also true for a great part of our Christian lay people.”<sup>102</sup> Wisløff’s insistence that all need to be born anew including the children of Christian parents must not be understood to mean he does not believe that many children remain in their baptismal covenant. At this point, Ree raises the question of whether or not Wisløff has shifted in his view “such that regeneration through conversion has received a somewhat stronger emphasis in his later writings.”<sup>103</sup> He also sees Wisløff’s emphasis on “you must be born anew” as “not so far away from saying that also the baptized Christian must go through the new birth’s narrow gate.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Men dåpens gjenfødelse omtales ikke svært ofte. Like ofte ser gjenfødelsen ut til å bli omtalt i sammenheng med omvendelsen hos voksne, som gjenfødelse ved Ordet.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 187. Når det gjelder dåpens betydning for den frafalne, betones det at dåpens pakt fra Guds side står fast. Men en ny gjenfødelse ved Ordet har en like stor plass, slik oppfatningen også er innen store deler av vårt kristne legfolk.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 188. Det kan likevel her væm spørsmål om en forskyvning i forfatterens syn, slik at gjenfødelsen ved omvendelsen har fått en noe sterkere betoning i hans senere skrifter.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Let ligger ikke så langt unna å si at også den dåpskristne må passere den nye fødsels trange port.

In general Wisløff's view of baptism is seen to be in line with that of Pontoppidan's and in this regard he dissents from Hallesby his teacher. According to Ree, Wisløff's reservation on preaching the regeneration in baptism is due to his fear of baptism becoming a "sovepute" (sleeping pillow) for the unrepentant.<sup>105</sup> Ree finds that in the realm of the Christian life Wisløff emphasizes faith strongly but "without putting it clearly in connection with baptism as a motive to a new life" rather "regeneration and the new life are joined to faith."<sup>106</sup>

In dealing with the soul-struggles (*anfektelse*) Ree concludes that Wisløff is very reserved in referring to baptism as a comfort in these trials. "We notice that the one tried is directed to the Word, not to baptism."<sup>107</sup> Ree however notes that Wisløff does refer people to the Word and Sacraments so let us "not deny that baptism as a comfort in affliction occupies a modest place in Wisløff's practical preaching."<sup>108</sup> Ree's study has raised some questions about shifts, and perhaps tensions in Wisløff's thinking and practice in regards to baptism.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 189. Odd Sverre Hove reports that in just the last three years he has heard Wisløff preach regeneration in baptism at least three to four times. He doesn't believe that Wisløff preaches little about it. Note to the writer in January 1998.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 227. Men så vidt vi kan se, betoner Wisløff troen sterkt uten å sette den klart i forbindelse med dåpen som motiv til et nytt levnet. Gjenfødselen og det nye liv knyttes til troen.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 247. Vi merker oss at den anfektede vises til Ordet, ikke til dåpen.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 248. Likevel lar det seg ikke nekte at dåpen som trøst i anfektelsen inntar en beskjeden plass i Wisløffs praktiske forkynnelse.

## Chapter Two

### **A Brief Survey of The Historical Background**

Our topic has been of particular concern to Lutheran Scandinavians. In this chapter we want to provide a brief historical survey of selected individuals of Scandinavian Church life who relate particularly to our theme. This will give a better understanding of both the broader and the more immediate context of Wisløff's life and work.

Within the context of the Lutheran family one can speak of a Scandinavian Lutheran tradition that has lived in a setting with some similarities to that of American Lutherans today.<sup>1</sup> The uniqueness of the Scandinavian tradition is that it “embodies, expresses, and sets forth the ideas and ideals of the great evangelical awakening in the Scandinavian countries in the nineteenth century in terms of what may properly be called *confessional pietism*.”<sup>2</sup> Such a designation “implies that in this tradition the historical tension or separation between confessional fidelity and pietism is substantially resolved.”<sup>3</sup> Accordingly Arden maintains that “a remarkable balance is achieved between the objective and the subjective, that is, between that which is given and that which is experienced.”<sup>4</sup> As a result “Christianity as inwardness is harmonized with the external forms and structures through which spiritual life

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<sup>1</sup> G. Everett Arden, *Four Northern Lights* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

in the Christian community has historically been wont to express itself.”<sup>5</sup> The fundamental and essential emphasis is that Christianity is a living inner, personal possession “alive with power, concern, enthusiasm and high moral conduct.”<sup>6</sup> This tradition emphasizes that the person may inherit the externalities of Christianity, that is to possess only the shell “while the reality itself, the kernel, the very soul and spirit, is lacking.”<sup>7</sup> Stated briefly, “the essence of Christianity is Jesus Christ and his victorious power and peace, and this is never inherited; it is always newly appropriated through faith by the grace of God.”<sup>8</sup> This tradition sought to preserve both the salvation delivering means of grace and a living saving faith.

During the revivals and awakenings in which the Scandinavian tradition noted above came into being there also arose the Free Church movement.<sup>9</sup> These people were unable to reconcile their revival experiences with Lutheran doctrine. They could not put together a personal faith with the Lutheran understanding of baptism. The founder of the Free Church at Skien, Norway (July 4, 1856), Gustav Adolf Lammers (1802-1878), rejected the Augsburg Confession’s teaching on baptism and absolution.<sup>10</sup> “For him the Word was the only means of regeneration, and baptism was only a seal that should follow after regeneration.”<sup>11</sup> Having to face this view the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition was thus conscious of the need to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 155f.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Einar Molland, *Norges kirkehistorie i det 19. århundre* bind I, (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1979), 225-242.

<sup>10</sup> Molland, 1979, 229. See also Arnold T. Olson, *This We Believe* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Minneapolis: Free Church Publications, 1993), 265.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Ordet var for ham det eneste gjænføðelsesmiddel, og dåpen var bare en besegling som skulle følge *etter* gjænføðelsen.

preserve all the divinely given means of grace.<sup>12</sup>

To provide historical background for our study on Wisløff we will briefly highlight some of the significant persons involved in this tradition even though all may not be considered representatives of it.<sup>13</sup>

### The 18<sup>th</sup> Century

The first major foundational figure we will consider is Eric Pontoppidan (1698-1764) who was born in Aarhus, Denmark the summer of 1698.<sup>14</sup> He is important for the establishment of pietism in Norway and those who follow him continue to interact with his teachings thus he is a logical starting point. At this time Denmark and Norway were one country. One of the religious movements that spread north to this region from Germany during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was pietism. It permeated the Denmark-Norway area rather quickly and established a rather strong following. King Christian VI (1731-1746) sought to introduce pietistic Christianity through legislation. A series of laws during 1735 to 1741 were especially significant. These were in part influenced by Philip Spener's *Pia desideria*. They were fleshed out with the focus on training the people in the pietistic spirit. The most important

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<sup>12</sup> A year later Gisle Johnson responded with his little book *Nogle ord om barnedaaben* (Christiania: Jac. Dybwads Forlaget, 1857).

<sup>13</sup> The writer is indebted to Oddvar Johan Jensen for the suggestion to include a separate chapter for the historical background.

<sup>14</sup> He became the Danish-Norwegian Lutheran Bishop in Bergen, Norway. Several of his books have greatly influenced both Denmark, Sweden, and Norway: *Heller Glaubens-Spiegel, in welchem die Kennzeichen der kinder Gottes vorgestellt werden* (1727). Thirteen years later it came out in Danish translation *Troens spejl* (1740). This work was instrumental in the conversion of Carl Olof Rosenius. An English translation exists, *The Mirror of Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1927). There is also his explanation to Luther's Small Catechism, Erik Pontoppidan, *Sannhet til Gud-Fryktighet. Forklaring til Dr. Martin Luthers lille katekismus*, published in 1737 and *Collegium pastorale practicum*. The influence of these writings has reached America through the Norwegian immigration.

was the confirmation law of January 13, 1736. Confirmation was meant to function so that the baptized were raised as true Christians and pious citizens. The arrangement can be seen as a systematic attempt to form the whole church and therewith the whole society into a pietistic organism and thereby overcome the tension that otherwise existed between the official state church on the one side and the pietistic conventicles as renewal centers on the other side.<sup>15</sup>

The confirmation law presented a need for a basic text and the king's court pastor, Erik Pontoppidan was chosen to write a suitable explanation to Luther's *Small Catechism*. It was given the title *Truth unto Godliness* and was published in 1737 consisting of 759 questions and answers. The title is a citation from Titus 1:1 and expresses pietism's program that "the correct teaching shall lead to the pious life, the correct knowledge of God shall lead to the relation with God himself."<sup>16</sup> Pontoppidan's biographer concludes that he is not the author but rather the editor of a new explanation of the catechism.<sup>17</sup> Philip Spener's explanation to the catechism had come out in Danish translation in 1727 and the evidence indicates that Pontoppidan made much use of Spener's work.<sup>18</sup> Pontoppidan's explanation has been considered by many church historians to be the layman's dogmatics in the Norwegian awakening movement.<sup>19</sup> Ivar Welle has said "that next to the Bible no book has

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<sup>15</sup> Bernt T. Oftestad, Tarald Rasmussen og Jan Schumacher, *Norsk kirkehistorie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991), 158.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Neiiendam, *Erik Pontoppidan II (1735-1764)*, (København: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1933), 81. Titlen er et citat fra Paulus (Titus 1, 1), men indeholder også pietismens program: den rette lære skal føre til det fromme liv, den rette kundskab om Gud skal føre forholdet til Gud med sig (ortopraksi).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 84. Ivar Welle says it is a shortened and revised edition of Spener's more pietistic explanation of the catechism. Where Pontoppidan deviates from Spener, Norwegian Christianity has done the same. Ivar Welle, *Norges kirkehistorie III* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1948), 126.

<sup>18</sup> Andreas Aarflot, *Tro og lydighet. Hans Nielsen Hauges kristendomsforståelse* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 123-124.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

exercised so great an influence on the Norwegian people. It has above all impressed upon them the true nature of Christianity.”<sup>20</sup>

One of the features of Pontoppidan’s explanation is the emphasis on the order of salvation. The focus is on the individual’s conversion and the order is what each person must go through in order to be saved. This is seen particularly in the development of the third article. The order has six parts that follow each other as phases on a time-line: the call, enlightenment, regeneration, justification, renewal, and preservation. Pontoppidan identifies the core of the order as conversion: “The order is called order of salvation. It consists in true conversion to God.”<sup>21</sup>

He defines regeneration as when “the person receives a living faith, is awakened from spiritual death, converts and is led over from darkness to light, from Satan’s power to God.”<sup>22</sup> In a more detailed description he says that it “is a work of God in the person’s heart. It receives in an incomprehensible manner a new nature, a new light in the mind and a new longing, desire and power in the will. Accordingly there arises a whole new life in those who before were spiritually dead. The Scriptures call this a new heart, a new spirit, a new person

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<sup>20</sup> Welle, *Norges kirkehistorie* III, 124. Nest Bibelen har ingen bok øvet så stor inflytelse på det norske folk, den har fremfor alle preget dets forestilling om hva sann kristendom er.

<sup>21</sup> Erik Pontoppidan, *Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed*, Forklaring Over Sal. Doct. Mort. Luthers Liden Catechismo, Danske. Kjøbenhavn, Udi det Kongelige Waysenhusets Bogtrykkerie, og paadets Forlag, Trykt af Gottmann Friderich Kisel, 1738. Kort Begrep (point) 25, 224. Torleiv Austad has observed that for Pontoppidan “it is the adult’s Christian faith and life that is the pattern for the child and young person.” Torleiv Austad, “Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed”, En analyse av Pontoppidans katekismeforklaring,” a chapter in Brynjar Haraldsø, red. *Konfirmasjonen i går og i dag* (Oslo: Verbum, 1986), 179. This results in the reason and the will playing a decisive role in conversion. Ibid.,180.

<sup>22</sup> Pontoppidan, *Sannhet til Gud-Fryktighet*, 1738, Spørsmål (question) 487. Hvad er Igiensfødselen, eller den nye Fødsel? Det samme som en levende Troes Meddelelse, eller opvækkelse af den aanelige Død, Omvendelse og Oversættelse fra Mørket til Lyset, fra Satans Magt til Gud.

or a new creation.”<sup>23</sup> A person can know that he is regenerated by “the serious change in his heart and the new gifts of grace which make him a new and different person.”<sup>24</sup>

Significant for our theme is the way Pontoppidan sets forth the means of regeneration. He states that it happens “with the small children through the water and the Spirit in the sacrament of baptism but with the older who by security or wickedness’ sin are fallen from the grace of baptism and regeneration’s state, it is received anew by God’s Word, the imperishable seed, 1Pet. 1:23.”<sup>25</sup> In the section on baptism he asks the question, “Why is baptism called a washing of regeneration? Because *baptism* is a means of regeneration for the young, just as the word is for the older the means of regeneration.”<sup>26</sup> He also adds another question. “Isn’t baptism then the only means of regeneration? No, the Word has the same power and effect. 1 Pet. 1:23.”<sup>27</sup> Pontoppidan makes it very clear that both baptism and the Word are means of regeneration. Baptism is the means of regeneration for the child and the Word is the means of regeneration for the adult.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 488. Siig mig endnu tydeligere, hvad Igienfødselen er? Den er ikke, efter Necodemi Tanke, at et Menniske skulde gaae i sin Moders Liv, naar hand er gammel, og fødes paa nye, men Igienfødselen er en aandelig og indvortes Guds Gierning i Menniskets Hierte, hvilket da fødes paa nye, naar der i, paa en os u=begribelig Maade, skabes en nye guddommelig Art og Beskaffenhed, i Forstanden et nyt Lys, i Villien en nye Længsel, Lyst og Kraft, og altsaa et gandske nyt Liv i den, som ellers var aandelig død, hvilket Skriften kalder et nyt Hierte, en ((pp n=130))nye Aand, et nyt Menniske, eller et nyt Creatur.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 491. Hvor paa kand et Menniske kiende, om hand er igienfødt? Det kiendes paa hans Hiertes alvorlige Forandring og de nye Naade=Gaver, som gjør ham til et kiendelig nyt og andet Menniske.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 489. Ved hvilke Midler virkes Igienfødselen? Hos de smaa børn ved vand og Aand i Daabens Sacramente, men hos de gamle, som ved Sikkerhed eller Ondskabs Synd ere faldne fra Daabens Naade og Igienfødselsens Stand, bekommes den paa nye ved Guds Ord den u=forkrænkelige Sæd. 1 Pet. 1,23.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 665. Hvorfor kaldes Daaben i disse Ord Igienfødselsens Bad? Fordi daaben er hos de unge, ligesom Ordet hos de gamle, Igienfødselsens Middel.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 693. Er Daaben da ikke det eneste Igienfødsels Middel? Ney, Ordet har samme Kraft og Virkning. 1 Pet. 1,23.

Pontoppidan makes a distinction between a living and a dead faith.<sup>28</sup> A true and living faith “consists in that a penitent soul takes his refuge in God’s grace in Christ’s merit, which it receives eagerly, appropriates and builds on with heartfelt confidence.”<sup>29</sup> He also uses Luther’s description of faith in his preface to the epistle to the Romans where he speaks of faith as a divine work in us that transforms and rebirths us of God, kills the old Adam, makes us completely different persons in heart, spirit, mind and all powers and it brings with it the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup>

Dead faith on the other hand is a “false imagination that the impenitent sinners make as if to receive grace although they will not convert and seek grace in the right order, but remain unchanged, when therefore faith’s nature is to change the person.”<sup>31</sup> Such persons do not have any true faith at all “even if they know all of God’s word, hold it to be true and take comfort in it.”<sup>32</sup> He concludes that there is no true faith “so long as faith only remains in the head and does not come into the heart, or kills the old Adam and regenerates them to new

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<sup>28</sup> The true nature of faith is also set forth in his work *Troens Spjel*.

<sup>29</sup> Pontoppidan, *Sannhet til Gud-Fryktighet*, 1738, Sporsmal 493. Hvad er den sande levende Troe, som skienkes ved Igienfødelser? Troen er en bodfærdig Siels Tilflugt til Guds Naade i Christi Fortieneste, hvilken begierlig antages, tilegnes og bygges paa med fortroelig Tillid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 494. Hvorledes beskriver Lutherus den sande Troe? Troen er en levende dristende Fortrøstning om Guds Naade; den er en Guds Gierning i os, som omskifter og nye føder os af Gud, dræber den gamle Adam, gjør os til gandske andre Mennsker af Hierte, Mod, Sind, og alle Kræfter, og fører den Hellig Aand med sig. O! hvor er det en levende, kraftig, mægtig og flittig Ting med Troen! See Fortal. over Epistel. til de Romere. See AE 35:370.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 497. Hvad er en død Troe? Den døde Troe er en falsk Indbildning, som ubodfærdige Syndere gjøre sig selv om at faae Naade, endskiønt de ikke vil omvende sig, og søge Naaden i den rette Orden, men blive u=forandrede, da dog Troens Art er at forandre Mennisket.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 498. Har da de u=bodfærdige ingen sand Troe? Ney slet ingen, om de end veed alt Guds Ord, holde det for sandt, og trøste sig der ved, saa er dog deres Troe død, og deres Tilstand fordømmelig, saa længe Troen bliver allene i Hovedet, og ey kommer i Hiertet, eller dræber den gamle Adam, og igienføder dem til nye Mennsker.

persons.”<sup>33</sup> One can know whether or not his faith is living or dead “by its powerful effect in the heart, namely love to God and neighbor, hate for sin and victory over the world, the right use of the means of grace and so forth.”<sup>34</sup>

Pontoppidan defines justification as the “closest fruit of regeneration and consists in that the triune God of sheer grace before his judgment frees a truly penitent and believing sinner, both from his sin and its deserved punishment, and thereby credits him Christ’s righteousness, yes views him in Christ as if he had never sinned.”<sup>35</sup> The first part of this definition was omitted in the editions that were published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup>

Pontoppidan also spoke to the issue of the right use of the means of grace in a way that indicates his awareness of the *opus operatum* problem. He stated, “Yes, they should thank God for such means of grace and neither neglect nor despise them. On the other hand they should rather not blindly depend on these means so that one uses them without true repentance and faith.”<sup>37</sup> In this way Pontoppidan sought to protect the right use of the means of grace and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 499. Hvor paa kand jeg da kiende, om min Troe er levende eller død? Paa dens kraftige Virkning i Hiertet, som er Kierlighed til Gud og Næsten, Had imod Synden, og Seyer over Verden, Naade=Midlernes rette Brug, og saadant mere.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Sporsmal 503. Hvad er da Retfærdiggjørelsen? Den er Igienfødelsens allernærmeste Frugt, og bestaaer der udi, at den Tre=enige Gud af idel Naade for sin Dom frikiender en sand bodfærdig og troende Syndere, baade fra sin Synd og dens fortiente Straf, og der imod tilregner ham Christi Retfærdighed, ja anseer ham i Christo, ligesom hand aldrig havde syndet.

<sup>36</sup> See the 1948 and the 1964 editions.

<sup>37</sup> Pontoppidan, (1738) Sporsmal 640. Ere da alle Christne skyldige til at bruge de hellige Sacramenter? Ja, de bør takke Gud for saadanne Naade=Midler, og ey forsømme eller foragte dem, men dog ey heller sætte en blind Tillid til disse Midlers Brug uden sand Bodfærdighed og Troe. *Sannhet til Gud-Fryktighet: Forklaring til Dr. Martin Luter Lille Katekismus*. (Oslo, Norway: Lutherstiftelsen, 1964. Reprint of 1737 edition). Sporsmal 640. Men plikter alle kristne å nytte de hellige sakramenter? Ja, de bør takke Gud for slike nådemidler og hverken forsømme eller forakte dem. På den annen side bør de heller ikke stole blindt på disse midler så at en nytter dem uten sann bot og tro.

not give the people a false security.

### The 19<sup>th</sup> Century

A very significant person in Norway's modern history as a country and as a church is Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824).<sup>38</sup> Andreas Aarflot makes the point that in our study of Hauge we must remember that he was first and foremost a child of his time.<sup>39</sup> Aarflot states that the "situation was characterized by the conflict between the older orthodox-pietistic teaching tradition which still had its root in the congregations and the more daring flights of thought congenial to the Enlightenment which the foremost cultural leaders represented."<sup>40</sup>

Hauge was born into a farm family at Tune where he grew up and worked as a young man. It was a time of stable orthodox liturgical forms and Christian instruction in Pontoppidan's explanation culminating in a meaningful confirmation at 16. Aarflot concludes that "we can safely assume, therefore, that to a large extent his theological ideas grew out of this soil."<sup>41</sup> His training in Pontoppidan's Explanation formed his basic life-view of baptism and regeneration. He was also shaped by devotional writings known for their emphasis on "penitential piety" which shifted the emphasis from "the Lutheran focus "on justification by faith alone to a more individualistic preoccupation with conversion, repentance, and 'the

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<sup>38</sup> Helpful works on Hans Nielsen Hauge are Andreas Aarflot, *Hans Nielsen Hauge: His Life and His Message* Translated by Joseph M. Shaw (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979); Joseph M. Shaw *Pulpit Under The Sky: A Life of Hans Nielsen Hauge* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1955); Arden, *Four Northern Lights*, 51-76.

<sup>39</sup> Aarflot, *Tro Lydighet*, 119. Nils E. Bloch-Hoell has characterized Hauge's time as having three features: (1) The orthodox-pietistic teaching, (2) The mystic-aesthetic form of piety, and (3) The Enlightenment's form of life. "Hauge var mystiker" (*TTK* 1970:2), 130.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Situasjonen var preget av brytningen mellom den eldre ortodoks-pietistiske læretradisjon som enda hadde rot i menighetene, og den dristigere tankeflukt i opplysningstidens tegn som de fremste kulturbærere representerte.

<sup>41</sup> Aarflot, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 48.

practice of piety.”<sup>42</sup> This devotional literature also impacted him in “its critical attitude toward external church matters and its warning against apathetic, routine Christianity.”<sup>43</sup> He also seems to have been acquainted with selections of Luther’s writings.<sup>44</sup>

On April 5, 1796 while he was out working in the field and singing the hymn “Jesus, I long for Thy blessed communion” he experienced something supernatural that changed his heart. This resulted in a desire to read the Scriptures and help all people to hear about Christ so they can be converted from darkness to light. Aarflot says that Hauge considered this “a conversion in the sense of an awakening to new life.”<sup>45</sup> Even though Hauge lived in the life of the church, Aarflot points out that he participated in the “subjective appropriation of salvation, the convincing spiritual break-through, the clear consciousness of faith, and the power to withstand sin, for the first time in a decisive way through his spiritual experience in 1796.”<sup>46</sup> Aarflot believes that there is “good reason to call Hauge’s spiritual development a synthesis between being nurtured in the Christian faith and being brought to faith through an awakening.”<sup>47</sup> Hauge rejoiced in this new-found assurance and entered into the new calling from God with all of his strength. Therefore it was not only life-changing for Hauge but also for Norway. He traveled over the country preaching and witnessing to people. He spent 10

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 50. See also Aarflot, 1969, 126. This would have included such writers as: Johann Arndt (1555-1621) especially his *Five Books on true Christianity*; Jens Dinesen Jersin (1588-1634) who died as bishop of Ribe and is perhaps one of the finest representatives for the so-called penitential piety in Denmark, Heinrich Müller (1631-1675) theological teacher and pastor in Rostock, Christian Sriver (1629-1693) also from the Rostock area, and Erik Pontoppidan.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Aarflot, 1969, 95. Men det kan likevel være god grunn tid å kalle Hagues åndelige utrikling en syntese mellom oppdeagelseskristendomog verkkelseskristendom.

years of his life in prison for violating the Conventicle Act of 1741.<sup>48</sup> This law was ultimately repealed in 1842.

Aarflot indicates that “Hauge did not deny baptism’s regenerating power,” yet he “sought to arouse people out of their spiritual security and lead them toward a decisive conversion.”<sup>49</sup> This was Hauge’s testimony: “I know from my own experience that when God gave me a new birth with his Spirit in the Word, I became a new man, and then I stood still in my own thoughts....”<sup>50</sup> What he witnessed “strengthened (his) confidence in God’s Word as the creating, life-giving, means of grace. He knew that the Word and the Spirit belonged together.”<sup>51</sup> In addition “it was not sufficient to grasp the Gospel as an idea or with the intellect, but as it is appropriated in faith and obedience, the Word must begin to fashion man’s inner life after God’s image.”<sup>52</sup>

In Hauge’s preaching there was an interaction between Law and Gospel. He states: “When Jesus with his good Gospel message comes into our hearts and enlightens us about the heavenly glory, then we are also able to see the uncleanness of our sin. Then comes the thunder of the Law, crashing and cursing our condition. We must give heed to both – the Gospel which draws our hearts to God, and the Law which chastises us for the evil.”<sup>53</sup> Aarflot concludes that even though the Gospel is the saving word it is not as clear in Hauge as in

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<sup>48</sup> Shaw, *Pulpit Under The Sky*, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Aarflot, 1979, 82. Arden points out that “in the spring of 1726 Hauge published a little book *Meditation on the Folly of the World*. The purpose of this book was to warn his readers of the dangers of a false Christianity which relies upon forgiveness without genuine repentance. It was also intended to keep the awakened alert lest they fall into sleep and carelessness.” Arden, *Four Northern Lights*, 58.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 82. Refer also to Aarflot, 1969, 175.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

Luther for Hauge “seldom lets the Gospel stand alone. The Gospel is always preached in indissoluble unity with the Law either as taskmaster to Christ, or as a guide for the new life.”<sup>54</sup> Hauge echoed the concern of penitential orthodoxy and pietism which “was to get our ‘brain-faith’ replaced with a ‘heart-faith,’ which could transform the life and actions of the believer.”<sup>55</sup>

He regarded the Holy Spirit as the one who creates the new life in the heart and regenerates as for communion with God.” Aarflot notes that in the Catechism Hauge points to the necessary connection between baptism and faith and places conversion and baptism together.”<sup>56</sup> Hauge states: “But God’s Spirit has now called you to conversion, so you believe that this baptism is good for the cleansing of the soul; so you must bear in mind and work at what more God demands of you, that you not only should cast off the evil and think that it is enough that you are converted and baptized, but also give heed to your words.”<sup>57</sup> For Hauge there is an outward baptism and an inward surrender. He says, “so that we not only are baptized with the external baptism and call ourselves Christians, ... but that we are also anointed with the Holy Spirit and the power of faith in the heart.”<sup>58</sup> Hauge’s approach has been influenced by mysticism. Aarflot put it this way: “God infuses his love into the human heart, and this love expresses itself as a burning desire to do what is good.”<sup>59</sup>

Hauge made it clear that he accepted baptism and the sacrament of the altar as external

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 142

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Refer also to Aarflot, 1969, 298.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 142.

means given for our instruction and edification. He emphasized that “they are useful and can accomplish much good for the serious Christian,”<sup>60</sup> but at the same time he emphasized more the warning against misuse of the sacraments than the positive appreciation of them,” says Aarflot.<sup>61</sup> Aarflot concludes that in Hauge’s Christianity “the sacraments are not decisive for participating in God’s salvation,” nor should one be troubled if he does not have opportunity to go to the altar or if children die without being baptized.<sup>62</sup> Thus Aarflot states that Hauge “does not ascribe to the sacraments any conclusive function in the appropriation of salvation or in the development of the Christian life.”<sup>63</sup> The sacraments were practiced but not preached; they are beneficial but not necessary.

Aarflot summarizes Hauge’s significance for Norway’s church history by noting that his strong preaching of conversion was the cause for an awakening that intervened deep into the people’s souls and led to a renewal of the religious life in the congregations.<sup>64</sup> He paved the way for the realization that the lay people also shared responsibility for the development of the Christian life within the church’s structure.<sup>65</sup> Hauge also through his preaching and writings created a bulwark against the rationalistic teaching and renewed the pietistic piety tradition in Norway.<sup>66</sup>

Wisløff has also assessed the heritage received from Hauge noting that he passed on

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>64</sup> Andreas Aarflot, *Norsk kirkehistorie II*, (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1967), 253.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

the best of what he himself had received such as the churchly order and devotional writings.<sup>67</sup> In the second place Wisløff points to the emphasis on Christian and brotherly fellowship around God's Word when the believers build up each other. There is also a concern that the Word is preached to awakening, conversion and a holy life.<sup>68</sup> His goal was a living faith (*Den levende tro*) that expressed itself in life. Thirdly, Hauge has passed on the emphasis that Christianity is for everyday living. This accent had tremendous significance for society.<sup>69</sup> Lastly, Hauge was a serious person and his kind of Christianity had seriousness as part of its basic character.<sup>70</sup> It can be said that Wisløff is also indicating in this article what he personally values of the heritage passed on by Hans Nielsen Hauge.

Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) from Denmark was born at Udby on the island of Zeeland where his father was a pastor.<sup>71</sup> He attended the University of Copenhagen and passed his theological exam in 1803. He had great interest in history, poetry and literature and worked as a private tutor and teacher. In the midst of a deep spiritual crisis he was converted finding the truth alone in the Word of God in 1811. He stated: "When Satan seizes me in the serpent's teeth and in the darkness of the night cruelly slaps me, there is no help in either knowledge or art; only thy Word is not in vain for that alone can bind him. I know that in thy divine Word, truth alone is found."<sup>72</sup> He was ordained in June 1811 by

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<sup>67</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Arven fra Hans Nielsen Hauge" in *Fullfør din tjeneste* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1993), 209-211.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-214.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-215.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>71</sup> For a brief and helpful biographical piece on Grundtvig see Arden, *Four Northern Lights*, 79-113.

<sup>72</sup> N. F. S. Grundtvig, *N. F. S. Grundtvig Værker i udvalg* ed. by George Christensen and Hal Koch, vols I and III (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1940), I, 302. Quoted in Trygve Skarsten, "Gisle Johnson: A Study of the Interaction of Confessionalism and Pietism." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1968, 124.

Bishop Münter. He served as pastor and in his preaching was often critical of the clergy and the conditions in the church. By 1815 he was deprived of preaching and spent the next seven years in literary work.

When he returned to the pastorate in 1821 it was a time of growing rationalism and doubt about the Bible and fundamental doctrines of the church. This concerned Grundtvig and led him to seek an answer. Trygve Skarsten says that Grundtvig “became convinced that the orthodox Lutheran doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible was inadequate to meet the onslaughts of rationalism.”<sup>73</sup> As a result he spent the years from 1822 to 1825 “with the problem of finding a way to spiritual certainty for the benefit of the non-theologically trained lay persons whose souls were being vexed by the teachings of the rationalistic theologians.”<sup>74</sup> He needed something with more authority than the words of Scripture.

In 1825 Grundtvig made what came to be known as an ‘unparalleled discovery’ (*mageløs opdagelse*). Bernt T. Oftestad has summarized it in *Norsk kirkehistorie*. The Scriptures had not created the church, but the church the Scripture. Faith’s basis and rule were given before the Scripture came. Before the Bible existed the church had been there as a *living congregation*, with its sacraments and confession of faith. It was not the Scripture that came from the “Lord’s own mouth,” but the Apostles’ Creed and this had followed the act of baptism as the “living word” and the church’s real foundation.<sup>75</sup> Grundtvig’s position became known as the “churchly view” (*Kirkelige anskuelse*). Skarsten says that “he began to speak of the Bible as the ‘dead’ word in distinction from the ‘living word’ which had come down

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<sup>73</sup> Skarsten, 126.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>75</sup> Oftestad, Rasmussen og Schumacher, 194-195.

through the centuries as the church's confession of faith, being renewed continually at the baptismal font."<sup>76</sup> Everything was basically centered in the sacraments.

Ree has concluded that "the difference between Luther and Grundtvig on this important point can be expressed so: when Grundtvig speaks about 'the Word which creates what it says,' then he means the sacramental word."<sup>77</sup> The preaching of the Biblical word has the purpose of explaining and casting light over the sacraments and their word of life.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, "for Luther both the sacramental word and the preached word were means of grace."<sup>79</sup>

Grundtvig's Biblical theology of his early years made its way into Norway through Svend Borchmann Hersleb (1784-1834) and Stener Johannes Stenersen (1789-1835) who were young teachers at the new university in Christiania (Oslo) which opened in 1813. They stood for a Bible-based Christianity and in opposition to the enlightenment's moralism and rationalism.<sup>80</sup> According to Aarflot "both Stenersen and Hersleb represented a stronger confessional theology than the earlier period had given place for, and with their living instruction they contributed to shape a new generation of pastors that created renewal in the Norwegian Church."<sup>81</sup> They broke with Grundtvig when he came with his new discovery.

It was Wilhelm Andreas Wexels (1797-1866) who would become the spokesman for

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<sup>76</sup> Skarsten, 135.

<sup>77</sup> Ree, 18-19. Forskjellen mellom Luther og Grundtvig på dette viktige punkt kan kanskje uttrykkes slik: når Grundtvig taler om "det ord som skaper hva det nevner", så mener han sakramentordene.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. For Luther var både sakramentord og prekenord skapende.

<sup>80</sup> Oftestad, Rasmussen og Schumacher, 181.

<sup>81</sup> Aarflot, *Norsk kirkehistorie* II, 307.

the new discovery of Grundtvigianism in Norway. Born in Copenhagen, he moved to Norway in 1814 and became a candidate in theology in 1818. He was a student of Hersleb and Stenersen. In 1819 he became a pastor at the Church of Our Savior in Christiania where he served until his death. He gained the confidence of the Bible believing lay people with his faithful preaching and strong public stand against rationalism.<sup>82</sup> This changed, however, in 1843 when they discovered that his revised edition of Pontoppidan's explanation to Luther's *Small Catechism* had departed from the original in several important areas.

Christopher Bratten, a teacher in Drammen, publicly noted that the revision was of a completely different spirit, especially the parts that dealt with conversion, faith, and sanctification.<sup>83</sup> Pontoppidan understood the church to be the fellowship of holy persons, organized and united in the Spirit whereas Wexels spoke of the church as the gathering of all those who are baptized and who confess the Christian faith.<sup>84</sup> Skarsten identifies that the "difficulty with Wexel's definition lay in the fact that often the phrase 'to confess the Christian faith' degenerated into a mere profession of the truthfulness of the Apostles' Creed. There was the inherent danger of emphasizing only the externals in Wexel's definition."<sup>85</sup> It also presented a different view of the adiaphora and omitted Pontoppidan's universal condemnation of novels, dancing, and the theater as *per se* sinful.<sup>86</sup>

He taught that Christ during his descent to the realm of the dead preached the *Gospel* to "spirits who were in prison" (I Pet. 3:19), and thereby gave the impression that the way was

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<sup>82</sup> Skarsten, 119-120.

<sup>83</sup> Ola Rudvin, *Indremisjonsselskapete historie I* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1967), 140.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Skarsten, 150.

<sup>86</sup> Einar Molland *Church Life in Norway, 1800-1950*, translated by Harris Kaasa (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1957), 32.

opened for a preaching of conversion after death. This had the impact of setting forth the example that the need for conversion was invalidated.<sup>87</sup> Wexels had already introduced the thought of a possible conversion after death in his *Christelige Betragtninger* of 1833. But in this writing he underscored very strongly that the possibility did not stand open for those who had heard the Gospel preached and knew God's call during the time of grace.<sup>88</sup> The conflict over the changes forced the government in 1852 to also authorize the continued use of the old *Explanation*.<sup>89</sup>

Wexels continued to have a significant influence in the Norwegian Church. His theology and churchly view was presented in his *Foredrag over pastoraltheologien* of 1853. Aarflot assesses it to be "one of his most well-integrated works."<sup>90</sup> He notes that it was influenced by the German neo-Lutheran Wilhelm Löhe especially in regards to his teaching on the church and the holy office of the pastor.<sup>91</sup> At the same time there are a number of references to Pontoppidan's *Collegium Pastorale Practicum* which more than any other writing had contributed to pietism's pastoral ideal in the Danish/Norwegian Church.<sup>92</sup> Wexels clearly articulated that the means of grace were constitutional for the church and that the pastoral office was instituted by Christ and therefore was not the result of the democratic concept of the office which makes the congregation's choice the decisive starting point.<sup>93</sup> This emphasis influenced a great part of the future generation of Norwegian pastors, which in

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<sup>87</sup> Rudvin., 137.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>89</sup> Molland, (1957), 33.

<sup>90</sup> Aarflot, *Norsk kirkehistore* II, 319.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 319-320.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 320.

turn laid the groundwork for a conservative churchliness later in the century.<sup>94</sup>

Oftestad summarizes the tensions that developed in the Norwegian church. “For the Grundtvigians the Christian life came to be through baptism, was nourished through the Lord’s Supper and unfolded in the churchly fellowship.”<sup>95</sup> In contrast, “pietism’s individualism and faith in regeneration through conversion represented for them a completely different view of the Christian life.”<sup>96</sup> The Grundtvigian approach was thus seen as “sacramentalism and the organic church concept as a step toward Rome and a greater danger for the Norwegian Church than the free churches.”<sup>97</sup>

Wisløff traces the sacramentalism that is found in Norway today, in part, back to Grundtvig.<sup>98</sup> He identifies his leading idea as being “that the words spoken at baptism (and communion) were the real center of the life of the Church.”<sup>99</sup> As Grundtvig said, “Only ‘at the bath and the table’ are we to hear the Word of the Lord.”<sup>100</sup> In addition, at baptism the person receives a new life which always remains even if a person forgets about God. This residue of baptismal grace is the point of contact for the Spirit of God and ultimately means that there is no need to talk about the need for a new birth.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Oftestad, Rasmussen og Schumacher, 196. For grundtvigianerne ble det kristne liv til ved dåpen, det ble næret ved nattverden og utfoldet i det kirkelige fellesskap.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Pietismens individualisme og tro på gjenfødelse ved omvendelsen representerte for dem et helt annet syn på kristenlivet.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Johnson og hans meningsfeller oppfattet grundtvigianismens <<kirkelige Anskuelse>>, dens sakramentalisme og tlet organiske kirkebegrep som et skritt mot Roma og en større fare for Den norske kirke enn frikirkene.

<sup>98</sup> Wisløff, *Do the Work of An Evangelist*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 3.

Wisløff evaluates this position as one for which there is no biblical evidence.<sup>102</sup>

Secondly, the idea of a residue of grace “is nothing but a naturalistic distortion of the concept of grace” that “reminds one of the Roman Catholic concept of *gratia infusa*, infused grace.”<sup>103</sup>

Thirdly, it reminds “us of those who teach eternal security, ‘once saved, always saved.’”<sup>104</sup>

Since we are born again in baptism, and since you can only be born again once, there is no basis to speak about being born again to the baptized.<sup>105</sup> Wisløff selects Gisle Johnson’s

statement, “there cannot exist a more effective obstacle to conversion than the ceaseless preaching that every baptized person remains a child of God,” as an appropriate response to

Grundtvigianism.<sup>106</sup> Fourthly, the approach of Grundtvigianism “inevitably deprives preaching of its seriousness” for the residue of baptismal grace means that no baptized person will go lost.<sup>107</sup> As we will see, Wisløff’s theology is in part a response to Grundtvigianism.

The Grundtvigian Churchly view has no doubt impacted the Norwegian preaching of baptism. Ree notes that Grundtvig’s strong stressing of baptism was more than an issue of a particular time but was rather a permanent problem that the preaching faced when it concerns the relationship between baptism and the Word.<sup>108</sup> This strong emphasis on baptism produced an emphasis on the Word at the expense of baptism in the “opponent’s” camp.<sup>109</sup> This problem engaged the church leader and awakening leader Gisle Johnson, to whom we now

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 4. The statement by Johnson is found in *Luthersk kirketidende* 10:3 (16 juli 1881), 19.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>108</sup> Ree, 20.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

turn our attention.

During the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Professor Gisle Johnson (1822-1894)<sup>110</sup> a professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Christiania (renamed Oslo in 1924) expressed his thinking and concern about the issues raised by Grundtvigianism. During his youth Johnson spent most of his time in the southern part of Norway where he was introduced to pietistic Christianity. Rudvin has recorded that Johnson himself has “told that the first strong religious influence he received was through his visit with the old Haugian business man O. P. Moe (1783-1862),” who spoke to him about God’s love and Jesus the child’s friend.<sup>111</sup>

Johnson was also influenced by Christian Thistedal (1813-1876), a Kristiansand Latin school teacher. Thistedal, who was neither a pietist nor a Haugean, but a conservative, orthodox, bibliocentric theologian, tutored him in Hebrew and Syriac, questions of Biblical interpretation and led him to “appreciate the old dogmaticians and the confessional writings of the Lutheran church.”<sup>112</sup> Johnson honored him by saying that “he was the one who first taught me the essence of Christianity.”<sup>113</sup>

In 1839 Johnson took his exam to study at the university and in 1845 he passed with distinction.<sup>114</sup> After having received a scholarship, he was able to travel. He studied in

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<sup>110</sup> Skarsten, Gisle Johnson. See also Molland, *Norges kirkehistorie I Det 19*, Godvin Ousland, *En kirkehøvdning: Professor Gisle Johnson som teolog og kirkemann* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1950), Shaw *Pulpit Under The Sky*, 186-194, Godvin Ousland, *Vekkelsesretninger i norsk kirkeliv 1840-75* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1978), 35-45. He strongly emphasized the Lutheran Confessions. He published a Norwegian Edition of the Book of Concord (co-edited with Carl Paul Caspari) in 1866 and a systematic theology. After 1851 he was active as a revival preacher which was of significant influence.

<sup>111</sup> Rudvin, 200-201.

<sup>112</sup> Skarsten, 54.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Berlin, Leipzig, Erlangen, Heidelberg, Tübingen, and Paris. Skarsten notes that “he rejoiced in the confessional and scriptural position taken by the entire Erlangen theological faculty with its emphasis on personal faith and commitment and wished he could have stayed longer.”<sup>115</sup> As a result of this trip “his confessional position was strengthened by Hengstenberg (1802-1869) at Berlin, Harless (1806-1879) at Leipzig, and Hofmann (1810-1877) and Thomasius (1802-1875) at Erlangen.”<sup>116</sup>

Johnson also had contact with the disciples of Schleiermacher (1768-1864) and there is some question about their influence on him.<sup>117</sup> However, it should be noted that the subjective faith consciousness as a point of departure in Schleiermacher found its way into the Erlangen theology and from there to Johnson. The contact with the Erlangen Faculty especially had a lasting impact on Norwegian theology. One other significant outcome of Johnson’s time in Germany was his meeting Carl Paul Caspari (1814-1892) in Leipzig and persuading him to join him on the faculty at the University of Christiania.

Johnson was very instrumental in shaping Norwegian church life by his teaching, preaching, and writing. His work resulted in what became known as the Johnsonian awakening. The church historian Welle says that the content of the Johnsonian sermon was

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Skarsten, 59-61. Skarsten points out that both Schleiermacher and Johnson criticized rationalism. However he believes that Johnson could not agree with Schleiermacher’s definition of religion and that his theology was too vague and confessionally ambiguous. Thus Skarsten can not agree with Gudvin Ousland when he says “it is clear that Gisle Johnson has been influenced by Schleiermacher when he adopted Christian consciousness as his theological starting point” because this consciousness was created by a confrontation with God’s Word in the Scriptures.

orthodox pietistic; it was Pontoppidan's explanation in sermon form; and it was especially united around the order of salvation.<sup>118</sup>

Since Johnson has had a significant impact on church life, it is important to give a sketch of the points of his theology which are relevant to our topic. He says that systematic theology is that main branch of Christian theology whose goal it is to understand Christianity from the subjective point of view.<sup>119</sup> The source is the individual's own personal faith consciousness.<sup>120</sup> This points beyond itself to other sources such as the confessions of the Christian church and ultimately to the Word of God as the *norma normans*.<sup>121</sup> Systematic theology is then the understanding that is mediated through the explication and systematic reproduction of faith in its essential unity with the Church's witness of faith, in the Holy Scripture, and solidly grounded in the content of personal faith's consciousness.<sup>122</sup> There is evidence supporting the influence of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) in his systematics. Gerhard Belgum says that "the Kierkegaardian 'stages' were adapted into Johnson's *pistik*, or genesis of personal faith."<sup>123</sup> He has observed that "at all points, Johnson came to precisely the same conclusions as the Lutheran confessional writings by this Kierkegaardian route."<sup>124</sup>

For Johnson "the Christian faith, as the sinner's assurance of being the object of God's

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<sup>118</sup> Welle, 219.

<sup>119</sup> Gisle Johnson, *Grundrids af den systematiske theologie* Tredie Oplag (Kristiania: Jacob Dybwads Forlag, 1897), 1.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>123</sup> Gerhard Lee Belgum, "The Old Norwegian Synod In America, 1853-1890 (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1957), 51-52.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

grace, is essentially faith in the Gospel.”<sup>125</sup> It is not merely “a matter of reason, but essentially a matter of the heart; the sinner’s personal, heartfelt, living conviction that he is the recipient of the grace of God.”<sup>126</sup> In order for the Gospel to bring about this faith in the heart there needs to be contrition produced by the Law.<sup>127</sup> Man comes to actual faith in the Gospel when he gives the involuntarily received impression room in the heart and with it opens itself for the Gospel.<sup>128</sup>

The will is a crucial aspect of faith. Faith is that realizing, seeking, taking and clinging to; therefore to do something.<sup>129</sup> Johnson emphasizes the need to include all three aspects of the personality: the understanding, will, and emotions.<sup>130</sup> He contends that if faith runs the way of understanding, living faith is reduced to orthodoxism and ultimately to rationalism.<sup>131</sup> If the the will is emphasized, the result is a Christianity of works; a pietism that has forgotten that faith is the product of revealed truth.<sup>132</sup> And if feelings become the focus, the fruit is mysticism and ultimately pantheism.<sup>133</sup>

The natural heart of man is of such a nature that it is unable to accept God’s gift of grace.<sup>134</sup> The birth of faith in the sinner’s heart is a divine work of grace. The person does

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<sup>125</sup> Johnson, *Grundrids*, 56. Den christelige Tro er som Synderens Overbevisning om at være Gjenstand for Guds Naade væsentlig *Evangelietro*.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 57. Den christelige Tro er ingen blot Forstandssag, men væsentlig en *Hjertesag*, Synd-erens personlige, inderlige, levende Overbevisning om at være Gjenstand for Guds Naade.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 69f.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

not make any contribution but stands solely in a truly passive relation.<sup>135</sup> When the Spirit has generated the needed subjectivity for Himself and His gift, He must also impart Himself to the heart that has been opened and fill it with His life.<sup>136</sup>

Regeneration is defined as “the gracious act of God whereby he *through his Spirit creates faith in Christ in the sinner’s heart and in the same moment in which he has thus opened it for his gift of grace, also in the Spirit takes his dwelling in it and imparts to it the fullness of his life.*”<sup>137</sup> In regards to the regeneration of an adult, the heart must be made fit for this to take place and this happens through preparatory grace which liberates the sinner from the natural opposition.<sup>138</sup> This puts him in a position with the freedom to choose between opposition and non-opposition and makes it subjectively possible for him to allow himself to be directed by the converting grace.<sup>139</sup> In this way the will of the heart is thereby able to give up its opposition.<sup>140</sup> The infant also needs regeneration, but the subjective receptivity which must be brought about in the adult is immediately present in the child, in whom sin cannot as yet express itself in active opposition to God’s grace.<sup>141</sup>

God does his saving through means. The verbal means of the Gospel is a word which has the power to create faith and therefore to save, a power that is both illuminating and

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 99. I denne *videre* Betydning af Ordet bliver da Gjenfødelse de Guds Naadegjerning, hvorved han *ved sin Aand skaber Troen paa Christus i Synderens Hjerter og i samme Øjeblik, hvori han saaledes har aabnet det for sin Naadegave, tillige i Aanden tager sin Bolig i det og meddeler det af sit Livs Fylde.*

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 99-100.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 105.

quickenings. It has regenerating power.<sup>142</sup> This word of the Gospel also absolves the penitent and believing sinner.<sup>143</sup> The same power that is attributed to the Word is also found in baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>144</sup> The sacraments work not as words but *Act*.<sup>145</sup> The Word addresses man's consciousness and in this way influences his feelings and will.<sup>146</sup> The sacraments on the other hand work on the unconscious life of the heart.<sup>147</sup> The sacraments give support to the Word. The first and foremost place among the means of grace belongs to the Word.<sup>148</sup> Johnson concludes that the necessity of following it up with the sacraments is not absolute, but dependent on access to use them.<sup>149</sup>

The child who has been truly regenerated and whose spiritual life has not been broken by a fall from baptismal grace still needs to experience renewal.<sup>150</sup> This has the character of daily repentance. In the case of such a child who remains in grace there is no room for awakening in the true meaning of the word and neither is there a need for a new regeneration.<sup>151</sup> The preservation and unfolding of baptism's regeneration to a new personal life is dependent upon access of the Word so that it might exercise its influence on the personality as it develops out of natural life's dark ground.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 177.

Johnson calls baptism the sacrament of regeneration, which is essentially designed to work in organic connection with the Word of God.<sup>153</sup> In the case of a person who has a developed personality, regeneration by baptism alone is impossible.<sup>154</sup> For such a person, regeneration is the work of the verbal means of grace, which can effect it without baptism. However, even in this situation, it is normal for regeneration to take place as a result of an organic cooperation of both means of grace.<sup>155</sup>

In response to the questions that were being raised about baptism by Adolph Lammers (1802-1878), Johnson published a year later in 1857 *Nogle ord om barnedaaben (Some Words about Infant Baptism)* where he developed and gave reasons for the Lutheran teaching on this point.<sup>156</sup> He also responded to the Grundtvigians by rejecting “the concept that through baptism one was regenerated and made a child of God in such a manner that one could hardly fall out of the covenant relationship which God had established with the person who was baptized.”<sup>157</sup> Out of his concern to preserve personal faith and avoid externalism he said, “There cannot exist a more effective obstacle to conversion than the ceaseless preaching that every baptized person remains a child of God.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. Det normale er imidlertid, at Gjenfødselen her er et Produkt af *begge Naademidlers organiske Samvirken*, idet Daaben med sin eiendommelige, hemmelighedsfulde Forbindelse, hvori den uvilkaarlig sætter Mennesket med Gjenfødselens Ophav, virksomt understøtter Ordet i dets gjenfødselende Indvirkning paa Hjertet. Oddvar Johan Jensen has commented to the writer that “the most striking of his arrangement of the relation between baptism and the Word as means of grace is the influence of the psychological understanding. Baptism is objective and works also on children, while the Word is subjective and works therefore only through the conscious subject. For Luther the Word is a creating Word therefore it is as much of a means of grace for the child as for the adult.” Personal note to the writer.

<sup>156</sup> Molland, I, p.229.

<sup>157</sup> Skarsten, 145.

<sup>158</sup> Quoted in Wisløff, *Do The Work Of An Evangelist*, 4-5. The statement by Johnson is found in *Luthersk kirketidende* 10:3 (16 juli 1881), p. 19.

Later in 1864 Johnson defended his teaching that both the Word and baptism are means of regeneration is in agreement with the Lutheran Confessions.<sup>159</sup> Skarsten points out that one of the first avenues used by Johnson “in order to expose what he believed to be the fallacies of Grundtvigian theology was to demonstrate from the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions that God used the written Word as well as the sacraments in order to regenerate mankind.”<sup>160</sup>

Johnson steers a course between Pontoppidan and Grundtvig. In contrast to Pontoppidan, who has two independent means of regeneration that stand side by side, namely the word and baptism, Johnson emphasizes that the normal is an organic cooperation between baptism and the Word. In contrast to Grundtvig’s single means of grace, he allows for the Word to be a means of regeneration. However, he does not speak about two kinds of regeneration but says that the one and the same regeneration can be repeated many times.<sup>161</sup> In the case of one who has lost baptismal grace he believes that the regeneration of such a person in any and every case is a fruit of the Word and the once received and always powerful cooperation of baptism.<sup>162</sup>

Another person who made an impact on Norwegian church life was the Swedish lay preacher and awakening leader Carl Olof Rosenius (1816-1868).<sup>163</sup> His greatest influence on

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<sup>159</sup> Gisle Johnson, “Til forsvar for min lære om gjenfødelsen og om kirken,” (*Luthersk Kirketidende*: 2:6, pp.81- 94; 2:9, pp.129-142; 2:10, pp.145-160 [ 7<sup>th</sup> February, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1864])

<sup>160</sup> Skarsten, 141.

<sup>161</sup> Ree, 25.

<sup>162</sup> Johnson, “Til forsvar for min lære om gjenfødelsen og om kirken,” (*Luthersk Kirketidende*: 2:6), 86. Mening: jeg tror, at saadan Gjenfødelse i alle Tilfælde er en Frugt af Ordets og den engang modtagne og stedse haftige Daabs *Samvirken*.

<sup>163</sup> Carl Olof Rosenius (1816-1868) was a Swedish Lutheran lay preacher and writer. Rosenius helped organize *Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen* a missionary society. From 1842-1862 he edited *The Pietist*, where most of his writings first appeared. Selections from

the lay people, lay preachers, and pastors was through his writing, especially the paper *Pietisten*. From the articles in this paper a number of books have been produced in Norwegian and English, including *A Faithful Guide to Peace with God, The Believer Free From the Law, Rosenius' Daily Meditations, Romans a Devotional Commentary, Rosenius' Devotions: Strength for the Helpless, Lessons for All*. Of particular interest for our topic is a collection of his writings on the sacraments, *Synlig nåde – dåp og nattverd* and *Guds ord og Guds Ånd*.<sup>164</sup> His writings include citations from Martin Luther (1483-1546), Stephan Praetorius (1536-1603), Jochim Lütke­mann (1608-1655), Karl Heinrich (1690-1774), and David Hollas (1648-1713).<sup>165</sup>

He visited Norway only one time.<sup>166</sup> It was in 1859, when he was in Christiania to meet his old friend and co-worker George Scott (1804-1874), who had come to greet his friends from the awakening time in Stockholm.<sup>167</sup> Rosenius had planned to follow in the steps of his father and become a pastor but during his studies at the university doubts arose and stood in the way. After coming to peace with God he came to the conviction that he had a message to give to the world and he gave himself to giving it out.

Ousland points out that both Haugianism and Rosenius are agreed that the Law shall

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these writings were edited in book form. See Arden, 114-150. Some are available in English.

<sup>164</sup> C. O. Rosenius, *Synlig nåde – dåp og nattverd* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1975) and idem, *Guds ord og Guds Ånd* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1978),

<sup>165</sup> Wisløff, "Arven fra Rosenius" (*Utsyn* 101: 9-10, 24 mars 1991), 10.

<sup>166</sup> Godvin Ousland, *Vekkelse­retninger i norsk kirkeliv 1840-75* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1978), 66.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. The English Methodist evangelist George Scott was instrumental in leading him "to spiritual clarity and an unshakable faith in God and his Word." Arden, 122.

drive the guilty person to Christ and that every mouth must be stopped.<sup>168</sup> However, when it involves the way of salvation there is a great difference, for Rosenius does not emphasize the old scheme of the order of salvation.<sup>169</sup> Wisløff says that “he does not have the strong penitent piety emphasis; he is not occupied with leading his hearers through sorrow, penance, struggle, and conflict and eventually to faith.”<sup>170</sup> He places Rosenius within the pietistic stream of Lutheranism but as one who puts stronger emphasis on Christ’s finished work and who invites the sinner to “come as he is,”<sup>171</sup> for everything is ready, all sin atoned for and God’s wrath and the Law’s curse taken away.<sup>172</sup> In this regard Ousland believes that Rosenius differs from both Hauge and Johnson, who would not speak in this manner.<sup>173</sup>

Rosenius had a strong emphasis on the Word as a means of grace which kindles faith and as something that it is to be used.<sup>174</sup> This Word was to be preached in the way of Law and Gospel. The Law reveals God’s holy will, convinces of sin, and leaves the sinner to stand helplessly lost before the holy God.<sup>175</sup> The Gospel is seen as the message of salvation Jesus has finished by paying our sin debt and bearing our punishment.<sup>176</sup> Salvation is a gift of God’s grace alone and the one who believes in Christ has everything in Christ, in himself a lost sinner, but in Christ pure and righteous.<sup>177</sup> Rosenius had a strong emphasis on

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>170</sup> Wisløff, “Arven fra Rosenius,” 10.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ousland, 73.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>174</sup> Wisløff, “Arven fra Rosenius,” 10,

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 11. Carl Olof Rosenius *Faithful Guide to Peace with God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1923). For a good explication of this refer to this work, pp. 16-56.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. Refer to Rosenius, 1923, 57-76.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 10.

justification through faith and the freedom from the Law that resulted from being in Christ. He was very instrumental in leading people who were under the Law to the assurance of faith and peace by pointing them away from their feelings and experience and to God's lamb, who bore all our sin.<sup>178</sup> They are to take God at his Word and build on it.<sup>179</sup> He says, "The genuine assurance of faith is built upon the Word of Christ alone. ... The only right way to assurance of faith is complete trust in the Word and promises of God; or, in other words, that you in full confidence repeat the words of God after Him."<sup>180</sup>

Baptism belongs together with the preaching of the Gospel as the two means of grace that together work faith and regeneration.<sup>181</sup> Even though regeneration takes place in baptism, for those fallen from baptismal grace it takes place by repentance and faith in the Gospel.<sup>182</sup> Rosenius refers affirmingly to Luther's commentary on Psalm , where he says that even if we fall, grace does not fall but stands open and waits for me, if I will only come back. If I fall out of the ship, I climb back in again. If I fall out of baptism, I turn back to it.<sup>183</sup> Rosenius clearly teaches that the person who does not believe is condemned even though he is baptized.<sup>184</sup>

Rosenius not only puts baptism forward as a comfort to those to have gone away from it and who will now turn back to it. But it can also to a still greater degree comfort the believer who is daily plagued by sin and weakness, and all the need and trials (*anfektelse*) he

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>179</sup> Ousland, 76.

<sup>180</sup> Rosenius, 1923, 222.

<sup>181</sup> C. O. Rosenius, *Guds ord og Guds Ånd* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1978), 62. For det andre ser vi av de ordene vi har sitert, at dåpen skulle høre sammen med forkynnelsen av evangeliet. Det er disse to nådemidlene som sammen virker tro og gjenfødelse.

<sup>182</sup> Rosenius, 1991, 10.

<sup>183</sup> Rosenius, 1978, 67. See *Psalm 117* (1530) AE 14: 31-32.

<sup>184</sup> Rosenius, 1975, 21.

experiences.<sup>185</sup> Baptism delivers great benefits to the believer: salvation, accepted God, clothed with Christ, and sanctification.<sup>186</sup> Rosenius shows how one should make use of what has been given in baptism as a way of preaching the Gospel in order to bring the fallen person back. He states, “when you see an ungodly, unbelieving, poor and wretched sinner, then think on the beggar child in the foreign land. Tell them what they possess through Christ’s death and their own baptism.”<sup>187</sup> Ree has observed, however, that “baptism is not often used as a motive to conversion in Rosenius’ preaching.”<sup>188</sup>

Wisløff concludes that Rosenius’ view of the sacraments follows the traditional Lutheran view, but his passion is not in the sacraments; it is entirely the Word he talks about.<sup>189</sup> Ree also notes that the sacraments do not have a great place in his message and he suggests that this is due to his task as an awakening leader to wake up the baptized church members and not to shape the church fellowship.<sup>190</sup>

### The 20<sup>th</sup> Century

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian Professor Ole Hallesby (1879-1961) had a very significant influence on the training of pastors at the Free Faculty, including Carl Fr. Wisløff, and on the people who made up the Christian lay movements in Norway.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 70. Dåpen er ikke bare en trøst for den som har kommet bort og som nå vil vende tilbake igjen. Den kan i enda større grad trøste den troende, som daglig plages av sin synd og svakhet, og all den nød og anfektelse han kommer i.

<sup>186</sup> C. O. Rosenius, *Synlig nåde – dåp og nattverd* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1975), 17-38.

<sup>187</sup> Rosenius, 1978, 21.

<sup>188</sup> Ree, 21.

<sup>189</sup> Wisløff, “Arven fra Rosenius,” 12.

<sup>190</sup> Ree, 22.

<sup>191</sup> No biography of Ole Hallesby exists in English even though he had an impact on Norwegian American Lutherans through his writings several of which have been translated

Hallesby's family was deeply rooted in the Lutheran piety of the Haugean tradition. As a young man he studied theology and had adopted the outlook of the liberal school. In 1902 he experienced a radical conversion and reverted to the Biblical faith and piety of his upbringing. He was alone in his small apartment when he knelt by a chair and confessed his sins and threw himself to God. He prayed, "God, I come not to cheat with you, but to settle up. Tell me now all my sins, all that which should come out of my life, and tell me all that which should come into my life. Lord, speak, your servant hears."<sup>192</sup> This was a decisive and influential turning point in Hallesby's life.

After his graduation from the university (1903) Hallesby did some lay preaching in the Inner Mission within the state Church of Norway (Lutheran). His preaching resulted in extensive spiritual revival. After much prayer and persuasion by Professor Sigurd Odland (1857-1937)<sup>193</sup>, who was gathering a faculty for a new school (1908), Hallesby decided to go

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into English. However, there are several important works in Norwegian. Kullerud, Dag. *Ole Hallesby: Mannen som ville kristne Norge*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1987. Norborg, Sverre. *Vekkeren fra Aremark: Ole Hallesbys livssaga*. Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1979. *Ole Hallesby: En høvding i Guds rike*. Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1962. A doctoral dissertation: Moe, Steinar. *Det avgjørende frelsevalg. Vilje og omvendelsesforståelsen hos Ole Hallesby*. Tønsberg: 1988. Hallesby lectured until May 20, 1952. He was 73 years old. He produced 67 books and writings and his books have been translated into 30 languages and they are read today over the whole world from Japan in the East to the USA in the West. Far more than half of Norway's pastors had been his students by the time he retired in 1952. Norborg, 217. More information on Hallesby will be given in the following chapter.

<sup>192</sup> Kullerud, 71.

<sup>193</sup> Sigurd Odland (1857-1937) became a "candidate of theology" in 1879, doctor of theology in 1889, and professor of New Testament exegesis at the University of Oslo in 1894." (Julius Bodensieck, ed., *The Encyclopedia of The Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 1791. He has written several commentaries and other more popular works including *Vækkelse, omvendelse og gjenfødelse (Daab og barnedaab)* (Bergen: Lunde & Co.s Forlag, 1919). He resigned his professorship in protest to the appointment of the liberal J. Ording. He started The Free Faculty in 1908. He resigned from this position in 1916 "because his conscience forbade him to teach future pastors in a church which (since 1915) had permitted women to deliver addresses in church buildings." Ibid.

to Germany to prepare for teaching systematic theology.<sup>194</sup> Hallesby received his Ph.D. from Erlangen (1909)<sup>195</sup> and returned to Norway to become professor of systematic theology at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology in Oslo. While in Germany he became acquainted with the Erlangen Theology.<sup>196</sup> L. Ihmels (1858-1933)<sup>197</sup> was of particular influence. Hallesby was not unique in this for the entire faculty had close ties to Erlangen University from the days of Gisle Johnson. All of the teachers had visited Erlangen once or many times. Two of the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology's professors had received their doctorates from there, one in philosophy and one in theology.<sup>198</sup>

Since Hallesby was such a formative influence for Wisløff it is important to take a closer look at his emphases. Following in the tradition of Ihmels, Hallesby thought that the matter of theology was for the reborn person. "Without having experience concerning the Spirit's working no one can grasp the revelation's reality, which is the theologian's object."<sup>199</sup> Hallesby did not regard this approach as unscientific, "for the demand concerning *teologia*

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<sup>194</sup> Odland's decision was the result of the conflict between liberal and conservative theology. The new school was given the permission by the state to give an examination equivalent to that of the university in 1913. See Molland, *Norges kirkehistorie I det 19. Bind II*, 256-325.

<sup>195</sup> On November 20<sup>th</sup> 1908 he handed in his dissertation to the faculty at the University of Erlangen. It was entitled "Johanns Volkelts Erkenntnistheori. Eine Darstellung und Kritik. Professor Falchenberg announced to him on New Year's eve that it had been approved. The oral exam took place on February 9, 1909, which was followed by the conferring of the doctor's degree on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Ole Hallesby fra Aremark i Norge ble tildelt den filosofiske doktorgrad med karakterene *magna cum laude*. Ole Hallesby from Aremark in Norway was awarded the Ph.D. with the distinction *magna cum laude*. Norborg, 69.

<sup>196</sup> This school is also known by the designation "experience theology" which corresponds to its methodical starting point. It is in the tradition of Schleiermacher in that it makes the subjective faith-life the subject and pattern for theology.

<sup>197</sup> Lutheran professor of systematic theology at Erlangen 1894 and at Leipzig from 1902. He is considered by some as the last great representative of the Erlangen Theology.

<sup>198</sup> Andreas Seierstad in *For lære og liv* "Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet 25 år", 42.

<sup>199</sup> Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie III*, 306.

*regenitorum* means only that here, as in all knowledge, the object is that which determines how the method should be formulated.”<sup>200</sup>

In accord with Odland, Hallesby understood inspiration of the Bible as an intensifying raising of the writer’s knowledge, thus a personal-inspiration more than a word-inspiration. He rejects the old theory of inspiration as mechanical and unpsychological. Inspiration is a strong enlightenment of the author’s knowledge so that he thereby invariably chooses the right expression.<sup>201</sup> Hallesby thought that there was a division between material in the Scriptures: what was of an external kind, and the Gospel’s spiritual content. There may be errors in the external material, and this can be discerned by the Christian’s experience.<sup>202</sup> At the same time Hallesby maintained a strong fight against liberal theology, whose stance toward the Scriptures was such that it came in conflict with the church’s confessions.

The struggle with liberal theology reached a point that resulted in a group of concerned people calling a meeting of all Christian organizations and institutions. Some of the leaders were Johan M. Wisløff (1873-1944), Hans Høeg (1881-1957),<sup>203</sup> missionary Henrik Seyffarth (1868-1933),<sup>204</sup> Absalon Taranger (1858-1930),<sup>205</sup> Ole Hallesby, Ludvig Hope (1871-

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ole Hallesby, *Den kristelige tros lære* I (Kristiania: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1920), 189-200. This view of Hallesby influenced Dr. George Aus, a long-time professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary in St Paul, Minnesota, to change his mind on inerrancy when he was told by Hallesby, “You can’t hold a theological position like that.” This shift in Aus’ thinking played a crucial role in the direction of the ALC. See Fredrik A. Schiotz, *One Man’s Story* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 149.

<sup>203</sup> He was active in the *Kristelig Gymnasium* and was its administrator 1921-1951.

<sup>204</sup> He was a missionary to China 1892-1907, and was active in the Norwegian Lutheran Mission as a treasurer and part-time preacher.

<sup>205</sup> Norwegian jurist and involved Christian lay person. Professor of the history of law at the University of Oslo. He also taught church law at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology.

1954),<sup>206</sup> and Edv. Sverdrup (1861-1951).<sup>207</sup> On January 15, 1920 the big mission house Calmeyergaten in Oslo was filled to capacity.<sup>208</sup> Johann Wisøff strongly emphasized that they would not have anything to do with liberal theology in their work as organizations. Hallesby became the day's man and from this day on he was the leader and spokesman for the Christian people.<sup>209</sup> Those gathered voted, with only one dissenting vote, to be faithful to the revelation that God had given and was handed down from the fathers.<sup>210</sup> The Bible-believing Christian must not go into working together with those who have broken with the Bible's authority.<sup>211</sup> They also voted, with only two dissenting votes, that within the Christian organizations they would watch so that those chosen as spokesmen and workers would unreservedly take a position on the Scripture's foundation according to the confessions.<sup>212</sup> This event had an important role in Wisløff's life, for it was in this tradition that he was to be educated and minister. He has sought to be faithful to this tradition.

At the heart of Hallesby's influence on his students was his emphasis on and work as an awakening preacher. There was very little separation between the study of dogmatics and the practical ministry. His teaching was such that students were gripped with emotion and with the question: 'Am I a child of God?' Hallesby was there first and foremost to train preachers, not to speculate about academic issues that had no contact with life.

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<sup>206</sup> Lay preacher and leader in the Norwegian Lutheran Mission.

<sup>207</sup> Wisløff, *Norske kirkehistorie* III, 236. Edv. Sverdrup was a pastor and one of the founders of The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology in 1908 and was its first professor of church history.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

As an awakening preacher Hallesby preached to people's consciences and called them to conversion's choice. The will occupies a very prominent place in Hallesby's thinking. Faith is principally a matter of the personal surrender of the will.<sup>213</sup> The psychological dimension must also come to the forefront.<sup>214</sup> He emphasized experience very strongly since it was in the tradition of his training. In harmony with "*Erfahrungs teologi*" Hallesby oriented his teaching more in line with the order of salvation than out from Law and Gospel describing the various phases of conversion in a living and striking manner.<sup>215</sup> He believed that repentance is when "the sinner, convicted by the Holy Spirit of his sins, submits to this conviction and confesses that he is bound by the chains of sin and that he loves sin and not God."<sup>216</sup> In another place he said that it is when "the adult realizes and acknowledges his helplessness and decides to surrender himself unconditionally to the Savior. For Jesus needs *help* neither from the little child nor from the adult. All he needs is *access*."<sup>217</sup>

He was also aware of the issues of our topic. In the introduction to a series of his lectures he presents a brief summary of the problem especially as it relates to baptism.

The relation between regeneration in Baptism on the one hand and awakening and conversion on the other is a problem that has produced great difficulties through the history of the church. This comes most clearly to light in the preaching. One kind of

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<sup>213</sup> Hallesby, *Troslære II*, (Kristiania: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1921), 397. See also Steinar Moe, *Det Avgjørende Frelsevalg: Vilje og Omvendelsesforståelsen hos Ole Hallesby* (Tønsberg, 1988.) Doctoral dissertation.

<sup>214</sup> Hallesby, 1921, 405.

<sup>215</sup> Sjaastad, 35.

<sup>216</sup> O. Hallesby, *Infant Baptism and Adult Conversion* translated by Clarence J. Carlsen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1924), 25. O. Hallesby, *Opdragelseskristendom og vækkelseskristendom. En utredning av forholdet mellem gjænfødelsen i barnedaaben og vækkelsen og omvendelsen* (Minneapolis: The Lutheran Free Church Publishing Company, 1923).

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. It can also be translated, "recognizes and admits his helplessness and chooses to lay quiet at his Savior's feet." <<... at han erkjender og indrømmer sin hjælpeløshet og bestemmer sig til at lægge sig stille for sin Frelser's fot.>>

preaching has baptism's grace clearly in view and speaks of it both often and fervently. But it seldom or never mentions awakening and conversion. It does not reject awakening and conversion. But it is not able to find an organic place for them in connection with baptism's grace.

Another kind of preaching speaks clearly of awakening and conversion. But it never mentions baptism, not because it rejects the regenerative effect of Baptism, but because it is unable to provide a place for Baptism in connection with awakening and conversion.

One who is somewhat well informed will know how much there is of both these kinds of preaching in our day. And both will work harm by suppressing such important sides of the Gospel's saving truth. It will have great meaning for both preaching and the care of souls to have placed awakening and conversion in the right relation to baptismal grace. It will have meaning both for dealing with the God-fearing child that has remained in the grace of Baptism, and with the apostate who is awakened and led to conversion.<sup>218</sup>

This was not an isolated matter but a concern that was expressed and dealt with in the preaching, teaching and writings throughout Hallesby's entire ministry.

Hallesby speaks of the baptismal gift of salvation.<sup>219</sup> Matthew 28:19-20 indicates that this is a new baptism, distinct from John's baptism, and is a means through which men are made disciples and therefore partakers in and recipients of the Messiah's gift of salvation achieved by the Triune God.<sup>220</sup> This gift includes the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, membership in the body of Christ, regeneration, and being united with Christ.<sup>221</sup>

This baptismal gift is also for infants.<sup>222</sup> The child remains passive and does not resist the grace of God that comes to him in baptism. Therefore "Jesus gains unimpeded access to

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<sup>218</sup> Ole Hallesby, *Opdragelseskristendom og vækkelseskristendom*, 7. Literally translated the title would read "Brought-up Christianity and Awakening Christianity." See also O. Hallesby, *Den kristelige troslære II* (Kristiania: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1921).

<sup>219</sup> Hallesby, 1924, 9.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-11.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-14.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-27.

this little human life with all his grace and gifts.”<sup>223</sup> To begin with, infant baptismal regeneration moves in the area of the unconscious life.<sup>224</sup> The adult does not become a Christian by way of the unconscious, because for the adult, “the divine influence which leads to repentance, must reach up into the conscious life of the individual. For conversion is impossible except by a conscious and free choice.”<sup>225</sup> The subconscious is not absent in the adult, however “this quiet working of the Spirit which leads to the awakening in man’s subconsciousness does not, meanwhile, do away with free choice.”<sup>226</sup> It must be remembered “the work of the Holy Spirit in the adult will never lead to *repentance* and salvation unless it extends from the subconscious up into the conscious life controlled by the will. Here it is that man’s choice comes in.”<sup>227</sup>

Hallesby presents two views on the relation between the Word and Baptism. The one understands baptism as a means of regeneration for the child, which is then followed by the Word that nurtures and guides the baptismal life to unfold its indwelling vitality.<sup>228</sup> “This view cannot recognize awakening and repentance in the sense of a *decisive break* with the

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 30. Olav Valen-Sendstad says that according to Hallesby baptism “has a sacramental effect which consists in that – irrespective of faith or unbelief it establishes a hidden connection between Christ and the baptized person’s subconscious spiritual life. From the moment of Baptism the recipient is uninterruptedly – whether he believes or not – under the inner workings of those saving powers and they continually add new content to the subconscious life.” Olav Valen-Sendstad, *The Word That Can Never Die* Translated by Norman A. Madson, Sr., Ahlert H. Strand. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 123. He believes that Hallesby operates “under the impression that the sacramental effect of Baptism consists in operations on a person’s unconscious or subconscious natural side, whether a person believes or not.” (Ibid.). This is basically crypto-Romanism, for it asserts that the sacraments effect something upon human *nature* irrespective of faith. (Ibid., 124).

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 60. This is a clear reference to Grundtvigianism.

past life” but rather understands the Word to have an *educational* purpose.<sup>229</sup> Concerning this view, Hallesby affirms regeneration in baptism but rejects that a living germ of the baptismal life remains in the person who lives in sin without acknowledging and confessing it. He also takes exception to limiting the Word to nurturing and guiding, for the baptized person needs the awakening and converting work of the Word.<sup>230</sup>

The other view “places such a strong emphasis upon awakening and repentance that it cannot allow for a real regeneration in baptism in Infant Baptism.”<sup>231</sup> It is Hallesby’s assessment that this view does not consciously disagree with the Confessions, but its strong emphasis on awakening and conversion through the Word has the effect of pushing aside baptism, which “is never mentioned except every time it is desired to admonish the hearers against the dead faith which goes to sleep on baptism.”<sup>232</sup> Hallesby says that this view is right in that it wants to “get away from the unbiblical thought that an abiding life-germ from Baptism remains in the backslider” and that “in repentance something new is created in him, namely, the God-life which he lost when he fell.”<sup>233</sup> But its weakness is a “misunderstanding of *Baptism*, of *regeneration*, of *repentance*, and of the *continuity* in the work which God does unto salvation in the human soul.”<sup>234</sup> As a result “the Word supplements and completes the gracious work begun by Baptism. Regeneration is therefore logically relegated to the time of conversion.”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 64.

Hallesby expresses that in the case of the baptized child “the Word as a means of grace is, therefore, to step in and do its work together with the grace of *Baptism*.”<sup>236</sup> It does this by clearing “away the hindrances which prevent the powers of grace received in Baptism from developing their indwelling life and doing their work of creating anew the one who is baptized.”<sup>237</sup> The Word awakens the child to see that it has an inborn nature, to break with all conscious sin, and to acknowledge his sinful condition and helplessness in sorrow to God.<sup>238</sup> The child is to have declared to it the forgiveness of sin.<sup>239</sup> During the time of transition this sense of sin is to be deepened because of what I Cor. 13:11 teaches.<sup>240</sup> As the child wrestles with its sin and sinful nature, it is now compelled to consider itself a *fallen child*.<sup>241</sup> When this happens, the child’s *awakening is complete*.<sup>242</sup> It happens in this way and at this time because “the child has reached that stage in its psychological development when the Word can complete the awakening that convinces the child fully of the evil nature with which it is endowed.”<sup>243</sup>

This experience is necessary so that the child can “pass over to a new plane in its experience of salvation and the assurance of salvation.”<sup>244</sup> It allows the child “to experience the innermost essence of baptismal grace: its being unmerited.”<sup>245</sup> Also, at this awakening the

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 67f.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 82.

God-fearing child must make a choice.<sup>246</sup> “If the child submits to the conviction it has gained through its awakening, it will experience *repentance* (omvendelse).”<sup>247</sup> Hallesby justifies using the term conversion (omvendelse) in this situation because “what the God-fearing child now experiences is so precisely the same as the backslider experiences during his conversion that it is both natural and proper on logical as well as on terminological grounds to use the same term.”<sup>248</sup>

Hallesby does acknowledge that there is a difference between the child who has remained in baptismal grace and the one who has fallen away. However, he says, the difference is of “a *theoretic nature*.”<sup>249</sup> Even though the God-fearing child has not been away from God it *feels* like it has. So it faces the same choice as the one who has fallen away.<sup>250</sup> In summarizing the significance of the difference he says, “there is, indeed, a difference here both of an objective and of a subjective nature; but it is immaterial for the choice in repentance (omvendelse) that it really does not enter into consideration.”<sup>251</sup> Hallesby goes on to say that the “God-fearing child believes, as a result of such an awakening, that it has fallen out of living fellowship with God and has only the empty forms of life left.”<sup>252</sup> The child now sees that he needs to be saved.

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 84. It would seem that this in effect denies what is actually true for the child, i.e. that he is in Christ by virtue of baptism and faith.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 89.

Hallesby asks, “How shall we orientate the child, so both Baptism and the Word will be rightly evaluated in its consciousness, and thus give the child all the help it so sorely needs during this critical period?”<sup>253</sup> Hallesby believes that the child knows by way of life’s experience that in baptism he really became a child of God but that is no proof that he is a child of God today.<sup>254</sup> For the child to “make use of its Baptism as a guaranty of its life in God,” “would be exactly as absurd as if a believer should make use of his conversion as proof that he now has life with God.”<sup>255</sup> Previous experience can not be the basis for our salvation. “The basis of its childish *assurance* of the grace of God was the work of Christ *in its heart*, and it could not be anything else in that stage of development.”<sup>256</sup> This basis is no longer sufficient. The child “sees that the administration of the act of Baptism is not what counts, but the attitude the child takes toward the salvation given in Baptism.”<sup>257</sup> When the child no longer finds its assurance in the fact that it has been baptized, or lived a godly life, and surrenders his worldly heart to God, he takes the right attitude to its baptism.<sup>258</sup> “The child now clings to and builds its faith on what Christ has done *for* it.”<sup>259</sup>

Hallesby understands that “the real gift of baptism” is “to transfer to the individual the full salvation which is in Christ.”<sup>260</sup> The Word has the role of clearing “away the hinderances to this transference of power in the child, and thus provide more and more room for these

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 96.

powers of salvation.”<sup>261</sup> An infant-baptized person who falls away from baptism’s covenant must be awakened and converted through God’s Word.<sup>262</sup> When such a one’s fellowship with Christ is re-established, rather than saying born anew, the proper expression for this is “raised from the dead.”<sup>263</sup> He points out that this is the way Scripture speaks in Eph. 5:14 and Luke 15:24. In fact, he says that to say such a person is now reborn through the Word is “not clear and comes in conflict with the Scriptures’ view on baptism as the one and only means of grace God has ordained.”<sup>264</sup> The Biblical way of speaking enables us to bring out “the right relation between Baptism and the Word at *this* point.”<sup>265</sup>

Hallesby asserts that we do not have two means of regeneration.<sup>266</sup> “Scripture speaks, then, of regeneration only when a person for the first time comes to life in God, and that takes place according to Scripture *through Baptism*.”<sup>267</sup> For the apostles, the Word and Baptism

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. Concerning falling away Hallesby makes the following points. 1. The “baptized child *cannot* fall away from God as long as it lives only in the unconscious life.” (Ibid., 74) 2. “In the early part of the child’s conscious age it cannot *of itself* break with God.” (Ibid.) If it happens during this time, then the fault belongs to the parents. 3. “About midway between the age of two and the transition from child to adult, the child reaches a conscious, volitional life developed to such a degree that it has the necessary psychological qualifications for determining its own childlike relation to God.” (Ibid.) Hallesby identifies a child who has fallen away from God as one who “*will not* from the heart ask God’s forgiveness for the sins of which it is conscious when the parents seek to have the child kneel and make up with God,” “even though it reads the Bible and prays.” (Ibid.) The fallen child must be led to awakening and repentance. (Ibid., 76)

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 98. Odd Sverre Hove has reported to the writer that he has heard Wisløff say in a private conversation that Hallesby in his theology taught regeneration only in baptism, but that in his practical preaching he, nevertheless, also preached regeneration through the Word. For example, said Wisløff, “I heard Hallesby preach on Nicodemus, the text in John 3, ‘You must be born anew.’”

<sup>264</sup> Hallesby, 1921, 556. Denne terminologi og tankegang er dog ikke klar og kommer i strid med Skriftens syn paa daaben som det ene gjenfølelsesmiddel, Gud har anordnet.

<sup>265</sup> Hallesby, 1924, 99.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 100.

work *together*.<sup>268</sup> Since “Baptism is a part of the Gospel, a part of the glad tidings,” “the apostles can say that we are begotten again by the Word, especially in places where they according to the context are not interested in separating or speaking individually of the parts employed by the Gospel of Christ.”<sup>269</sup>

Hallesby has a place for baptism in the preaching for awakening by pointing to what the person did possess as a child so that he may see what he has “lost, and feel how empty his life is without God.”<sup>270</sup> Proclaim the “mercy of God in the grace of Baptism, namely, that the sinner can never change on God’s part in the covenant of Baptism.”<sup>271</sup> In regard to the preaching that aims at repentance, such a message as mentioned above, will “*spur him on* to a choice, because they make his life in sin burdensome to him and call forth deep longings for the peace with God which he possessed during his childhood years.”<sup>272</sup> In addition, it simplifies the choice for the sinner because “he hears that God will give him the power.”<sup>273</sup> It relates to faith because in baptism the promises of God have been spoken to him as an individual, and in an act.<sup>274</sup> “Baptism is *individualized grace*. Baptism is the most distinct expression of the love of God for the individual.”<sup>275</sup> Ree has observed that Hallesby

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 102. Hallesby has in mind I Peter 1:23, James 1:11, and I Cor. 4:15.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

“preaches baptism’s Gospel positively, but not often, and seldom dwells more thoroughly on baptism.”<sup>276</sup>

Johannes Larvik, a well-known editor of the Norwegian Christian newspaper *Dagen*, has written about the tensions that developed in Norwegian church life during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He writes, “with the awakenings tension came into the Norwegian Church.”<sup>277</sup> According to Larvik this was needed for “both in principle – churchly and historically the tension is necessary in order to soften up the stiff churchliness in the folk-church institution and correct its view of the congregation or more correctly its lack of a view of the congregation.”<sup>278</sup> However, “it cannot be denied that the tension has often caused splits and that the result of this development is a sustained churchly dualism.”<sup>279</sup> He describes the extent of this dualism as follows:

Two kinds of congregations (folk-church congregation and a circle of friends), two kinds of gathering houses (church and prayer house), two kinds of preachers (state-church pastors and lay preachers), two kinds of organizations (free-will [voluntary] Christian organizations and the legally established state-church), two kinds of Lord’s Supper (church’s Lord’s Supper and ‘free’ Lord’s Supper) and according to the thinking of many two kinds of Christianity (church Christianity and prayer house Christianity, baptism’s Christianity and awakening’s Christianity).<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Ree, 53.

<sup>277</sup> Johannes Larvik, *Spenningen i norsk kirkeliv* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1946), 208. Med vekkelserne kom spenningen inn i norsk kirkeliv.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 208. Både prinsipielt-kirkelig og historisk er spenningen nødvendig for å myke opp det stivkirkelige i folkekirke “institusjonen og korrigerer dens menighets” syn eller rettere sagt mangel på menighetssyn.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. Men det kan ikke nektes at spenningen ofte har ført splittelse med seg og at resultatet av utviklingen er blitt en gjennomført kirkelig dualisme.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid. To slags menighet (folkekirkemenigheten og venneflokken), to slags forsamlingshus (kirkehuset og bedehuset), to slags forkynnere (stats- kirkepresten og lekpredikanten), to slags organisasjon (frivillige kristelige organisasjoner og lovfestede statskirkeorganisasjoner), to slags nattverdbord (kirkens nattverdbord og det <<frie>> nattverdbordet) og etter manges utening også to slags kristendom (kirkekristendom og bedehuskristendom, dåpskristendom og vekkelser- kristendom).

Such was the situation as it developed in Norway. This gives us a sense of the world in which Carl Fr. Wisløff lived and worked as a pastor and theologian.

Before considering his response it may be helpful to consider some others. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Danish Lutheran systematician Regin Prenter (1907-1990), who did his theology in the context of Scandinavian pietism and gave an analysis of the fronts that arise in such a situation. He, too, notes that “from the very beginning the Lutheran Reformation faced a double front: the pope and the fanatics (*Schwärmer*). The fanatics were Protestant and evangelical.”<sup>281</sup> Prenter describes the fanatics as mistrusting the external word “because of their emphasis upon inner experience as the basis of certainty,” which Luther saw as the same work-righteousness as found in the papal church.<sup>282</sup> This is also found in pietism,<sup>283</sup> which Prenter defines “as the tendency to rest the assurance of one’s relationship with God upon an experience of God, an experience arising out of one’s own piety.”<sup>284</sup> He sees the tension as something positive in that it can “serve to give greater clarity concerning the essence of evangelical Christianity.”<sup>285</sup> Pietism, in its pure form replaces Christ with man’s own piety, but when the pietistic tendency encounters anti-pietism it can “serve to remind us that in evangelical Christianity the Gospel cannot be divorced from faith.”<sup>286</sup>

Prenter believes that wherever pietism occurs, evangelical dogmatics must deal with it

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<sup>281</sup> Regin Prenter, *Creation and Redemption* translated by Theodor I. Jensen. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 172-173.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>283</sup> Prenter is not using pietism to refer to the historical movement but rather to identify a way of thinking.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

in a positive encounter so it does not become a heresy and so that Reformation Christianity itself does not become distorted in the opposite one-sided anti-pietistic direction.<sup>287</sup> He believes that “apart from such a positive encounter with the heritage received from the religious revivals and without a corresponding positive encounter with rational criticism, evangelical dogmatics will all too easily stagnate into a barren orthodoxy, which is only a poor variety of a Roman Catholic religion of security.”<sup>288</sup> Since “new forms of revival and criticism will continue to appear in the evangelical churches,” and “if they are met in a positive way, they will give evangelical dogmatics opportunity to counter the pietistic distortion, not with a doctrinaire anti-pietism, but within the struggle for personal Reformation Christianity.”<sup>289</sup>

A very significant figure in Norway in the discussion on baptism during the 1940s and 50s was Olav Valen-Sendstad (1904-1963).<sup>290</sup> Valen-Sendstad grew up in a Christian home with a strong mission emphasis. After a long struggle he was set free through the truth of Romans 8:1.<sup>291</sup> In 1928 he took both the theological and practical exams. After serving as a district secretary in the Oslo Blue Cross for three years, he was installed as pastor at Jelsa the spring of 1931. He served Jelsa 1931-1941 and Johanneskirken in Stavanger 1941-1954. He received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Oslo in 1948.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Refer to Ole Bjørn Høiesen, *Olav Valen-Sendstad 1904-1963: Stridsmann for skrift og bekjennelse* (Stavanger: E. A. C. Eikenes Forlag, 1997) for a recent biography on Valen-Sendstad.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>292</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Virkelighet og virkelighetsforståelse. Forsøk til en systematisk metafysikk-kritikk*, filosofisk doktorarbeid (Bergen: A. S. Lunde & Co's Forlag, 1948).

In 1935 Valen-Sendstad wrote a very important critical analysis of Karl Barth, *Karl Barths panteistiske teologi og Den norske kirke*.<sup>293</sup> The first part of the book shows that Barth goes from dualism to monism and ultimately pantheism.<sup>294</sup> Wisløff summarizes this part of the book as presenting that “Barth’s teaching on the Trinity, sin, the fall, the virgin birth, and the resurrection do not maintain the Biblical purpose, and his teaching on revelation and the Bible’s inspiration and authority depart from the Bible’s own witness.”<sup>295</sup> In the second part he writes with application to the Norwegian church. There he asserts that while the church is on earth it will always be the church militant. The church must always be in battle for its soul’s salvation “against a false spirit, false teaching, and false prophets.”<sup>296</sup>

During 1936-41 Valen-Sendstad wrote a number of important books that were of a devotional nature.<sup>297</sup> At the heart of all these books is the clear distinction between Law and Gospel. Høiesen says that “*Forsonet med Gud* is one of the most central evangelical books in his entire production of devotional books.”<sup>298</sup> Høiesen observes that in all of these books “we meet an author and preacher who with concern and soul-care insight arranges and formulates

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<sup>293</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Karl Barths panteistiske teologi og Den norske kirke* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1935).

<sup>294</sup> Høiesen, 43-44.

<sup>295</sup> Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie* III, 385. Barths lære om Treenigheten, synden og syndefallet, om jomfrufødselen og oppstandelsen holdt ikke bibelske mål, og hans lære om åpenbaringen og om Skriftens inspirasjon og autoritet avvek fra Bibelens eget vitnesbyrd.

<sup>296</sup> Valen-Sendstad, 1935, 172. De for stod dermed menighetens jordiske kår, slik som disse artet sig i den enkeltes kamp for sin sjels frelse, og i menighetens kamp mot falsk ånd, falsk lære og falsk profeti.

<sup>297</sup> Høiesen, 128-129. Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Forsonet med Gud* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1936), idem., *Tornen i kjødet* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1937), idem., *Referdiggjort av tro* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1938), idem., *Drømmen om den frie vilje. Et ord til vår tid fra Guds lov og evangelium* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1939), idem., *Tusenårsriket og Jesu gjenkomst, kommer tusenårsriket i fremtiden eller hører det nutiden til?* (Oslo: Arne Gimes Forlag, 1941).

<sup>298</sup> Høiesen, 129. Olav Valen-Sendstads første bok etter Barth-boken skulle bli en av de mest sentrale, evangeliske bøker i hele hans produksjon av oppbyggelsesbøker, noe bokens tittel også antyder.

systematically and logically that which is Christianity's main concern, namely, the relation between Law and Gospel."<sup>299</sup> "He writes and speaks both to the mind and the heart, and is always conscious that his call is to preach God's mystery in Jesus Christ."<sup>300</sup> Wisløff describes Valen-Sendstad's emphasis by noting that "faith is not depicted as a choice and a decision of the will as strongly as Hallesby, but rather as the trust of the heart, awakened by the word of the Gospel in the sinner who has gotten his own righteousness crushed by the hammer of the Law, which speaks to us as if we had a free will, in order to show us that we are bound in sin and our own will."<sup>301</sup> And on the other hand "the Gospel speaks to us as the helpless, bound sinners we actually are in order to set free the soul that sighs and calls to Jesus."<sup>302</sup>

Valen-Sendstad began to address the means of grace issue and in particular baptism in 1944.<sup>303</sup> This was followed by a number of articles in *Dagen*, and the books *Ordet som aldri kan dø. Til selvbesinnelse, særlig for Nordens kirker* (1949),<sup>304</sup> *Velsignelsen i Kristus Jesus*.

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 128. Vi møter en forfatter og forkynner som med omsorg og sjelesørgerisk innsikt formidler og formulerer systematisk og logisk det som er evangelisk kristendoms hovedanliggende, nemlig forholdet mellom lov og evangelium.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. Han skriver og taler til både tanke og hjerte, og er seg alltid bevisst at hans kall er å forkynne Guds hemmelighet i Jesus Kristus.

<sup>301</sup> Wisløff, *Norske kirkehistorie* III, 393. Troen blir ikke så sterkt som hos Hallesby skildret som valg og viljesavgjørelse, men heller som hjertets tillit, vakt ved evangeliets ord i den synder som har fått sin egenrettfærdighet knust ved lovens hammer. Loven taler til oss som om vi hadde en fri vilje – for å vise oss at vi er bundet i synd og egenvilje.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., Evangeliet taler til oss som de hjelpeløse, bundne syndere vi faktisk er – for å sette i frihet den sjel som sukker og roper til Jesus.

<sup>303</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Dåpen, barnedåpen og dåpspakten* (Trondheim: Misjonselskapet, Trondheim krets, 1944).

<sup>304</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Ordet som aldri kan dø. Til selvbesinnelse, særlig for Nordens kirker* (Bergen: A. S. Lunde & Co's Forlag, 1949), idem., *The Word That Can Never Die* Translated by Norman A. Madson, Sr., Ahlert H. Strand. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

*Om den sanne Gudserkjennelse* (1953),<sup>305</sup> and *Oppgjør om den lutherske dåpslære. En rekke dokumentasjoner* (1954).<sup>306</sup> His efforts resulted in what became known as the baptism conflict. We will look at the main issues, since it relates directly to our topic.

The problem that Valen-Sendstad addressed was what he identified as crypto-Romanism, where baptism works *ex opere operato*, i.e., works automatically/mechanically at the moment the water is poured over the candidate of baptism's head whether there is faith or not.<sup>307</sup> Valen-Sendstad feared this romanizing tendency of the sacraments and the pastoral office within the Lutheran Church more than anything else including liberal theology.<sup>308</sup> It was this fear of romanizing and sacramentalism, that is, the over-emphasizing of the sacraments at the expense of the Word, which was represented by Leiv Aalen in his book *Dåpen og barnet. Barsedåp eller "troendes dåp"?* (1945),<sup>309</sup> that motivated Valen-Sendstad to respond.

He takes as his point of departure the two Reformation principles that the Scriptures are the source and norm (formal principle) and that one is made righteous before God through faith in Jesus Christ alone without works of the Law (material principle).<sup>310</sup> He defines regeneration as when "God's Spirit through the Word, through the Gospel of God's Lamb, inspires in the heart a living refuge and faith, trust and confidence in Jesus Christ as our only true substitute and Savior. Also: where there is a living faith in Jesus as God's Lamb, there is

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<sup>305</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Velsignelsen i Kristus Jesus. Om den sanne Gudserkjennelse*, (Bergen: A. S. Lunde & Co's Forlag, 1953).

<sup>306</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Oppgjør om den lutherske dåpslære. En rekke dokumentasjoner* (Bergen: A. S. Lunde & Co's Forlag, 1954).

<sup>307</sup> Høiesen, 331.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 332. Aalen's book will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>310</sup> Valen-Sendstad, 1954, 18.

regeneration, whether one senses and knows it or not.”<sup>311</sup> “To come to this faith is God’s Spirit’s work in our hearts through the means of grace.”<sup>312</sup>

He refers to *Augustana V* as a clear presentation of how faith comes about.<sup>313</sup> He interprets *Augustana V* to say that “the means of grace *works faith* ‘where and when God wills,’ so the main point in the Lutheran teaching of the means of grace is that all the means of grace have one and the same effect, namely, that they work *faith* and are effective *through faith*. Once again from a new side: a rejection of *magic!*”<sup>314</sup> He states that “the means of grace are devised exclusively for God’s use in creating, upholding, and completing personal faith in Jesus Christ through them.”<sup>315</sup> The Lutheran Church avoids romanizing “by insisting, on the basis of Scripture, that the means of grace are means to faith and can produce effects within man only with and through faith.”<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Valen-Sendstad, 1953, 97. Gjenfødelse er at Guds Ånd ved og gjennom ordet, ved evangeliet om Guds Lam, inngir i hjertet en levende tilflukt og tro, tillit og fortrøstning til Jesus Kristus som vår eneste rette stedfortreder og frelser. Altså: hvor der er en levende tro på Jesus som Guds Lam, der er det skjedd gjenfødelse, enten man nå sanser og vet det, eller ei.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 1954, 31. Å komme til denne tro, det er Guds Andes verk i våre hjerter, ved nådemidlene.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. Vi skal se at likesom Aug. V sier at nådemidlene *virker tro* <<hvor og når Gud vil>>, så er det hovedpunktet i den lutherske nådemiddel-lære at alle nådemidlene har en og samme virkning nemlig at de virker til tro og er virksomme ved tro. Atter fra en ny side: avvisning av *magi!* Valen-Sendstad is in agreement with Pontoppidan’s view that both the Word of the Gospel and baptism are means of regeneration. Charles J. Evanson says that “if baptism, for example, is merely one among several forms that the Gospel can take, then Baptism may lose its *proprium*, that is, its particular blessing and value.” He adds that “whether or not the Means are derogated will depend on the theologian’s understanding of the way in which primary and secondary are interrelated.” Charles J. Evanson “Baptism and Repentance” in *Mysteria Dei: Essays in Honor of Kurt Marquart* ed. Paul T. McCain and John R. Stephensen (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1999), 38-39. It is Evanson’s conclusion that in Valen-Sendstad’s case, baptism is relegated to a secondary position. This prompted a response by Leiv Aalen. Ibid., 39.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 1966, 99.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

He also maintains that “in the proper sense of the term there is only one means of grace – the Word, Jesus Christ Himself”<sup>317</sup> “in four historical, visible, and perceptible forms: Scripture, oral proclamation, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>318</sup> He does acknowledge a difference in the means of grace. He says that “the Word is the universal means of grace which is to be brought to all people regardless of their age, sex, race, station, belief or unbelief, state of grace, apostasy, or heathenism. It is to be brought to them in writing as well as orally.”<sup>319</sup> In contrast “the sacraments are *special* means of grace which should be administered only to those who have a personal faith in Jesus Christ, or to those who meet the requirements to come to faith (Infant Baptism) or to remain in the faith (cf. Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15, 16).”<sup>320</sup> However, “He is not more or in a better way present in the Word than in the sacraments – and not more or in a better way present in the sacraments than in the Word. Both Word and sacrament are the hut and the temple in which He dwells and the vessel and instrument with which He operates.”<sup>321</sup> Baptism and the Lord’s Supper have the special character that they are applied to specific persons who are directly present and involved in that the sacramental word and act are addressed specifically to them.<sup>322</sup>

In regard to the operation of the Word and the sacraments Valen-Sendstad identifies three groups: 1. The antisacramentalists who reject the sacraments as a means of grace; 2. The sacramentalists who see that the sacraments have a greater operation than the Word; 3. The

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 107.

identists who hold the basic view that the content, power, and operation of all the means of grace is identical, the same.<sup>323</sup> The third view is that of the Lutheran reformers.<sup>324</sup> Valen-Sendstad understands all of the means of grace to give the same gift and that they are only beneficial when received in faith. He believes that they bestow and create faith.<sup>325</sup> They “bestow and accomplish our possessing what the Word declares.”<sup>326</sup> He puts this together by affirming that “the means of grace convey and effect our *believing in order to have and our having by believing* everything God has promised and pledged in the Gospel concerning our salvation.”<sup>327</sup>

Valen-Sendstad’s understanding of baptism is summarized in the following theses.

1. As baptism is a one-time sacrament that combines water with God's word to be a washing of water in the word, it is God's word which is combined with the water without any conditional ( Law ) promise but with the unconditional ( Gospel ) promise in Christ's person and redemptive covenant.
2. The Gospel's unconditional promise in baptism is not a promise about a coming benefit, but a promise of a present benefit - and for that matter equal to a gift-giving to the baptized and equal to a promise of absolution in Christ to the baptized.
3. This gift-giving ( promise of absolution ) is equal to that God is merciful in and through baptism, *gives* grace, *gives* its kingdom, its treasure, its blessing to the baptized in and through baptism.
4. That baptism is a one-time sacrament implies that the gift-giving is valid for the whole life, and does not need to be repeated.
5. The gift-giving in the sacrament is *not* identical with the recipient's act of taking the gift into possession. The sacrament *gives*, is given for life, but is received ( taken into possession ) *by faith of the heart alone*. Only those that believe, *have* the gift in possession, useful and beneficial before God.
6. There can always be given public statements in accordance with the Gospel of the nature and content of the gift-giving’s reality. But only God can see and test when the taking into possession of the gift through faith happens in the heart’s hidden faith. No person has any authority or right on the basis of God's Word, to make any declaration

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 115-116.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

about who believes (and who possibly does not believe ) through the sacramental gift-giving. This applies also to infant baptism.

To conclude: Notwithstanding that the Lord's Supper is a reiterated sacrament, the gift-giving of grace and faith's possession in baptism and the Lord's Supper are *completely analogous*, and Luther illuminates the relation between gift and faith through the sacrament marvelously clear in the *Large Catechism* V, 28-35. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are a sign that again and again remind, raise up, and affirm the weighed down mind to continue to believe. *Apology* IV, 272-276. See also *Augsburg Confession* V; *Apology* XIII; *Large Catechism* IV, 60-86.<sup>328</sup>

This thesis number six shows another characteristic of Valen-Sendstad's understanding of baptism.

He was unwilling to say that all children were reborn in baptism. He said, if we say that *all* children are reborn in baptism, then we are assuming that baptism works according to the magical principle *ex opere operato*.<sup>329</sup> He argues that Jesus says that regeneration is the Spirit's work and is as the wind blows where it wills (John 3:8).<sup>330</sup> Thus this great truth of the Spirit's free and sovereign work is expressed in *Augustana* V where it says that "(1) the Spirit

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<sup>328</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Dogmatikken for legmenn. Konkordieboken. De lutherske bekjennesskrifter. Oversatt, systematisert, ordnet og med anmerkninger av Olav Valen-Sendstad* (Bergen: A. S. Lunde & Co's Forlag, 1957), 330-331. 1) Idet dåpen er et engangs-sakrament som forener vann og Guds ord til et vannbad i Ordet, er det Guds ord som er forenet med vannet intet betinget (lovens) løfte, men det ubetingede (evangeliets) løfte i Kristi persons og forløsergjernings nye pakt. 2) Evangeliets ubetingede løfte i dåpen er ikke løfte om et kommende (fremtidig) gode, men et tilsagn om et nærværende gode – og for så vidt likeverdig med en *gaveoverdragelse* til den dømte, og likeverdig med et *absolusjonstilsagn* i Kristus til den dømte. 3) Denne gaveoverdragelse (absolusjonstilsagn) er likeverdig med at Gud er nådig i og med dåpen, *gir* nåde, *gir* sitt rike, sin skatt, sin vel-signelse til den dømte i og med dåpen. 4) Da dåpen er et engangs-sakrament, innebærer det at gaveoverdragelsen er gyldig for hele livet, og ikke behøver gjentas. 5) Gaveoverdragelsen i sakramentet er *ikke* identisk med at mottageren tar gaven i besittelse. Det sakramentet *gir*, gis for livet, men mottas (tas i besittelse) *alene ved hjertets tro*. Bare den som tror, har gaven i eie, bruk og nytte innfor Gud. 6) Om gaveoverdragelsens faktisitet kan det ifølge evangeliet alltid gis offentlige erklæringer om art og innhold. Men da det å ta i besittelse ved tro skjer i hjertets skjulte tro som bare Gud kan se og prøve, har intet menneske noen som helst fullmakt eller rett etter Guds ord til å avgi noen erklæring om hvem som tror (eventuelt ikke tror) ved den sakramentale gaveoverdragelse. Det gjelder også ved barnedåp. Til slutt: Til tross for at nattverden er et gjentagelses-sakrament er nådens gaveoverdragelse og troens besittelsestagelse i dåp og nattverd *fullkommen analoge*, og Luther belyser forholdet mellom gave og tro ved sakramentet enestående klart *Cat. Maj. V, 28-35* (se nedenfor s. 362). <<Dåp Gg nattverd er tegn som gang på gang påminner, oppreiser og bekreftede nedbøyede sinn til fastere å tro., *Ap. IV, 272-276*. Se også *C.A. V; Ap. XIII; Cat. Maj. IV, 60-86*.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 1953, 98.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

is given through the Gospel and the sacraments, and (2) this Spirit, which is given in this manner, '*works faith*, in the one who hears the Gospel, where and when God wills.'"<sup>331</sup> So when "*faith is worked* by the Gospel and the sacraments 'where and when God so wills,' then faith and regeneration stand *in God's hand* and not *in the pastor's hand!*"<sup>332</sup>

Therefore "it is, namely, God's counsel and grace-choice that is consummated in the means of grace, faith and regeneration – and absolutely not a 'churchly machinery' in a 'salvation institution' magical mechanism."<sup>333</sup> He maintains that Jesus in John 3:8f. shows with all clarity that he "does not connect regeneration in an automatic manner, as if all baptized in the moment of baptism are reborn. For he connects regeneration to that *we come to faith* – whether it happens before, in, or after the use of water (baptism)."<sup>334</sup> As a result of Valen-Sendstad's view, that we can not say that all the baptized infants are God's children, he proposed a new liturgy for baptism that made no pronouncement about the state of the child.<sup>335</sup>

Valen-Sendstad fleshes out for us how his view of baptism should be preached. It should not be preached so that it comforts or indicates that they are once for all regenerated in baptism.<sup>336</sup> This leads the person to trust in something within rather than on the Lord Jesus.

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 99-100. Der sies det nemlig: 1. At Anden gis gjennom evangeliet og sakramentene, og 2. At denne And, som gis således, <<virker troen, i den som hører evangeliet, hvor og når Gud så vil>>.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 100. Men når troen *virkes* ved evangelium og sakrament <<hvor og når Gud så vil>>, da står jo tro og gjenfødelse *i Guds hånd*, og ikke *i prestens hånd!*

<sup>333</sup> Ibid. Det er nemlig Guds råd og nådevalg som fullbyrdes i nådemidler, tro og gjenfødelse – og slett ikke et <<kirkelig maskineri>> i en <<frelsesanstalt>>s magiske mekanismer.

<sup>334</sup> Valen-Sendstad, 1954, 51-52. En fortsettelsen I Johs. 3, 8 f. viser med all klarhet at Jesus ikke knytter gjenfødelsen til vannet på automatisk mate, som om alle døpte i dåps-øyeblikket blir gjenfødt. For han knytter gjenfødelsen til at *vi kommer til troen* – enten det nå skjer før, i eller etter bruken av vannet (dåpen).

<sup>335</sup> Valen-Sendstad, 1957, 351-354.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 1954, 113.

Rather “baptism shall be preached as a means of grace whereby God has personally pledged us that Christ’s atonement involves us personally, that we thereby are personally pledged all the promises in Christ, and that the promises are fulfilled to us personally, without our dignity or merit, when we believe in Jesus Christ and the promises in him.”<sup>337</sup>

When seeking to give soul-care, there is no help in using baptism to indicate that one is reborn once for all.<sup>338</sup> Rather, baptism is the visible symbol and seal of God’s promise of grace. Baptism “is a call to us and an invitation to us to partake in the whole fullness of God’s blessing, counsel, and grace – through faith in Jesus Christ. That this is personally pledged and promised to us in baptism, comes to audible and visible expression in the form of baptism; namely, by the fact that the act of baptism is performed on us personally by name.”<sup>339</sup> Soul care has its goal in helping the person to believe.<sup>340</sup> He affirms that the one baptism follows us our whole life “and this baptism is for the whole life a means to kindle our faith, strengthen it, nourish it, confirm and preserve it in the power of the promises of which it is a symbol.”<sup>341</sup> So in the care of souls, baptism in the name of the Triune God is an “external

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 115. Dåpen skal forkynnes som et nådemiddel hvormed Gud personlig har tilsagt oss at Kristi forsoning gjelder oss personlig, at vi dermed personlig er tilsagt alle løfter i Kristus, og at disse løfter blir oppfylt på oss personlig, uten vår verdighet eller fortjeneste, idet vi tror på Jesus Kristus og løftene i ham.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 118-119. Nå er den dåp Jesus har innstiftet for oss en dåp *til den treenige Gud*, og altså en tilsigelse til oss og en innvielse av oss til delaktighet i hele fylden av Guds velsignelse, råd og nåde - *ved troen på Jesus Kristus*. At dette er personlig tilsagt og lovet oss i dåpen, kommer til hørlig og synlig uttrykk i dåpens form: nemlig derved at dåpshandlingen utføres på oss personlig ved navns nevning.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 120. Så følger den ene dåp oss *hele livet*. Og denne dåp er hele livet et middel til å tende vår tro, styrke den, nære den, bekrefte og bevare den i kraft av de løfter den er pant på.

seal and symbol that God by his grace will fulfill all and all kinds of promises in his way and in his time when we believe in Jesus Christ.”<sup>342</sup>

Valen-Sendstad also relates baptism to the approach that should be taken in the upbringing of children. He believes that the approach of those who build on the presupposition that all children from the moment of their baptism are God’s children is permeated with the third use of the Law and results in a Law orientation to the Christian life.<sup>343</sup> But this is not a true presupposition.<sup>344</sup> The true presupposition is that “each child is a little person who is included and taken into account by God in Christ’s love sacrifice of atonement for the world’s sin, and that in baptism was personally pledged all God’s promises of grace in Christ and that these promises shall be fulfilled in the child’s life in a comprehensive manner in the same way as in the adult’s life: namely, through faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>345</sup>

Thus “the Christian’s main presupposition in bringing up children lies therein that the child in baptism has also received the Spirit’s promise that the Spirit will work to create and maintain faith in Jesus in and by God’s Word.”<sup>346</sup> This means that we who bring up children “must dedicate ourselves to the ‘view’ of the child, that it is a child that *God’s Spirit works*

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 121. ... i dåpens løfter i og med den treeniges navn, og dåpen er et ytre segl og pant for at Gud av sin nåde vil oppfylle alle og alle slags løfter på sin måte og i sin time, når vi tror på Jesus Kristus.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 121-122.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid. Men dette er den sanne forutsetning, at hvert barn er et lite menneske som er innbefattet og medregnet av Gud i Kristi kjærlighets offer til soning for verdens synd, og at det i dåpen er blitt personlig tilsagt alle Guds nådes løfter i Kristus, og at disse løfter skal oppfylles i barnets liv på allsidig måte på samme vis som i den voksnes liv: nemlig ved troen på Jesus.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 124. ... den kristelige hovedforutsetning for oppdragelsen ligger deri, at barnet i dåpen har fått også Andens løfte om at Anden vil virke til å skape og opholde tro på Jesus i og med Guds Ord.

with – whether it was now ‘reborn’ in baptism or not.”<sup>347</sup> He concludes by saying that “those who alone can have the right presuppositions as Christian up-bringers, are those who are humble of heart and who do not reckon with patent methods, but with God’s Spirit’s hidden work.”<sup>348</sup>

His position on the state of the baptized child was judged to be in conflict with the Lutheran faith and he had to clear his name at a meeting with the bishops where he declared that the Norwegian Church’s *Alterboken*’s ritual for baptism was correct and truly Lutheran.<sup>349</sup> In a letter to Carl Fr. Wisløff, Valen-Stendstad takes comfort in the fact that he has nevertheless won a great victory in the baptism conflict, for the *Kinamisjonens* main board has officially distanced itself from Aalen’s view and completely adopted his view.<sup>350</sup> He also notes that the *Vestlandske Indremisjon* had earlier done the same. “This means that two of Norway’s largest laymen’s organizations have distanced themselves from The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology’s view of baptism as taught by Leiv Aalen.”<sup>351</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran systematician Professor Leiv Aalen (1906-1983)<sup>352</sup> was another one who responded to this situation. His responses are important for our study since he was a contemporary, colleague, and in this matter an opponent of Carl Fr. Wisløff. During

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid. Dertil svarer at vi som oppdragere må tilegne oss det <<syn>> på barnet, at det er et barn som Guds And arbeider med – enten det nå ble <<gjennfødt>> i dåpen eller ei.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid. Den som alene kan ha de rette forutsetninger som kristelig oppdrager, er den som er ydmyk av hjertet og ikke regner med sine patentmetoder, men med Guds Ands skjulte gjerning.

<sup>349</sup> Høiesen, 377-378.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 378. The letter was dated February 2, 1947.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid. He has in mind here especially the view of Leiv Aalen.

<sup>352</sup> Three important works by Leiv Aalen as they relate to our topic are: Leiv Aalen, *Dåpen og barnet. Barnedåp eller “troendes dåp”?* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1945, 2 rev., 1972), idem, *Dogmatisk grunnriss* (Oslo: Skrivestua Menighetetsfakultetet, 1982), idem, *Ord og sakrament* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1966).

his study time in Erlangen he experienced another theological conversion that brought him into confessional Lutheranism. It was especially Hermann Sasse who had a significant influence.<sup>353</sup> He now saw that his task as a theologian was “to state the Evangelical Lutheran Confession in full.”<sup>354</sup> This does not mean that Sasse’s theology simply replaced Aalen’s previous position but rather served as a modification of a theological conception that through its previous development had already found much of its character which included the influence of Barth and Brunner.<sup>355</sup>

In regards to the relationship of faith and the means of grace, Aalen understood several fronts to be present. He faced the front of pietism’s subjective appropriation with its emphasis on conversion’s choice. He saw this as giving the assurance of salvation an anthropocentric reference locating it in the person’s work and experience. He was concerned about sacramentalism. There was also the problem of synergism, which called forth from Aalen a strong monergistic teaching on God’s predestination. He was also concerned about pietism bringing into justification an emphasis on inner renewal, thus robbing justification of its forensic character. The battle with soul-struggles (*Anfektesle, Anfechtung*) called for a more solid basis for his salvation than the subjective experience of faith. He says, “Gradually I also came to work with the question of baptism. And I dare say that the driving motive with me was the same soul-struggle (*Anfektelse*) as we have found suggested by Odland when he required a more sure basis for his Christian position than the ‘subjective faith’s life

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<sup>353</sup> Harald Hegstad, *Transcendens og inkarnasjon. Troserkjennelsens problem i Leiv Aalens teologi* (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1993), p. 24. Aalen translated Sasse’s book *Was Heisst lutherisch?* into Norwegian. Hermann Sasse, *Hvad er luthersk kristendom?* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1936).

<sup>354</sup> Quoted in Hegstad, 24.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

expression.”<sup>356</sup>

Aalen sets forth that when the Word is spoken of as a means of grace this “means that it is divided clearly between Law and Gospel.”<sup>357</sup> It is important to see that “faith’s new life (*donum*) is only given us ‘in the grace of Christ’ and the salvation lies therefore alone in the forgiveness of sins on which faith rests (*favor*).”<sup>358</sup> Thus “the Gospel’s promise received in faith, contains therefore, according to the evangelical confession, salvation in a totality, and therefore it is here that not only the Word, but also the sacraments are understood as means of the grace of forgiveness (*favor* in opposition to infused grace).”<sup>359</sup> The gift of faith is an effect of the Gospel’s *favor*.<sup>360</sup> “So then the Gospel in this meaning is not a mystical-magical ‘power,’ but a message that shall be preached and believed, it means that the Word – together with the sacraments – are the *means* that God’s Spirit uses to *create* faith.”<sup>361</sup> In this way “the Word’s work happens through the Spirit alone without mediation of any human factor, and on that the spiritual new creation happens *by the Word’s external means* and not in the form of an unprepared inner effect of the Spirit.”<sup>362</sup> Conversion is according to Aalen, in principle, the

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<sup>356</sup> Leiv Aalen, *Ord og Sakrament*, 199. Etter hvert kom jeg også til å arbeide med dåpsspørsmålet, og jeg tør si at det drivende motiv hos meg var den samme anfektelse som vi har funnet antydning hos Odland når han krever et fastere holdepunkt for sin kristenstand enn det <<subjektive Troslivs Ytringer>>.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 135. Troens nye liv (*donum*) er bare gitt oss <<in gratia Christi>>, og frelsen ligger derfor alene i den syndsforlatelse som troen hviler på (*favor*).

<sup>359</sup> Ibid. Evangeliets løfte mottatt i tro inneholder derfor etter evangelisk bekjennelse frelsen i en sum, og derfor blir her ikke bare Ordet, men også sakramentene oppfattet som formidlere av forlatingsnåden (*favor* i motsetning til *gratia infusa*).

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 137. It appears that Aalen understands regeneration in the gift of faith way.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 137-138. Så sant evangeliet i denne mening ikke er en mystisk-magisk <<kraft>>, men et budskap som skal forkynnes og tros, betyr det at Ordet – sammen med sakramentene - er det *middel* som Guds And bruker til å skape troen.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid. For en rett forståelse av forholdet ligger det da like meget vekt på at Ordets gjerning skjer *ved Anden alene* uten formidling av noen menneskelig faktor, og på at den åndelige nyskapelse skjer *ved Ordets ytre middel* og ikke i form av en uformidlet indre åndsvirkning.

same for both the apostate and the believing (the daily conversion).

Aalen distinguishes between the salvation-seeking faith and the salvation-possessing faith.<sup>363</sup> The salvation-seeking faith becomes salvation-possessing faith when salvation is given in baptism.<sup>364</sup> Aalen says that “the unbaptized who is converted stands *in the same position as the believer in the old covenant*: They believe on the salvation that they have in anticipation, but still is not given to them, and this expectation of faith God reckons for righteousness because it is faith in salvation’s promises (Rom. 4, Heb. 11: 11-16).”<sup>365</sup>

For Aalen the various means of grace do not have the identical effect.

Through the Word as a means of grace God offers salvation to all, in baptism He bestows it to those who will receive it, and in the Lord’s Supper He strengthens the faith of those who have accepted salvation. In this way baptism gets a fundamental importance in the order of salvation, and the Bible expresses it by saying that salvation is connected to baptism as the washing of regeneration. The meaning is then clearly that salvation in Christ becomes our personal possession in baptism.<sup>366</sup>

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Aalen refers to *Augustana V*, which gives a strong understanding of the instrumental means of grace.

<sup>363</sup> Aalen, 1982, 242-243. Aalen seems to be in agreement with Sigurd Odland on this point. Aalen refers to Odland in these pages. Aalen refers to Romans 10 and Acts 22 for Biblical support for this distinction.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>365</sup> Aalen, 1972, 68. Udøpte som er blitt omvendt, står nemlig i samme stilling som de troende i den gamle pakt: De tror på den frelse som de har i vente, men som enda ikke er skjenket dem, og denne troens forventning regner Gud m rettferdighet, fordi den er en tro på frelsens løfter (Rom. 4, Hebr. 11, 13-16).

<sup>366</sup> Leiv Aalen, *Dåpen og barnet. Barsedåp eller “troendes dåp”?* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1945), 37. Gjennom ordets nådemiddel tilbyr Gud frelsen til alle, i dåpen skjenker han den til dem som vil ta imot den, og i nattverden styrker han troen hos dem som har tatt imot frelsen. På denne måten får dåpen en grunnleggende betydning i frelsens orden, og det uttrykker bibelen ved å si at frelsen er knyttet til dåpen som gjenfødelsens bad. Meningen er da kort og godt den at frelsen i Kristus blir vår personlige eiendom i dåpen. This view has remained unchanged in the 1972 revised edition.

From this we see that Aalen's response to pietism's anthropocentrizing was to put baptism as the point of departure and the anchor for salvation.<sup>367</sup> Baptism is the only means of regeneration. Aalen points out that Luther saw in baptism's word of institution that it was baptism's word of promise that requires faith in that this promise actually is fulfilled in baptism.<sup>368</sup> He notes that Luther's main concern was against both the Roman church and the enthusiasts and in responding to this situation he carries out baptism's constitutional meaning for standing in grace.<sup>369</sup>

Bernt Oftestad focuses this when he states the theological concerns behind Aalen's understanding of baptism's proprium. It is "on the one hand to give struggling faith (*anfektede tro*) a resting place in something outside itself, a resting place in God's objective action, and on the other hand to protect God's absolute sovereignty and exclusivity when it involves the person's salvation."<sup>370</sup> Aalen believes that in the double front against sacramentalism and spiritualism it is decisive "that faith in the sacrament is referenced not only to the accompanying word of promise, but for the baptized person concerned, to the baptismal word that forms a part of the sacramental act and builds on baptism's word of institution."<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> For a discussion on Aalen's views of baptism and repentance see Evanson, 37-50. He sets forth that Aalen teaches the foundational nature of baptism, a view that Lutheran orthodoxy had let slip away.

<sup>368</sup> Aalen, 1982, 243.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 243-244.

<sup>370</sup> B. T. Oftestad, "Nådemidlet og troen" (*Ung teologi 2*, Oslo, 1969), 39. Det teologiske anliggende bak Aalens forståelse av dåpens proprium kan vi derfor konkluderende formulere slik: på den ene side å gi den anfektede tro et hvilested i noe utenom den selv, et hvilested i Guds objektive handling, på den annen side å verne um Guds fullkomne suverenitet og eksklusivitet når det gjelder menneskets frelse.

<sup>371</sup> Aalen, *Dogmatisk grunnriss*, 196. Det avgjørende i den dermed gitte dobbeltfront mot sakramentalisme og spiritualisme er at troen i sakramentet henføres ikke bare til det ledsagende løfteord. Men for dåpens vedkommende til det døpeord som inngår i selve sakramenthandlingen og bygger på dåpens innstiftelsesord.

It is quite clear that Aalen, who was Ole Hallesby's successor as professor of dogmatics at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, has given a very different response than his predecessor. Wisløff, who was a student of Hallesby and a colleague of Aalen, identifies some of the changes.<sup>372</sup> Already in the 1930s many of the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology students withdrew from their prayer-house background. Scepticism against the prayer-house and free organizations was common among the students. "Church" was the big word. The focal point had shifted from conversion to baptism and therefore less was heard about conversion. "The Aalen brothers stressed the viewpoint of the Lutheran Confessions far stronger than Hallesby had done. While Hallesby continuously defended against the liberal theology, one heard now above all warnings and charges against 'the reformed' and against 'pietism.'"<sup>373</sup>

Olav Valen-Sendstad concludes that Aalen's approach represents a type of crypto-Romanism.<sup>374</sup> He is critical of Aalen's assertion that baptism is the only means of regeneration. This stands in opposition to the Lutheran understanding that "to believe the Word is to possess what the Word promises."<sup>375</sup> He also finds that Aalen teaches that the forgiveness of sins is present irrespective of faith, and thus seems to indicate an *ex opere*

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<sup>372</sup> Sjaastad, 78.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid. Brødrene Aalen fremhevet det luthersk-konfesjonelle synspunkt langt sterkere enn Hallesby hadde gjort. Mens Hallesby stadig advarte mot den liberale teologi, hørte en nå frem for alt advarsler og anklager mot <<de reformerte>> og mot <<pietismen>>.

<sup>374</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, (1966),130. Refer to Ole Bjørn Høiesen, *Olav Valen-Sendstad 1904-1963: Stridsmann for Skrift og bekjennelse* (Stavanger: E. A. C. Eikenes Forlag, 1997) for a recent biography on Valen-Sendstad. Hoiesen says that that there is no doubt that the relation between Leiv Aalen and Olav Valen-Sendstad was very strained. Ibid., 192. He notes that Aalen was strongly confessionally oriented while for Valen-Sendstad the Scripture and its Law and Gospel distinction was the starting point for all of his theological thinking. Ibid. He further notes that there was a kind of competition between them. Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

*operato* position.<sup>376</sup> This leads Valen-Sendstad to believe that ultimately Aalen's position implies "that all who are baptized are children of God's grace in the objective sense, whether they believe or not," which is the deepest point of crypto-Romanism.<sup>377</sup> While acknowledging Aalen's contribution of increasing the consciousness of important aspects of the Lutheran understanding of Christianity, Hegstad sees that his emphasis on the objective "happens in such a manner that it does not give an adequate place for the dimension of the Christian's faith experience."<sup>378</sup> Thus there is some question whether or not Aalen ultimately avoided sacramentalism.

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 132-133.

<sup>378</sup> "Leiv Aalen's Teologi: Intervju med Harald Hegstad om Leiv Aalen," (*Fast Grunn* 46:4, 1993), 205. Svakheten ved hans understrekning av det objektive er imidlertid at det skjer på en slik måte at det ikke gir tilstrekkelig plass til kristentroens erfaringsdimensjon.

## Chapter Three

### **A Survey of Wisløff's Theological Life**

A basic understanding of a person's context and life may be helpful when considering a particular aspect of his theology for as Wisløff himself has said, "I am in part what I have met in life."<sup>1</sup> In pursuit of this understanding and also to introduce Wisløff to the American reader we will in this chapter give a biographical sketch of the various periods of his life including his teachers, writings and activities. We will also give special consideration to Wisløff's attention to and development of our topic during the course of his life.

Since there is no comprehensive biography available we will make use of a variety of sources.<sup>2</sup> Throughout Wisløff's life significant events have been written about in the various newspapers.<sup>3</sup> When he received his doctorate from the University of Oslo on Luther's doctrine of the Mass it was widely reported and discussed in the papers. Significant birthdays such as his 50<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup>, 80<sup>th</sup>, and 85<sup>th</sup> were all occasions for articles. A Festschrift was published for his 70<sup>th</sup>, which includes a biographical essay and a bibliography.<sup>4</sup> There are

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<sup>1</sup> From a personal conversation with Carl Fr. Wisløff.

<sup>2</sup> The following will provide the basic material and therefore will be summarized in English. Egil Sjaastad, *I samtale med Carl Fr. Wisløff*. (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1982), Steinar Hunnestad, Jon Kvalbein, Gunnar Prestegård, Redaksjonskomite, *På Ordets Grunn: Festschrift til professor dr. theol. Carl Fr. Wisløff på 70-årsdagen 31. desember 1978* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1978), Øyvind Anker og Bjarte Kaldhol, Redaktørene. *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon: Grunnlagt Av Edv. Bull, Anders Krogvig, Gerhard Gran. Vol. XIX*. (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), 1983). The article on Wisløff was done by Helge Fæhn.

<sup>3</sup> *Aftenposten; Dagen; Vårt Land; Fast Grunn*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Steinar Hunnestad, Jon Kvalbein and Gunnar Prestegård.

articles in various reference works, which give brief biographical summaries.<sup>5</sup> Egil Sjaastad, a former student, did a series of interviews with Wisløff that have been edited and published in book form.<sup>6</sup>

### Childhood Years: 1908-1927

Wisløff was born December 31, 1908 in Drammen, Norway to Dagny and Frederik Wisløff. He was their first-born. On his day of baptism, a uniformed driver drove him to the church in the carriage of the fire chief. His father was an assistant to the city engineer of Drammen at the time. Wisløff describes the meaning of his baptism as follows: “The water that touched my forehead, is a sign for me that God has dealt with me. My baptism’s day is therefore a great day in my life. That day God’s gracious will was turned to *me* – God took me to himself. How dare I believe it?”<sup>7</sup> In 1913 his father became city engineer in Sarpsborg; there Carl grew up.

His parents were God-fearing people who prayed for Carl from the first hour and brought him to God’s house where he learned to hear God’s Word. Wisløff has on many occasions mentioned that he has had four master teachers who have had considerable meaning for his life’s attitude and spiritual development. The first of them was his father, of whom he speaks with great warmth and thankfulness. His father was a dynamic personality with broad interests and a Christian in the full sense of the word. The home was marked with a regular

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<sup>5</sup> Øyvind Anker og Bjarte Kaldhol, redaktørene.

<sup>6</sup> Egil Sjaastad, *I samtale med Carl Fr. Wisløff*. (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Luthersk Sakramentsyn” in *Ordets svar på livsspørsmål i kirken* redaktør Håkon Fred Breen (Oslo: Naomi Forlag, 1960), 45. “Vannet som berørte min panne, det er et tegn for meg på at Gud har handelet med meg. Min dåpsdag er derfor en stor dag i mitt liv. Den dag ble Guds nådevilje vendt mot *meg* – Gud tok meg inn til seg. Hvordan tør jeg tro det?”

family devotional life. His mother died in 1915 when he was only seven. His father then also became involved in their evening and morning prayers, which had previously been his mother's responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

Wisløff's father was associated with the Kristiania Ynglingeforening<sup>9</sup> and the KFUM.<sup>10</sup> He was very active in the local congregation and other Christian activities. Besides attending the worship services of the church, Carl grew up in the Christian environment of the Christian young people's societies. Nevertheless, the strongest impression was given by his father's example and the devotional life in the home. Wisløff grew up in a distinctly churchly environment. There does not seem to be an emphasis on attending the prayer house or the more low-churchly movements with which Wisløff in his later life became closely associated.

Wisløff recalls his confirmation as having special meaning. He was instructed in the explanation to the catechism edited by H. U. Sverdrup (1813-1891).<sup>11</sup> This would have a lasting impact on him even though he was fifteen at the time. He remembers the old Senior Pastor Fyhn speaking very seriously to the class. Spiritually, it was not going too well with the young Wisløff. "I made an attempt to be a Christian when I was confirmed," he said.<sup>12</sup> "I remember well that I made a decision. Now I will be a Christian for real. ... Now I must add that this decision didn't really change anything. It was soon forgotten. I was often in the

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<sup>8</sup> Sjaastad, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Kristiania Youth Association.

<sup>10</sup> Kristelig forening for unge menn. Christian Young Men's Association. Y.M.C.A.

<sup>11</sup> Udtog af Dr. Erich Pontoppidans forklarjng ved H. U. Sverdrup, FHV. Sogneprest til Balestrand. Forkortet utgave Autoriseret av kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet 15de Oplag. Kristiania 1918. [80 sider, 387 spørsmål + 1 – 40: Kort begreb. ... godkjent ved skrivelse av 4de juli 1893.] I am indebted to Dr. Oddvar Johan Jensen for providing this reference.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Å være fri*, (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1980), 43. Jeg gjorde et forsøk med å være en kristen da jeg ble konfirmert.

church on Sundays, but there wasn't any heart relationship. I didn't live with God."<sup>13</sup> In an interview in 1978 he put it this way: "I had for some time turned my back on God. I was no Christian and I didn't want to be as a teenager."<sup>14</sup>

The great turning point came in August 1926. He considers the event to be "the greatest that has happened" to him.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless he states: "I have for that matter, often since wondered what essentially made the impression on me at that meeting. There was hardly any strong preaching there. Nathan Söderblom was one of the main speakers I can remember. ... What can be said is that what I had with me from home became living for me in a special way at that meeting. My father's prayers must not be forgotten."<sup>16</sup> In a presentation given in 1959 at a conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota he gave the most complete summary of it. Since it is such an integral part of his life and thinking we will quote

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<sup>13</sup> Egil Sjaastad, 23-24. "Jeg husker godt at jeg tok en beslutning. Nå ville jeg for alvor være en kristen! Nå må jeg få legge til at denne beslutningen ikke førte til noe særlig. Den ble nokså fort glemt. Jeg var ofte i kirken om søndagene, men det var ikke noe hjerteforhold. Jeg levde ikke med Gud." Wisløff states in other places his belief that he fell away from his baptismal grace. See "Barnedåpens betydning for den voksne" and *Å være fri*, 43. See also "The Word That Brings Salvation" (*Evangelize* 15, no. 12, 1959), 5, where he states: "... for the grace which I had gotten in baptism was lost because of my sin and disobedience." Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Do the Work of an Evangelist*, 1, "In terms of my own experience I can say that even though I was born into a Christian family and baptized as an infant, I experienced a conversion from spiritual stupor and death as a young man."

<sup>14</sup> John Kilde, "An Interview With Carl Frederick Wisløff", *Faith and Fellowship* December 20, 1978 (Vol. 45, Number 21), p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Sjaastad, 26. "Ja, - det er jo det største som har skjedd meg!"

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 24. Jeg har forresten ofte siden undret meg på hva som egentlig gjorde inntrykk på det møtet. Noen sterk forkynnelse var det knapt der borte. Natan Söderblom var en av hovedtalerne, kan jeg huske. Han er jo ikke av de teologene jeg senere har følt meg mest på linje med! Sant å si var det jeg hadde med meg hjemmefra som ble levende for meg på en spesiell måte under det møtet. Min fars bønner må nok heller ikke glemmes. Helge Fæhn says, "This meeting had great spiritual meaning for Wisløff – mostly to make the heritage from his childhood home personal and existential." "Dette møtet fikk stor åndelig betydning for W - - mest ved å gjøre arven fra barndoms-hjemmet personlig og eksistensiell," in Øyvind Anker og Bjarte Kaldhol, 277. Fæhn mentions that John Mott was among those who were present at Helsingfors. *Ibid.*

a major part of it here. To a certain extent this experience continues to provide a sort of paradigm for Wisløff's thinking.

Oh, I remember so very clearly the day it happened. It happened far away from my home. I was sent by my father to a Christian Young Men's Conference in Finland. I think my father had the hope that the long journey to Finland would interest me and perhaps I might get some impression of the Word of God. And that happened. I remember very well how I sat there in a class room in a school in Helsingfors. If I should come to Helsingfors once more, and if that school is still there, I am sure I could find the spot where I sat when I made the great decision and said to Jesus, "I want to come now, O Lord." I remember it very clearly, although it is more than thirty years ago and I was a very young boy then. I had my Bible in my hand and I raised it, and I said to Him, "I will, I will, I will be a Christian now."

Ah, the relief when the decision was made. I thought, "Everything will be all right now. Now I shall get the wonderful power promised in the Bible and which I have heard of so many times." And it is true - for some time it was very wonderful indeed. I came back home, and I told my father, I told my pastor, I told my friends. That was a little bit hard to do, but I did it. And it was a very great relief afterwards to have said it openly, "I will be a Christian from now on."

But very, very difficult days followed. I couldn't experience the joy every day which I got when I made the great decision. And after a while I even doubted if I had really been converted that day back in Helsingfors. I asked myself, "Were you really converted that day?" And I remember that one afternoon as I sat in my room in my home in Sarpsborg in Ostfold, Norway, I said to myself, "I shall sit here at my desk with my Bible until I am sure that I was really converted that day some months ago."

I tell you I had to leave that room without knowing. I didn't get the assurance that day. No, I didn't. Because, you see, I was struggling with the Law. It was **my** conversion, **my** Bible reading, **my** prayers, **my** decision, **my** good works, **my** being a Christian, **my** confession to my friends, and all that. Of course that is all a good thing. It is necessary, very necessary. But I had to learn the lesson which Paul has written of in his Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 2, verse 19, "Through the Law I am dead to the Law." Paul has also given us an explanation of that experience, when he says in the Letter to the Romans, chapter 7, "For I was alive without the Law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death."

The word of the Law could not save me. I had to learn a lesson - simply to listen to the Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus Christ who died for me. I had been worrying very much about my conversion. It was a great thing, and I do think there was joy in heaven that day when a young boy made his decision in the school class room in Helsingfors. But I had to learn a lesson. It was not my conversion insofar as I made a decision which was the greatest thing; I had to listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And one day I could understand those strange words of Jesus when He said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

I had been very much occupied with my choosing Him. That is good. My friend, have you chosen, have you made a decision? You ought to do so, you must do so. But I had been too much bothered with this, until one day He showed me in His Word, "That is all right, but consider what Jesus says, 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'" Something happened to me then. I stopped circling around myself. I saw Jesus. I put my trust in Him. I saw He had died for me. Jesus came making peace. I think I can tell you which day I made the great decision - it was August the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1926. I am quite sure it was that day. But which day the peace of God filled my heart and my feet were set on the rock, I can tell you only approximately. I think maybe that is significant. Because you see the time when I make my decision, I am circling around myself and I am very occupied with myself. Everything concerns myself. I may even look at my watch to see when it happens. But when I really listen to the Gospel, and the Spirit of God is speaking in my heart and I see Jesus my Saviour for the first time, and this old school lesson which I have learned by heart suddenly becomes the Bread of Life for my soul - well, I cannot look at my watch then. Then I forget time and space. I see only Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

Wisløff told this as part of a sermon on Acts 10:38-43 to illustrate that the words of the Law cannot save and that only the Gospel has the words that bring salvation. Jesus Christ and He alone is the foundation for salvation and assurance.<sup>18</sup> Wisløff's writings reveal that he sought

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<sup>17</sup> Wisløff, "The Word That Brings Salvation," 5-6. This was given at the Mid-Winter Conference of the LEM. This experience is also referred to in other places. See Wisløff, *Å være fri*, 40-41, 44; and Sjaastad, 24-26.

<sup>18</sup> Wisløff, *Å være fri*, 40-41. "No, you should not know of anything other than Jesus as the basis for your salvation and assurance. Allow me to say a little about how I experienced it as quite a young Christian. I had learned that I should confess my sins, then God would forgive for Jesus' sake. And so it is true as He said. But I had not gotten the right understanding of it to begin with. For I thought that when I had confessed before God, then He has forgiven. But the next day the wrong happened again. For I said something I shouldn't have said, and I did something I ought not to have done, and then I had a feeling that the connection with God was broken. But fortunately I could then come to God and confess anew, and so the connection was attached again. But the day after it was the same misfortune. I thought as if I became a Christian every day, and fell out of grace every day, and I became so tired of this that I was on the verge of giving up altogether.

"Until Jesus had mercy on me and showed me a word: '*You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.*' I had struggled so terribly with *my* choice. Yes, if you will not make a decision nothing will happen to you. You do not escape without it. But it is *his* choice and *his* grace that is decisive. And so I learned to understand that when I became a child of God, then I was a *child*. And when I in the peace of evening came with my sins and confessed them, then it was *as a child* I came to Him about whom it says: "as a father pities his child, so the Lord pities those who fear him." Nei, du skal ikke vite av noe annet enn Jesus om grunnlag for din frelse og salighet. La meg få si litt om hvordan jeg opplevde det som ganske ung kristen. Jeg hadde lætt at jeg skulle bekjenne mine synder, så ville Gud tilgi for

throughout his life to help those who have had the same wrong understanding of these matters as he had in his youth. The Law-Gospel way of understanding his conversion was not present when it was experienced. As he says fifty-six years later, “the promise and the decision I kept to, even if I had a long way to go before it became a more mature comprehension of the Gospel. So it is with joy I think back on these August days in 1926.”<sup>19</sup> The Gospel became clearer to Wisløff in the 1930s through the writings of men like Carl Olof Rosenius, Martin Luther, Francis Pieper, and C. F. W. Walther.<sup>20</sup>

### Education Years: 1927-1932

Wisløff had originally planned to study medicine; he did not find it easy to be certain what course of study he should take. It became clear to him little by little that theology and the pastoral ministry was the way he should go. So after taking the prescribed university entrance exams he began his studies at The Free Faculty. At the Free Faculty Wisløff came to

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Jesu skyld. Og det er jo så sant som det er sagt. Men jeg hadde ikke fått riktig tak i det til å begynne med. For jeg tenkte at når jeg nå har bekjent for Gud, så har han tilgitt. Men neste dag så ble det jo galt igjen. For så sa jeg noe jeg ikke skulle ha sagt, og gjorde noe jeg ikke burde ha gjort, og da hadde jeg en følelse av at forbindelsen med Gud var gått i srykker. Men heldigvis kunne jeg da komme til Gud og bekjenne på nytt, og så ble forbindelsen knyttet igjen. Men dagen etter var det samme ulykken. Jeg syntes liksom at jeg ble en kristen hver dag, og falt ut av nåden hver dag, og dette ble jeg så trett av at jeg holdt på å gi opp alt sammen.

Inntil Jesus forbarmet seg over meg, og vise meg et ord: <<*I har ikke nvalgt meg, men jeg har utvalgt Eder.*>> Jeg hadde strevet så forskrekkelig med *mitt* valg. Ja, hvis du ikke vil ta en beslutning, blir det ikke noe med deg. Det slipper du ikke utenom. Men det er *hans* valg og *hans* nåde som er det avgjørende. Og så lærte jeg å forstå at når jeg var blitt et Guds barn, så var jeg barn. Og når jeg da i aftenens fred kom med mine synder og bekjente dem, så var det *som* barn jeg kom til Ham om hvem det står at << som en far forbarmer seg over sine barn, forbarmer Herren seg over dem som frykter ham>>. This was included in a Bible hour entitled “Fri til tjeneste” (“Free to Serve”) based on 1 Cor. 9:16-27 that Wisløff gave to a youth gathering during the summer of 1980.

<sup>19</sup> Sjaastad, 24. “Likevel, - løftet og beslutningen holdt jeg fast på, selv om jeg nok hadde en lang vei å gå før det ble en mer moden erkjennelse av evangeliet. Så det er med glede jeg tenker tilbake på disse augustdagene i 1926.”

<sup>20</sup> The influence of these writers will be considered later in this chapter.

know the second of his master teachers, Dr. Ole Hallesby (1879-1961).<sup>21</sup> Wisløff had other teachers but it was Hallesby who had the greatest impact.<sup>22</sup> Wisløff says, “he had already made a powerful impression on me the summer before I began to study, at a meeting in Karlskoga in Värmland, Sweden. There was a certain faith attitude with Hallesby. He met us with this strong either – or.”<sup>23</sup> This attitude seems to characterize Wisløff as well.

We have previously given Hallesby’s view of the Scriptures that was passed on to the young Wisløff. After his student days Wisløff became critical of this view of Scripture, as we shall later observe. He remarked that “Krogh-Tonning’s old question of where the border goes between essential and non-essential is not seriously discussed, neither does Hallesby seem to be alarmed by the thought that ‘the religious-ethical’ in the Biblical context are deeply anchored in the historical.”<sup>24</sup>

Hallesby’s heart and passion for conversion and awakening came through even in dogmatics. Wisløff recalls that “during his teaching and instruction it was always strongly underscored that we must aim at awakening and conversion. We should win people for

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<sup>21</sup> See the previous chapter for information on Hallesby.

<sup>22</sup> The other teachers included: Professor Olaf Moe (1876-1963) New Testament; Professor D. A. Frøvig (1870-1954) New Testament; Professor Karl Vold (1875-1948) Old Testament; Professor Andreas Seierstad (Church History); Gabriel Skagestad (1879-1952) Practical Theology. For a more complete discussion of this period and its theologians see Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie* III, “Teologer og Teologi i Mellomkrigstider”, 304-325 and Sjaastad, 29-32.

<sup>23</sup> Sjaastad, 33. Han gjorde etveldig inntrykk på meg allerede sommeren før jeg begynte å studere, - på et sommermøte i Karlskoga i Värmland. Det var en så avgjort trosholdning hos Hallesby. Han møtte oss med dette sterke *enten – eller*.

<sup>24</sup> Wisløff, III, 306. Krogh-Tonnings gamle spørsmål om hvor grensen går mellom vesentlig og uvesentlig blir ikke for alvor drøftet, heller ikke synes Hallesby å være foruroliget av tanken om at <<det religiøs-etiske >> i bibelsk sammenheng er dypt forankret i det historiske.

God!”<sup>25</sup> The students were confronted directly and personally with the Word of God and its bearing upon their lives in relation to God. As awakening preacher his concern had a practical focus. “He strongly emphasized that the Christian life was to follow Jesus. It must mark our life and our witness,” says Wisløff.<sup>26</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology was very much in the Erlangen theology tradition. Thus Wisløff was also trained in the Erlangen way of thinking. Hallesby’s emphasis on choice and surrender came through when he as a teacher, “gave descriptions of how God makes us willing to surrender in such a way that caused us to feel our spiritual pulse.”<sup>27</sup> Even though Wisløff valued Hallesby’s understanding of the human person, he nevertheless felt that it was “followed one-sidedly.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, says Wisløff, “the personal experience can get the main emphasis in such a manner that the historically known deeds of Christianity do not come forth strongly enough.”<sup>29</sup> In spite of the fact that Hallesby oriented his theology more out of the order of salvation than Law and Gospel, Wisløff concludes that “the message of the finished work of salvation *also* sounded strong in his preaching” and “many came forth to clarity and freedom through Hallesby’s preaching of the

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<sup>25</sup> Sjaastad, 33. I hele hans undervisning og veiledning ble det derfor hele tiden sterkt understreket at vi måtte sikte på vekkelse og omvendelse. Vi skulle vinne mennesker for Gud!

<sup>26</sup> Sjaastad, 33. Sterkt betonte han at kristenlivet var å følge Jesus. Det må prege vårt liv og vårt vitnesbyrd.

<sup>27</sup> From a conversation with Wisløff.

<sup>28</sup> Sjaastad, 35. Kanskje fulgte det en viss ensidighet med.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. De personlige erfaringer kunne få hovedvekten på en slik måte at de historiske kjennsgjeringer i kristendommen ikke kom sterkt nok fram.

Gospel.”<sup>30</sup> Hallesby’s understanding of preaching seems to have shaped Wisløff’s understanding as well especially in the necessity to speak to the conscience.

In Wisløff’s assessment, Hallesby’s doctrine of baptism has a strong emphasis, however; his teaching on the relation between the Word and baptism was expressed differently than what the lay people were accustomed to.<sup>31</sup> But he has observed that Hallesby will not speak of regeneration in this connection but rather prefers to speak of awakening from the dead.<sup>32</sup> Wisløff believes that “the lay people preferred, in general, Pontoppidan’s manner of expression to Hallesby’s, but they were still completely on the same wave length with Hallesby’s preaching to awakening and conversion.”<sup>33</sup>

While Wisløff was a student at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology he became involved as a member of the Norges Kristelige Studentlag.<sup>34</sup> Hans Bovim has observed that “it would not be too strong to say that in the 50 years since, except for Professor

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Men når jeg sier dette, må det straks tilføyes at budskapet om det fullbrakte frelsesverk også lød sterkt i hans forkynnelse. Mange kom fram til klarhet og frigjørelse ved Hallesbys forkynnelse av evangeliet.

<sup>31</sup> Wisløff, III, 307.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Hallesby followed Odland. Both distanced themselves from the Grundtvigian comprehension that seemed to put such emphasis on baptism that awakening and conversion were pushed into the background and also from those who were willing to speak of a new birth in connection with conversion such as Gisle Johnson and Erik Pontoppidan. Ibid. Pontoppidan taught that “every conversion from dead works and awakening to a new life is a new birth.”(*Sannhet til Gudfryktighet*, sporsmal 692.)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Lekfolket foretrakk i alminnelight Pontoppidan uttrykksmåte for Hallesbys, men vas selvsagt helt på bølgelengde med Hallesbys forkynnelse til vekkelse og omvendelse.

<sup>34</sup> Organized in March 1924 with the purpose “to gather Christian students to strengthen their Christian lives and to win others for Christ.” See Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie* III, 326-329.

Hallesby and Rector Høeg (1881-1957), no other individual person has to the same degree had the decisive influence as Wisløff in maintaining its original direction.”<sup>35</sup>

After five years at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology including the practicum Wisløff was ready and eager to begin the pastoral ministry.<sup>36</sup> At the same time he was already interested in church history which later became his discipline as a professor. During his student years it appears that Wisløff was clearly shaped by the tradition of Hallesby his master teacher.

#### Pastor at Vaterland's Church: 1932-1940

Having gotten the approval to be a pastor, Wisløff was ordained into the office of pastor on June 22, 1932. Bishop Johan Lunde officiated and preached on the first verses of Luke 5 using the theme “On Your Word I Will Cast Out the Net.” A little earlier the Bishop

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<sup>35</sup> Steinar Hunnestad, Jon Kvalbein, Gunnar Prestegård, Redaksjonskomite, *På Ordets Grunn: Festskrift til professor dr. theol. Carl Fr. Wisløff på 70-årsdagen 31. desember 1978* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1978), 267. Wisløff hadde altså ingen avgjørende innflytelse i Laget da kursen ble lagt, men det er ikke for sterkt sagt at i de 50 år som siden er gått, er det ved siden av professor Hallesby og rektor Høeg ingen annen enkeltperson som i den grad har hatt avgjørende innflytelse når det gjaldt spørsmålet om å holde kursen.

<sup>36</sup> Wisløff took his theological exam the Spring semester 1931 and received the mark *Laudabilis LK 69: 1*, (1932), 19-20. The following assignments were given: 1. Church History, a. Historical presuppositions for the Lutheran Reformation, b. Gisle Johnson and the churchly movement from his times. 2. Old Testament, Translate and interpret Gen. 49: 21-28. 3. New Testament, Translate and interpret Romans 8:26-30. 4. Systematic Theology, The Christian teaching concerning the guilt of sin. The practical-theological exam was taken the Spring of 1932 and covered pastoral theology (soul care during awakening), homiletics (the relationship between the timeless and the relevant in the sermon), and pedagogikk (Is upbringing, especially Christian upbringing, necessary or possible, and how far is it possible? Pastoral doctrine, The personal and churchly conditions for becoming a pastor.) He received the mark of *Laudabilis LK 69:13*, (1932), 302. Seven years was the average time used to prepare for the pastoral ministry.

had said to him, “Remember, Wisløff, that the servant also stands under the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>37</sup>

On Sunday September 4, 1932, Wisløff became assistant pastor of Vaterland’s Church.<sup>38</sup> The text for this 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity was Matthew 6:24-34. One thing that stood out for him was that no man could serve two masters. His calling to this church was halftime, with the other half spent as the first secretary in the Studentlaget where he began on July 1, 1932. During the course of the first year at the Studentlaget Wisløff started the organ *Credo* which was named by him. The first number came out in February 1933. He was editor for the first half year. After his time as secretary Wisløff continued to be active in the organization.<sup>39</sup>

In 1934 Wisløff was married to Ingrid Brun, a daughter of missionaries to China. She gave up her medicine studies to devote herself to the home and her role as a pastor’s wife.

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<sup>37</sup> Sjaastad, 48. Jeg kan også så levende huske et trekk fra samtalen med biskopen før ordinasjonen. <<Husk det da, Wisløff,>> sa han, <<at også tjensten skal få stå under syndenes forlatelse.>> When preaching on John 21 Wisløff said that this passage reminded him of when the Bishop called him in for a talk before he was ordained in 1932. “It was a decisive word to have with me on the way and I was reminded about my responsible task in the congregation.” *Dagen* 76:152 (6 juli 1994).

<sup>38</sup> This congregation was located in the poorest district of Oslo.

<sup>39</sup> Wisløff was a member of the student association’s Landsrådet (country’s council) from the start (1933) up to 1968, except for the years he was senior pastor at Birkenes. For 12 years (1948-1960) he was chairman of the council and president 1967-69. In 1934 three Norwegian members of the organization traveled to meet Robert P. Wilder of the InterVarsity Fellowship. One of the Norwegians was Carl Fr. Wisløff, who also spoke. “When Wisløff saw that the British IVF was clearly caught up in the same task as the slightly older Norwegian movement, he suggested to the IVF General Secretary Douglas Johnson that more formal contacts be arranged with the existing national student movements. Wisløff returned to Norway, consulted with the NKSS leaders, and an invitation was sent to the British IVF to attend a September 1934 conference in Oslo, the first International Conference of leaders from various kindred student movements. Hallesby addressed the conference.” Keith Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship – USA, 1940-1990* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991): 135. There was a student meeting in 1939 at Cambridge, England. In August 1947 the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) was organized at the Phillips Brooks House, Harvard University, Boston. Ole Hallesby was the organization’s first president.

She was very supportive and active. Later, when he became rector of the practical seminary, they often had students in their home and she was of special encouragement to the women who were engaged to the theological students training to be pastors. After the children were raised she often accompanied him on trips at home and abroad.<sup>40</sup>

On December 1, 1936 he became the pastor at Vaterlands where he stayed until 1940. During these years he met his third master teacher, Anna Iensen (1865-1955), who was of decisive importance for his development.<sup>41</sup> Iensen worked with the homeless and others for whom life had become hard. The church was located in one of Oslo's poorest areas so the need was great. The first thing that Wisløff learned from Anna Iensen corresponded to what Hallesby had underscored, namely being converted to God.<sup>42</sup> Helge Fæhn states that "she taught Wisløff in a new way to rely on the Gospel's power to save and change people."<sup>43</sup> The second and even more important was that she taught him to read Rosenius (1816-1868), which he had not done before, and he was very glad for her advice. This was a very significant introduction for it not only acquainted him with Rosenius but also with Martin Luther, whose writings saturated those of Rosenius. Bishop Bo Giertz (1905-1998) has said that Rosenius is one of the few who have really understood Luther's theology.<sup>44</sup> Wisløff summarizes for us what he personally received through Rosenius.

I got to see how important it is to distinguish between the Law and the Gospel. God's holy Law makes us lost sinners in ourselves and reveals to us our sinfulness and false

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<sup>40</sup> See Sjaastad, 37-47.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>43</sup> Fæhn, 278. Hun var sterkt preget av den rosenianske bevegelse, og hun lærte W. på en ny måte å stole på evangeliets makt til å frelse og forvandle mennesker.

<sup>44</sup> Asbjørn Kvalbein, "Kristelig litteratur – I går og i morgen," (*Fast Grunn*, 49:5, 1996), 266.

religiosity. The Gospel is not some recipe of what we should do, but only a blessed message of a finished salvation. Jesus took our guilt upon himself! When one grasps this in faith, it is a liberating Gospel. The conscience receives rest in that it is not something of mine that makes me pleasing before God.<sup>45</sup>

Wisløff was not the first to be influenced by Rosenius; his influence may already be observed in Norway around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many things were translated and edited, most notably a devotional book for the home. Wisløff notes that this resulted in many believing people receiving freedom to look away from their own piety that was such a great part of their struggles. They got to see: I am a lost sinner, but saved through faith in Jesus!<sup>46</sup> Rosenius' *Guide to Peace* is a classic that ought to be found in every Christian home.<sup>47</sup> Also during the 1930s Wisløff read Luther's lectures on the big *Galatians* and the *Bondage of the Will* in the Swedish edition as well as his house sermons.

The learning did not end with Rosenius; in 1935 Olav Valen-Sendstad recommended that Wisløff read Franz Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*.<sup>48</sup> Wisløff sent for them and gave them careful study. His appreciation for Pieper is noted in at least two places. The first is in his article "Hvor er grensen mellom det feilfri og det feilbare i skriften?" Wisløff states, "What for that matter concerns Pieper, even I can also still have individual objections to him and his

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<sup>45</sup> Sjaastad, 53-54. Jeg fikk se hvor viktig det er å skjelne mellom loven og evangeliet. Guds hellige lov gjør oss til fortapte syndere i oss selv og avslører vår syndighet og vår falske religiøsitet. Evangeliet er ikke noen oppskrift på hva vi skal gjøre, men bare et salig budskap om en fullbrakt frelse. Jesus tok vår skyld på seg! Når en griper dette i troen, er det et frigjørende evangelium. Samvittigheten får hvile i at det ikke er noe av mitt som gjør meg behagelig for Gud.

<sup>46</sup> Sjaastad, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Sjaastad, 54. C. O. Rosenius, *Klar og usvikelig veiledning til fred* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1977). This book is translated into English: C. Rosenius, *A Faithful Guide to Peace with God*. Excerpts from the Writings of C. O. Rosenius. Edited by N. J. Laache. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1923.) Wisløff himself translated three volumes of Rosenius' works, which we will say more about in the next section.

<sup>48</sup> From a conversation with Wisløff. Franz Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 3 Bände (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924).

teaching father Walther, but I am still convinced that even the ‘able theologians from The Free Faculty’ can have great benefit from studying his vast and scholarly Lutheran Dogmatics.”<sup>49</sup> Also in his preface to the first edition of *I know on Whom I Believe*, he states “I have omitted all literature references and sources. In a book without scholarly pretensions they are not at home. Just the same I will name one book especially: Franz Pieper’s *Christliche Dogmatik*. I stand in great debt to this, without, however, therefore being able to follow it in all.”<sup>50</sup>

Wisløff also acquired from America C. F. W. Walther’s book *Die rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium* which he gave careful study before the beginning of the Second World War.<sup>51</sup> The proper distinction between Law and Gospel would soon become a strong emphasis in Wisløff’s writing and preaching.

Also during the years at Vaterland, and for many years after, Wisløff benefited from a friendship with the person and writings of Olav Valen-Sendstad (1904-1963).<sup>52</sup> They often corresponded with each other and would meet together whenever possible. Wisløff read what Valen-Sendstad wrote, encouraged his work, and often reviewed his writing for various publications. Wisløff was influenced very much by Valen-Sendstad’s book on Karl Barth,

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<sup>49</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Hvor er grensen mellom det feilfri og det feilbare i skriften?” (TTK 8, 1938): 142. “Hvad forøvrig Pieper angår, så kan nok også jeg ha enkelte innvendinger mot ham og hans lærefader Walther, men jeg er dog overbevist om at endog de ‘dyktige teologer fra Menighetsfakultetet’ (S.s uttrykk) kunde ha stort utbytte av å *studere* hans mektige og grunnlærde lutherske Dogmatikk.”

<sup>50</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* (Bergen: Lunde Forlag, 1946): 7. “Jeg har sløyet alt som heter litteraturhenvisninger og kildeanførsler. I en bok uten vitenskapelige pretensjoner hører ikke slikt hjemme. Likevel vil jeg nevne en bok særskilt: Franz Piepers *Christliche Dogmatik*. Denne står jeg i stor gjeld til, uten derfor å kunne følge den i alt.” This statement does not appear in later editions. The reason Wisløff gave was that it wasn’t fair to present himself as a pupil of Pieper only when he had been influenced by others including Krogh-Tonning and Hallesby. From a personal conversation with Wisløff. Wisløff also has several references to Pieper in his work on preaching, *Ordet fra Guds munn*.

<sup>51</sup> From a personal conversation with Wisløff. C. F. W. Walther, *Die rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1897).

<sup>52</sup> Høiesen, 80, 187, 441-446.

especially the second part. Valen-Sendstad's emphasis that the church during her earthly sojourn will always be the church militant (*ecclesia militans*) made a lasting impact on him and one can say that it became characteristic of his life to stand for the truth.<sup>53</sup> In his review of *Forsonet med Gud*<sup>54</sup> he states "that it is a book which makes Jesus and his grace great for us" and that "it is a long time since I have been so glad for a book. It brings the eternal message, and says it especially as it shall be said now."<sup>55</sup>

Valen-Sendstad was very focused on the theme of Law and Gospel. He wrote an article "Forkynnelsen av lov og evangelium" already in 1932.<sup>56</sup> He expressed the significance of the topic by saying that "'in the distinction between Law and Gospel lies Christendom's entire distinctive quality,' and the one who has not known and does not preach this distinctive quality 'is not a true Christian theologian.'"<sup>57</sup> It seems very probable that in the areas of Law and Gospel, Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the will, Valen-Sendstad was an influence on Wisløff's theology even though he does not say so directly.<sup>58</sup> This would also

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<sup>53</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Ecclesia militans" *Mellom Brødre* 18, no. 5 (Sept 1935), 5. In a conversation with the writer, Wisløff said the second half of the book corresponded closely to his own thinking on the church, and this meant very much to him.

<sup>54</sup> Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Forsonet med Gud* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1936).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 131. Og la det være sagt med en gang, at det er en bok som gjør Jesus og nåden stor for oss. ... Et er lenge siden jeg er blitt så glad for en bok. Den bringer det evige budskap, og sier det således som det skal sies nu.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 231. "I forskjellen mellom lov og evangelium ligger den hele kristendoms egenart", og den som ikke har erkjent og forkynner denne egenart, "er ikke en rett kristelig teolog."

<sup>58</sup> In Wisløff's book on preaching *Ordet fra Guds munn* he refers to several of Valen-Sendstad's writings. There is no evidence, however, that Wisløff followed Valen-Sendstad in his teaching that one could not say for sure that the infant was regenerated at the moment of baptism expressed in his *Oppgjør om den luthersk dåpslære. En rekke dokumentasjoner* (Bergen: A. S. Lunde & Co's Forlag, 1954). Wisløff has indicated in a conversation with the writer that Valen-Sendstad has taken the doctrine of predestination into the sacrament of baptism in a way that would make one think of Calvin.

most likely have had a bearing on Wisløff's departure from the order of salvation approach of his training.

This was a very significant period for the shaping of Wisløff's thinking. It was during this time that he began to express himself by way of the written page. We have already mentioned his activity as the editor of the newly started *Credo*. In addition to other smaller pieces that appeared here and there, he engaged in a debate on the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible with his former teacher Ivar P. Seierstad. Wisløff's position indicated that he was not following in the steps of his teachers but rather stood with Krogh-Tønning, (1842-1911)<sup>59</sup> H. Schmid, (1811-1885)<sup>60</sup> and Franz Pieper, (1852-1931).<sup>61</sup> As Wisløff quotes Pieper: "A Bible in which the boundaries between divine truth and human error would forever be uncertain would indeed be a fitting controversial subject for theologians of the school of Lessing, but would certainly not be the Book of which David says: 'The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple'" (Ps. 19:7).<sup>62</sup> The believer is to approach the Bible believing that "each word is God's word."<sup>63</sup> We conclude that Wisløff is seeking to be a corrective to

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<sup>59</sup> Knud Karl Krogh-Tønning, *Om inspiration. Nogle ord i anledning af Prof. F. Petersens angreb paa den kirkelige inspirations lære*, 1888. Also *Den kristelige troslære i dens grunntræk*, 1870, and *Dogmatik, I-IV*, 1885-1894. Wisløff has indicated that he read the piece on inspiration during 1937 and the shorter *troslære* before World War II.

<sup>60</sup> Heinrich Schmid, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt* (Erlangen: Verlag von Carl Hender, 1847). Wisløff indicated that he read Schmid during 1935.

<sup>61</sup> Ole Hallesby was very upset about the article Wisløff wrote on inspiration against Ivar P. Seierstad. From personal conversation with Wisløff.

<sup>62</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Vårt forhold til G. T. praktisk og teoretisk" (TTK 8, 1937), 252. Franz Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*, 275: Eine Bibel, in der die Grenzen zwischen göttlicher Wahrheit und menschlichem Irrtum ungewiss bleiben, wäre zwar ein passendes Streitobjekt für Theologen Lessingscher Geistesrichtung, aber nicht das Buch von dem David sagt: <<Das Zeugnis des Herrn ist gewiss und macht die Albernern weise>>. See also Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics I* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 229.

<sup>63</sup> Wisløff, "Vårt forhold til G. T. praktisk og teoretisk," 253.

the prevailing view of the Bible even among the so-called conservative theologians. This was Wisløff's first major public debate.

In the Spring of 1939 Wisløff reviewed Arnold T. Øhrn's book, *Is the Sermon on the Mount Gospel?* Wisløff points out that Øhrn teaches that faith is not only trust but also obedience; consequently, the Gospel consists not only of promises but also of commands that aim at the obedience of faith.<sup>64</sup> The book seriously confuses Law and Gospel.<sup>65</sup> A series of articles appeared in *Dagen* during March, April, and May. This was Wisløff's second major debate.<sup>66</sup>

While still at Vaterlands Wisløff gave a lecture in the Fall of 1939 on the theme "Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn."<sup>67</sup> This was given at a course for the Sunday School teachers in Oslo and the surrounding area at the request of Sverre Seim. Some of what he had met through the years 1935-39 is expressed in this lecture. We shall spend some time with it as evidence representative and especially crucial.

Law and Gospel are here presented as foundational and the key for understanding how we should preach to children. Wisløff gave this lecture with the conviction that preaching is the most important in all Christian work, even for children. Therefore those who work with

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<sup>64</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn*, 227. Refer to pages 227-230.

<sup>65</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Blir vi frelst ved å handle?" *Dagen*, 1 april 1939; idem., "Lov og evangelium: Svar til Arnold T. Øhrn fra pastor Carl Fr. Wisløff," 29 april 1939; idem., "Lov og evangelium: Svar til Arnold T. Øhrn," 17 mai 1939.

<sup>66</sup> The first major debate was with I. P. Seierstad on Scripture. He commented in a conversation with the writer that his teachers did not thank him for the debate with the Baptist. He took this to indicate that they were not too happy with this type of engagement.

<sup>67</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (Oslo: Norsk Søndagsskoleforbunds Forlag, 1939). English = *Law and Gospel in our Preaching to Children*.

them need to have it clear that one is a child of God entirely on the basis of what Jesus has done. He says, "One does not go to heaven because one is nice. One must seek to make it clear for the children that they are not saved if, provided that, in case....! No, God is first! ... He even comes to the little child's unconscious life and gives this child his part in his undeserved salvation through baptism."<sup>68</sup> He wanted through this lecture to establish the importance of having always in our thoughts, when speaking about Christianity, that the Gospel of Jesus is the foundation for our standing in grace, and that we should prepare and deliver this also to children.<sup>69</sup>

The lecture is divided into two parts. Part I deals with the general subject of Law and Gospel and Part II makes specific application to children. Wisløff's point of departure is the question that needs answering: "How shall I be a child of God?" He answers this first in the way of the Law, "Do this and you will live," (Gal. 3:12). Then he gives the answer by way of the Gospel referring to Eph. 2:8, 9, and Is. 55:1 saying, "At the core of all these promises is Jesus. He is the host, and the invitation is to come to him. ... Here one does not bring but receives. And what one receives is not something indefinite, it is spoken to him by the one who invites. He is the giver, he is the gift."<sup>70</sup> The Law and the Gospel are God's Word and are not to be separated, for God means both of them. However, they are to be distinguished. "For all peace and salvation come from the fact that the preacher and those who hear can

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<sup>68</sup> Sjaastad, 55. En kommer ikke til himmelen fordi en er snill. En må forsøke å gjøre klart for barna at de ikke blir salige hvis, såfremt, ifall - - ! Nei, Gud er først ute! ... Han kommer endog til det lille barns ubevisste liv og gir dette barn del i sin uforskyldte frelse ved dåpen.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>70</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium* 1939, 4-5. Midtpunktet i alle disse Guds nådeløfter er Jesus. Han er innbyderen, og innbydelsen er å komme til ham. ... Her gjelder det ikke å bringe, men å få. Og det man får er ikke noe ubestemt, det er egentlig talt ham man innbys til. Han er giveren, han er gaven.

distinguish between Law and Gospel. Just as all doubt and weakness and all wrong teaching and dead piety have their source in that the Law and the Gospel are not distinguished.”<sup>71</sup> Both Law and Gospel run through the whole Bible. The Law is natural to our flesh. The Gospel is totally foreign to our way of thinking. “That God’s Son has kept the Law as our substitute, that he has atoned for our sin, that we through relying on this are saved without any works – no, that no thinking could discover.”<sup>72</sup> The Law aims at our works saying, “you shall, you shall not.” The Gospel on the other hand aims at faith. It “does not point at me and what I am and do, it points the whole time at Jesus and says: He lived for you and died for you, he is your salvation, he is your peace, (Eph. 2:14).”<sup>73</sup> Thus the Law results in despair and death. The Gospel works life. The preaching of Christ as a pattern is not the preaching of the Gospel, for it preaches the pattern and not the substitute.<sup>74</sup> Therefore: “the Law’s result is a crushed conscience in terror before judgement. The Gospel’s result is a comforted conscience and peace with God on the basis that what Jesus has done for me, is always enough for God.”<sup>75</sup> Putting it in a different way Wisløff says, “Law and Gospel say to me two different

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 5. For all fred og salighet kommer av at forkynneren og den som hører kan skjelne mellom lov og evangelium. Likesom all tvil og vanmakt, all vrang lære og død fromhet har sin kilde deri at det ikke blir skjelnet mellom lov og evangelium.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 8. Det Guds sønn har holdt loven som vår stedfortreder, at han har sonet vår synd, at vi uten noen gjerning blir frelst ved å lite på det – nei, det kunde ingen tanke finne ut.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Derfor driver evangeliet ikke på mig og det jeg er og gjør, det driver hele tiden på Jesus og sier: Han, lan levde for dig og døde for dig, han er din salighet, han er din fred. Efes. 2, 14.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 10. Lovens virkning er en sønderknust samvittighet i skrekk for dom. Evangeliets virkning er grunnlag at hvad Jesus har gjort for mig, er evig nok for Gud.

things about God, which are both true. It has been said from old: The Law is God when he accuses and sentences, the Gospel is God when he acquits and justifies.”<sup>76</sup>

The second question considered in the first part concerns the question “How shall I learn to live a true Christian life?” Here once again the orientation is the distinction between Law and Gospel. “The Law is necessary also for a Christian, just because he still has his flesh. The flesh needs again and again to be disciplined and be put to death, again and again to be given over to crucifixion, as it was once for all given to crucifixion through conversion.”<sup>77</sup> In addition, “the believer needs the Law as an admonition/reminder about how and in what manner God would have his new life lived in sacrifice and service.”<sup>78</sup> However, “the Law does not give the believer any power to live the new life.”<sup>79</sup> But “the Gospel is that which also gives the believer power for a new life. For in and with the Gospel comes our Lord Jesus himself, and is through faith our possession. And he is our life, our sanctification, 1 Cor. 1:30. The one who remains in him bears fruit, John 15:1 ff. All depends on this: That one who in himself is a poor sinner remains in him.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. *Lov og evangelium sier mig to forskjellige ting om Gud*, som begge er sanne. Det har vært sagt slik fra gammelt: Loven er Gud når han anklager og straffer, evangeliet er Gud når han frikjenner og rettferdiggjør.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 14. Loven er nødvendig også for en kristen, nettop fordi han ennå har sitt kjød. Kjødet trenger på ny og på ny å tuktes og dødes, igjen og igjen å overgis til korsfestelse, likesom det en gang for alle blev overgitt til korsfestelse ved omvendelsen.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Likeså trenger den troende loven som en påminnelse om hvor og *på hvilken måte* Gud vil ha hans nye liv i offer og tjeneste.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Men loven gir heller ikke den troende noen *kraft* til det nye liv.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 14-15. Evangeliet er det som gir også den troende kraft til et nytt liv. For i og med evangeliet kommer vår Herre Jesus selv, og blir ved troen vår eiendom. Og han er vårt liv, vår helliggjørelse. 1 Kor. 1, 30. Den som blir *i ham*, bærer frukt. Joh. 15, 1 ff. Alt henger på dette: Som en i sig selv fattig synder der *å bli i ham*.

We now turn to Part II, which relates these truths specifically to children. Wisløff contends that the child can relate to these truths as well as an adult. He takes support from Luther, who focused his preaching at a level appropriate for Hans and Grete. The child can know grief for what he has done against God and can rejoice in the assurance that Jesus is pleased with him in spite of disobedience and sins because of His indescribable love.<sup>81</sup> In our ministry we must, says Wisløff, take the pains to be clear on the truths of Law and Gospel ourselves before we speak of them to others, including children. “The difference between the way of works and the way of grace to salvation we must know, - or we simply do not know God, and can not show others the way either. The way is the same for all. Beware of presenting it differently.”<sup>82</sup>

Wisløff discusses the importance of not preaching Jesus for our children as a pattern Savior, which is no Savior, but rather as a redeeming Savior. Even though we must give consideration to the fact that many children live in the life they received in baptism, this does not mean that *all* children live with God. “Therefore these children need to come to Jesus in contrition (*anger*) and faith, just as an adult sinner – even if it happens in the manner that is appropriate for children.”<sup>83</sup> In the second place the preaching of the Gospel “concerns all of God’s children, both small and big, that the ‘life they live in the flesh, they live by faith in him who loved us and gave himself for us.’ (Gal. 2:20) Jesus is our life. Your children have their

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 22. Forskjellen mellem gjerningenes vei og nådens vei til frelse må vi kjenne, - ellers kjenner vi simpelthen ikke *Gud*, og kan ikke vise andre veien heller. Veien er den samme for alle. Vøkt dig for a fremstille det anderledes.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 25. Derfor trenger disse barn å komme til Jesus i anger og tro, likevel som en voksen synder – om det enn skjer på harnets måte.

life in him just as you have it.”<sup>84</sup> Here we see his core emphasis on the right distinction between Law and Gospel.

Some have questioned whether children actually need the grace in Christ to the same extent as a sinner grown hardened. Wisløff believes such questioning is the result of the psychological preaching in the past. This kind of preaching is described as:

focused on digging in our soul-life, to show how it is with the *sleeping* sinner, calling attention to what he feels and experiences in *awakening*, dwelling on what he inwardly experiences before, during and after *conversion*, and how he then finally feels it when he is *saved*. During this kind of preaching the sinner sits the whole time and feels himself, takes his pulse and thinks in one moment: Of course I recognize myself, - and in the next: No, this I have not experienced.”<sup>85</sup>

In general this description fits the “experience theology” discussed in chapter two. Wisløff does not specifically identify whom he has in mind. However, at least in part, it fits the kind of preaching that is sometimes found in Hallesby. Wisløff’s analysis runs the way of Law and Gospel. By so doing he concludes that “preaching in psychological categories easily becomes legalistic preaching, because the whole time it keeps at me and after me and my feelings and my reactions – while a Biblical Gospel preaching first and foremost urges at Him, Him.”<sup>86</sup> It also has the danger of leading people to believe that they only have a need for what they *feel* a

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 25-26. Det gjelder alle Guds barn, både små og store, at det <<liv de lever i kjødet, det lever de i troen på ham som elsket oss og gav sig selv for oss.>> Gal. 2, 20. Jesus er vårt liv. Barna dine har sitt liv i ham likevel som du har det.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 26. Men forynnelsen har ofte i den grad vært psykologisk orientert og interessert, at den i ett og alt har vært innstillet på å grave i vårt sjel liv, vise hvordan den *sovende* synder har det, påpeke hvad han føler og oplever i *vekkelsen*, dveler ved hvad han innvortes erfarer før, under og etter *omvendelsen*, og hvordan han så endelig føler det når han er frelst. Under denne forkynnelse sitter tilhøreren hele tiden og kjenner på sig selv, tar sig selv på pulsen og tenker i det ene øieblikk: Jo, nu kjenner jeg mig igjen, - og i neste: Nei, dette har jeg ikke erfart. Interestingly enough this section has been edited out of the later editions (1970 and 1995). Perhaps it was felt that the material no longer applied to the current situation.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 26-27. En forkynnelse i psykologiske kategorier blir lett en vesentlig lovisk forkynnelse, fordi den hele tiden driver på mig, og atter mig, mine følelser og mine reaksjoner, mens en bibelsk, evangelisk forkynnelse først og fremst driver på Ham, Ham.

need for. On this basis therefore it is concluded that since a child does not have this experience, it really does not need grace. However, the Bible tells a different story, for the child is born with the need for grace (Rom. 5:18; Eph. 2:6).<sup>87</sup> “So the children also need the grace in Christ. They need to see God’s lamb. Access to Him is not dependent on a certain measurement of the knowledge of sin.”<sup>88</sup>

Turning to the question of the possibility of this grace to be given to our children Wisløff takes up the subject of baptism. But what is baptism? How should we understand it? Thinking of the sacraments as a visible word, “a speaking that we can see,” Wisløff asks, “what does baptism speak to us, is it Law or Gospel?”<sup>89</sup> He answers, “Baptism is pure Gospel. ... It is a friendly invitation and a grace-filled promise of the forgiveness of sins. A Gospel!”<sup>90</sup> For Wisløff the rejection of infant baptism involves the changing of baptism from Gospel to Law.<sup>91</sup> The doubts about infant baptism are traced back to preaching that has confused Law and Gospel and thus given the impression that salvation and consequently baptism was a working together between God and them. This confusion was the inevitable result of preaching the Gospel in psychological categories.<sup>92</sup> The solution is not “to harp a lot about infant baptism, much more than before,” but

that one changes his mind on the distinction between Law and Gospel. Then one understands that the Law is not given to make us living, but to kill, to crush. And the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 28. Så trenger også barna nåden i Kristus. De trenger å se det Guds lam. Adgangen til ham er ikke avhengig av et visst mål av syndserkjennelse.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 29 En tale som vi kan se. Og det dåpen taler til oss, er det lov eller evangelium?

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. Dåpen er rent evangelium. ... Den er en vennlig innbydelse og et nådefullt tilsagn om syndenes forlatelse. Et evangelium!

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 30.

Gospel is not a demand of obedience indeed, but an unrestricted promise of grace and the forgiveness of sins, that aims alone at our heart's faith and trust (confidence). That, in other words, salvation is God's work alone, - inasmuch as faith is not any work but the heart's trust (confidence), - a trust (confidence) that is created by the Word and Spirit.<sup>93</sup>

As we consider this lecture in the context of Wisløff's life and education we can see the influence of what has come to him during the Vaterland years. We have noted briefly that his position on Scripture reflects this. He also deals with the issue of salvation in terms of Law and Gospel and their corresponding counterparts of repentance and faith, rather than according to the typical pietistic scheme of the order of salvation. The Law – Gospel approach was applied to the question of how we learn to live as Christians. Law and Gospel provide the way to understand the needs of children and reveal the errors produced by the psychological preaching with its anthropocentric reference. Baptism and its application is understood in terms of Law and Gospel. This lecture seems to give clear indication of what Wisløff has learned during these years: the Law – Gospel way of theology.

#### Pastor at Birkenes: 1940-1947

The time had come when he thought a change would be good for the congregation and him. He had been at Vaterland's for eight years, four of which were in the position of senior pastor. He had made known his desire to move before April of 1940, and on August 28<sup>th</sup> he was named senior pastor at Birkenes in the Agder bishopric. The move took place early November in the midst of the German occupation of Norway that had begun April 9, 1940.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 30-31. Men veien er at man besinner sig på forskjellen mellem lov og evangelium. Så man forstår ut loven ikke er gitt til å gjøre oss levende, men til å døde, sønderknuse. Og at evangeliet ikke er et krav om lydighet det også, men et fritt tilsagn om nåde og syndenes forlatelse, som sikter alene på vårt hjertes tro og tillit. At m. a. o. Frelsen er Guds verk

When he was installed on 10 November, it was not just into another congregation. It marked a big transition involving his meeting with what he later called his fourth master teacher, the “lay readers (*leserne*).”

What was new for Wisløff in this transition? This was a part of the country that had experienced many big awakenings at the beginning of the century. He tells us that “it was here that I seriously met the free laymen’s work.”<sup>94</sup> He was not completely unfamiliar with the prayer house movement, but what was new for him was to see it developed in such a strong way. This expression of Christianity made a lasting impression on him. He states: “I needed time to get used to it. I felt at the time, and I have felt it since, that a new dimension opened for me. I could see the country’s popular awakening movements in a greater relationship than before. I acquired many elements into my view of the church and Christianity. And there the self-standing (independent/free) laymen’s work has an impressive place.”<sup>95</sup> This seems to give evidence of a shift in thinking for before moving to Birkenes Fæhn notes that Wisløff could prioritize as follows: “First is the congregation (*menigheten*) – and then comes the committee (*foreningene*) they are the *workers* in the congregation.”<sup>96</sup> Fæhn concludes that the center of gravity in this view of the church was little by little essentially disowned, and this was not least due to the influence that Wisløff met at

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alene, - eftersom troen ingen gjeruing er men hjertets tillit, - en tillit som er skapt ved Ordet og Anden.

<sup>94</sup> Sjaastad, 60. For her møtte jeg det frivillige lekmannsarbeid for alvor.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 60-61. Jeg trengte tid til å venne meg til det. Jeg følte det den gangen, og jeg har følt det siden, at en ny dimensjon åpnet seg for meg. Jeg kunne se landets folkelige vekkellesbevegelser i en større sammenheng enn før. Jeg fikk flere momenter inn i mitt syn på kirke og kristendom. Og der har det selvstendige lekmannsarbeid en ruvende plass.

<sup>96</sup> Fæhn, 278. Quoting Wisløff, Vaterlandskirkens 40-årsberetning. Ennå i 1939 kunne W. prioritere slik: “Først er det *menigheten* – og så kommer foreningene . . . de er *arbeidslag* i *menigheten*.”

Birkenes.<sup>97</sup> Wisløff says “It was in meeting with these readers that I learned that which has meant so much for me since: namely, the necessity of free movements in the church that are subject to neither the church’s office nor the church’s institution.”<sup>98</sup> It must be remembered that Wisløff is saying this in the context of a state church. The implications of this shift, or perhaps we might say expanded view of the church, will be seen more clearly in Wisløff in the 1960s and later. Since Wisløff’s doctrine of the church lies outside the scope of our investigation, we will not pursue upon it here.

As a growing and developing young pastor Wisløff believed preaching to be at the heart of the pastoral ministry. Sjaastad says, preaching has been Wisløff’s main concern the whole way, and the care for the Christian congregation’s preaching is still what Wisløff is involved with in his seventies.<sup>99</sup> Wisløff expresses his conviction on the significance of preaching. “The spiritual advance and spiritual stagnation, breakthrough and lethargy in the Christian congregation’s life – all this is connected closest together with the spiritual content in the preaching. As Luther says: ‘It is better to leave out everything else, than to leave out God’s Word.’”<sup>100</sup> In preaching “one should have the goal that people must be converted to God. That one must not forget, because otherwise one is in danger of nudging people into

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Sjaastad, 62. Det var i møte med disse leserne at jeg lærte det som har betydd så mye for meg siden: nemlig nødvendigheten av frie bevegelser i kirken som ikke er underlagt hverken kirkens embete eller kirkens organer.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 74. Forkynnelsen har vært Wisløff’s hovedanliggende hele veien, og omsorgen for den kristne menighets forkynnelse er nok det Wisløff til syvende og sist er mest opptatt med.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Åndelig fremgang dvaletilstand i den kristne menighets liv – alt dette henger på det nøyeste sammen med den åndelige gehalt i forkynnelsen. Som Luther sier: <<Det er bedre å utelate alt annet, enn å utelate Guds ord!>>

self-deception.”<sup>101</sup> But, at the same time the preacher “must not forget the Gospel. For, in opposition to what many think it is not easy to believe the Gospel. It is so foreign to our nature! By nature we think differently. Therefore we must hear again and again the word of what Jesus has done for sinners.”<sup>102</sup> This clearly discloses what was on Wisløff’s heart as a pastor.

What topics were Wisløff speaking and writing about during the days at Birkenes? In his lecturing and from his pen the pouring forth continues of what he had met while a pastor at Vaterlands. We will briefly survey those works that have particular relevance for our theme. We will consider them in chronological order.

In 1941 Wisløff wrote a small brochure entitled *Jesu dåp og vår dåp*. It takes up the task of answering the then pressing questions relating to baptism. The introduction identifies them: “What do I have in my baptism? – What should I think about baptism?”<sup>103</sup> The first question deals with baptism’s benefit, i.e. what do we get and receive? The second relates to the meaning of Jesus’ baptism and asks, “Is this an example for me to follow?” A third question deals with the meaning of John's baptism. Wisløff expresses his convictions that every Christian must be clear especially on the first two questions and in particular those who work with children.<sup>104</sup> He believes that it is far more important to bring clarity in these

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 75. ... en skal ha det siktet at folk må bli omvendt til Gud. Det må en ikke glemme, for en står ellers i fare for å dytte folk inn i selvbedrag.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Så må en heller ikke glemme evangeliet. For, - i motsetning til det mange mener -, er det ikke lett å tro på evangeliet. Det er så fremmed for vår natur! Vi tenker av naturen annerledes. Derfor må vi høre det om igjen og om igjen, ordet om hva Jesus har gjort for syndere.

<sup>103</sup> Wisløff, *Jesu dåp og vår dåp* (Oslo: Norsk Søndagsskole Forbunds Forlag, 1941), 3. English translation of the title *Jesus’ Baptism and Our Baptism*, abbreviated hereafter as JD.

<sup>104</sup> Wisløff, JD, 3.

questions of baptism than being eager that one should speak more and several times of baptism.<sup>105</sup> For Wisløff the problem of understanding baptism is a Law – Gospel problem.

He “will in this little writing take up these questions in the light from the Bible, which is the only true guide.”<sup>106</sup> The piece is divided into six main parts: I. What is baptism? II. Do children need baptism? III. Can children believe? IV. The apostate and baptism. V. John’s baptism. VI. Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan – and our baptism. The work did not intend to be a complete writing about baptism. It focused particularly on the relationship between Jesus’ baptism (and John’s baptism) and our baptism. Since a later chapter will deal with Wisløff’s understanding of baptism we will not give it any more analysis at this point.

At a meeting at Birkeland Wisløff gave a major lecture entitled “Barnedåpens betydning for den voksne.”<sup>107</sup> This was later published in the Christian paper *For Fattig og Rik* October 4 and 11, 1942. The lecture sought to answer three questions. 1. What does it mean for me that I am baptized? 2. What does it mean for me that I was baptized as an infant? 3. The apostate and baptism.

The starting point for the lecture is that the New Testament teaches us “that the life in God consists in knowing Jesus and being in living relationship with him. Jesus himself says it: ‘this is the eternal life that they know you, the only true God, and him you sent, Jesus

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<sup>105</sup> Wisløff, JD, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Wisløff, JD, 4. Vi vil i dette lille skrift ta disse spørsmål fram i lyset fra Bibelen, som er den eneste sanne veileder.

<sup>107</sup> Wisløff, “Barnedåpens betydning for den voksne.” I & II (*For Fattig og Rik* October 4 og 11, 1942). Title translated into English, “Infant baptism’s meaning for the Adult.” Abreviated as Barne I and Barne II. Barne II indicates the Wisløff made use of Luther’s *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519) AE 35: 29-43. In Barne II Wisløff says that when a person is dead, then baptism is complete (Appendix 1). This corresponds to what Luther said. “But the spiritual baptism, the drowning of sin, which it signifies, lasts as long

Christ.' John 17:3."<sup>108</sup> After discussing what being a Christian is not, he comes to the matter of how one comes to this living relationship with Jesus. The New Testament answers by pointing to that which is called the means of grace: the Word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Out of this context and orientation the three questions are expounded.

During the same year Wisløff published in a scholarly journal *Tidsskrift for teologi og Kirke* "Schartaus prekener. Forsøk på en systematisk oversikt, særlig med tanke på forkynnelsen av nådens ordning."<sup>109</sup> This study gives evidence of Wisløff's interest in preaching and also of his scholarly ability. Various aspects of Schartau's sermons are analyzed and commented on. Wisløff notes that "we can say that here we meet a preaching of conversion."<sup>110</sup> There is a strong emphasis on the marks that distinguish false and true faith. His preaching has a very detailed order of salvation along with a psychological description of conversion. Schartau goes in the direction of pointing the sinner one-sidedly to what is going on within and to prayer rather than to the Word. For an illustration of the orthodox way Wisløff quotes Walther. "The Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to the Word and the Sacraments,

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as we live and is completed only in death. Then it is that a person is completely sunk in baptism, and that which baptism signifies comes to pass." AE 35:30.

<sup>108</sup> Wisløff, Barne I. Dette er det evige liv at de kjenner deg, den eneste sanne Gud, og ham du utsendte, Jesus Kristus. Joh. 17, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Schartaus prekener. Forsøk på en systematisk oversikt, særlig med tanke på forkynnelsen av nådens ordning." (*Tidsskrift for teologi og Kirke* No. 2 & 3, 1942). English translation of the title: "Schartau's Sermons: Attempt at a systematic survey, especially with the thought of the preaching of Grace's Order." Henric Schartau (1757-1825) was a Swedish Lutheran pastor and churchman. After his death a movement known as Schartauanism rose up among theological students at Lund and later continued in the areas of Lund and Gothenburg.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Som en alminnelig kan vi si at vi her møter en utpreget *omvendelses-preken*.

but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace.”<sup>111</sup>

While clearly acknowledging the weakness of its subjective character, Wisløff believes that Schartau knows that faith can only build on Christ and not on itself but he does not rejoice in it in the same way as Luther.<sup>112</sup> “Likewise one can come to think – that with Schartau where there appears overall a pronounced *ordo – salutis* teaching – that the eye is directed much to one’s own heart and little to God’s.”<sup>113</sup> Wisløff ends the article by noting that this preaching at the same time has its great merits especially in its seriousness whereby it speaks to the conscience. It also gives solid knowledge and brings up a type of Christian that knows where they stand and what they believe in.<sup>114</sup>

On the basis of Wisløff’s analysis there is indication that he sees clearly the problems in the order of salvation emphasis as well as the dangers with the psychological way of preaching. Thus what we have observed earlier in his approach to Law and Gospel, and baptism we now see coming through in the analysis of preaching.<sup>115</sup>

At the cathedral in Kristiansand Sør during October 1943 Wisløff gave a series of lectures on the subject of baptism. Many requested to have them and so they were made available in printed form. He begins by noting that the problem is that “for very many of

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 12. Quote from Pieper 3: 257 (German), 218 (English) Gottes Wort wird nicht recht geteilt, wenn man die vom Gesetz getroffenen und erschreckten Sünder, anstatt sie auf Wort und Sakrament zu weisen anweist, durch Beten und Kämpfen sich den Gegenstand zu erringen, nämlich so lange zu beten und zu kämpfen.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. Likeså kan en komme til å synes – hos S. Som overalt hvor det opptrer en utpreget *ordo salutis*-lære – at blikket rettes vel mye mot ens eget hjerte og vel lite mot Guds.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>115</sup> Wisløff also addresses the *ordo salutis* on pages 162-163 of *Ordet fra Guds munn*.

today's Christians baptism has lost its organic place in their faith view. Very many do not know what they should do with baptism or where they should place it."<sup>116</sup> On the one hand "they have rather clear for themselves conversion and salvation, but as soon as we speak about baptism, it becomes difficult. Where does baptism belong in relation to my conversion? What place should I give the fact that I am baptized as a child?"<sup>117</sup>

In speaking about baptism it is especially important to put it in relationship to the entire Christian life. In doing so Wisløff's point of departure is what he considers to be the most important question in the Christian life: "How does a person come to faith?" To this Wisløff responds that the Bible does not give one answer but two: the Law and the Gospel. The development that follows is much the same as in *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelsen for barn* (1939). The transition to baptism comes with the words, "All words that are heard in the congregation are Law and Gospel. Where then does baptism belong here?"<sup>118</sup> Baptism is the Gospel's word in God's congregation.

The next major section deals with baptism as a means of grace. He reviews what was previously covered, namely "that saving faith in itself is not a decision of the will that I make, even though it also belongs with, but that faith in itself is nothing other than *trust in God's grace*. A trust/confidence that is created and worked in my heart by God's Holy Spirit."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Wisløff, *Dåpen*, 5. Saken er den at for svært mange av vår tids kristne har dåpen mistet sin organiske plass i deres trossyn. Svært mange troende vet ikke hva de skal gjøre med dåpen eller hvor de skal plasere den.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. De har nokså klart for seg dette med vår omvendelse og frelse, men såsnart vi taler om dåpen blir det vanskelig. Hvor hører dåpen hjemme i forhold til min omvendelse? Hvilken plass skal jeg gi det faktum at jeg er døpt som barn?

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 9. Alt ord som lyder i Guds menighet er lov og evangelium. Hvor hører da dåpen hjemme her?

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 11. Vi talte igår om troen og evangeliet og streket særlig under at troen, den frelsende tro, i seg selv ikke er en viljebeslutning som jeg tar, uaktet det også hører med,

This is all in the context of the two big factors of Law and Gospel. Wisløff shows from the Scriptures the teaching of the means of grace. This is followed by referring to the *Augsburg Confession* Article V.

The third part turns to infant baptism. This material is presented with the consciousness that there are some who now deny that infant baptism is right and so think that they do not need to be baptized.<sup>120</sup> The major problems here are their failure to see baptism as a means of grace, and that infants need this cleansing. In summary on why we practice infant baptism: “We do it because he loved us first, because the Bible strongly witnesses that it was not we who chose him, but it was he who chose us. We do it because we must nail down that faith is a fruit of the means of grace. Infant baptism stands as a strong witness that you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”<sup>121</sup> Wisløff deals with these and other objections to infant baptism, which we will present in greater detail in a later chapter.

The presentation concluded with material from “Barnedåpens betydning for den voksne” (1942) given in a revised and somewhat shortened form. He ends by thanking God for his baptism for it gives witness of three things. 1. God is the one who begins. 2. God is faithful. 3. God will complete that which he began.<sup>122</sup> The lectures work out of the same basic orientation as given in 1939 with a strong emphasis on Law and Gospel and stresses that baptism is Gospel and that God gives His grace through means.

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men at troen I seg selv intet annet er enn *tillit til Guds nåde*. En tillit som er skapt og virket i mitt hjerte ved Guds hellige ånd.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 26. Det gjør vi fordi han elsket oss først, fordi Bibelen sterkt vidner om at det var ikke vi som utvalgte ham, men det var han som utvalgte oss. Vi gjør det fordi vi må slå fast at troen er en frukt av nådemidlene. Barnedåpen står der som det sterke vidnesbyrd om at I har ikke utvalgt meg, men jeg har utvalgt eder.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 39.

There is a small article by Wisløff that appeared in January 1943 entitled “Hva betyr den evangelisk lutherske tro for den enkelte og for det hele folk?”<sup>123</sup> that gives a brief summary of his understanding of Lutheran theology. He points out that since the time of the Reformation the Lutheran church has lived in the crossfire between the Roman Catholic Church on the one side and the Reformed and all the sects on the other. The Reformed think that the Lutherans are one-sided in their emphasis on the Gospel. They believe that Lutherans should include in the Gospel a demanding message that calls for obedience. Wisløff answers, “It is this ‘one-sided’ Gospel that alone gives life and salvation; salvation is God’s work *alone*.”<sup>124</sup> A Lutheran Christian is in many people’s eyes an incomprehensible person. “He is quite simply a sinner, saved by grace – a child of God and one body in the church that is there where the Word is preached and the sacraments rightly administered.”<sup>125</sup>

In another small article of a devotional nature Wisløff takes up a common theme in pietism, “Levende kristendom.”<sup>126</sup> This deals with the nature of the Christian life. The definitive verse is 1 John 5:12 which teaches that “the life – it is fellowship of faith with Jesus. In him is the life. In fellowship with him you possess life.”<sup>127</sup> This leads naturally to the question of when? “When I ask Him very sincerely about it? When I give myself completely over to Him? Oh dear, the seeking soul asks Him sincerely about life – more life! And will continuously anew give himself over to God. This is good, for it is one part of

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<sup>123</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Hva betyr den evangelisk lutherske tro for den enkelte og for det hele folk?” (*Kristelig Ukeblad* januar 1943).

<sup>124</sup> Wisløff, “Hva betyr...” januar 1943. Det er dette <<ensidige>> evangelium som alene gir liv og salighet: frelsen er Guds verk alene.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Han er ganske enkelt en synder, frelst av nåde – et barn av Gud og et lem på den kirke som er der hvor Ordet forkynnes rett og sakramentene forvaltes rettelig.

<sup>126</sup> Wisløff, “Levende kristendom” *Bymisjon*, ( 4 desember 1943). ET=Living Christianity.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Livet - det er troens samfunn med Jesus. I ham er livet. I samfunnet i med ham eier du livet.

completely over to Him? Oh dear, the seeking soul asks Him sincerely about life – more life! And will continuously anew give himself over to God. This is good, for it is one part of God's work in the awakened and seeking. But life is not in anything of this."<sup>128</sup> This is running the way of the Law.

In contrast Wisløff connects life with the forgiveness of sins. "Where the forgiveness of sins is – there is life and salvation."<sup>129</sup> And with Jesus "is the forgiveness for all sin." Therefore "Seek Him! Seek Him in the Word, the blessed Gospel about Jesus, the sinner's friend. ... Seek never to become something different in yourself than what you are: a lost sinner before God. But seek Him in the Word and means of grace."<sup>130</sup> For "those who have the Son have life."<sup>131</sup> There seems to be such an emphasis on seeking here that it overshadows Jesus.

The subject of preaching was close to Wisløff's heart as we have already observed. In 1944 he gave a lecture on the subject "Forkynnelsen og noen ord om de krav som må stilles til den."<sup>132</sup> The study of preaching, says Wisløff, requires that one inquire into the spiritual background and the relationship that it stands in.<sup>133</sup> For this reason the first part of the lecture

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Når jeg ber ham riktig inderlig om det? Når jeg overgir meg helt til ham? Akk ja, den søkende sjel ber ham inderlig om, liv – m e r liv! og vil stadig på ny gi seg h e l t over til Gud. Dette er godt, for det er en del av Guds gjerning i den vakte og søkende. Men liv er det ikke i noe av dette.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. Men hvor syndenes forlatelse er – der er liv og salighet. See *Small Catechism*.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Søk ham! Søk ham i Ordet, det salige evangelium om Jesus, synderes venn. ... Søk aldri å bli noe annet i deg selv enn det du er: en fortaapt synder for Gud. Men søk ham, søk ham i Ord og nådemiddel.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Den som har Sønnen, har livet.

<sup>132</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Forkynnelsen og noen ord om de krav som må stilles til den." Norges Kristelige Studentlag, 1944. ET= "Preaching and some words about the demand which must be placed on it."

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 2.

is given to a historical survey of the previous century up to the present. Next, he seeks to do that which is “still much more important: A cross-section of the preaching’s spiritual situation today. Few things are more difficult than to understand ones own time, and yet fewer things are more useful.”<sup>134</sup> Finally, Wisløff “will attempt to be clear over how the result of this examination can answer to the ideal: A Biblical and Lutheran preaching, such as the Bible and the Confessions can give it.”<sup>135</sup> Selected relevant passages will be highlighted in our survey.

From this piece we get a glimpse into Wisløff’s analysis of his own time and what issues he was facing. He finds that an abundant amount of Reformed devotional material and preaching has made its way into Norway.<sup>136</sup> Along with this was the *Alliance View* movement. This involved Christians joining together for meetings and other events. At such gatherings the preacher is not to speak on controversial questions, that is, those issues on which Christians differ, such as the means of grace, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, faith, etc. From this approach there follows a certain looseness in the life.<sup>137</sup>

In pietism Wisløff believes that there are some things that need to be preserved while other aspects are not so valuable. It is not good to go the way “that looks more on our own heart than on God’s heart – not the pious person, but Jesus should be the focal point for our

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid. Deretter skal vi forsøke oss på noe som er enda meget vanskeligere: Et tversnitt av forkynnelseens åndelige situasjon i dag. Få ting er vanskeligere enn å forstå sin egen tid, enda færre ting er nyttigere.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Endelig skal vi prøve å bli klar over hvordan resultatet av disse undersøkelser kan svare til idealet: En bibelsk og luthersk forkynnelse, slik som Bibel og Bekjennelse kan gi oss den.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 7.

attention.”<sup>138</sup> It “is better to point the seeking soul to the Word and sacrament than to their own prayer.”<sup>139</sup> There is also the weakness in pietism to focus on the immoral rather than sin.<sup>140</sup> There is a lack of understanding of the heart’s total corruption.<sup>141</sup> Additionally, there is a lack of the knowledge that it is only Christ’s imputed righteousness that makes a Christian pleasing before God.<sup>142</sup> Of value is the emphasis that our citizenship is in heaven and that this world is not our home.<sup>143</sup> Wisløff also recognizes as positive that friendship with the world is to be an enemy of God. Many preachers do not have the Gospel clear when they think that the appeals “You must come tonight!” and “Surrender to God!” are the Gospel.<sup>144</sup>

Wisløff traces this lack of clarity to an optimistic view of the human person. He sees this as a clear departure from the Reformation citing the explanation of the third article of the Creed in Luther’s *Small Catechism*.<sup>145</sup> He also refers to the *Formula of Concord*, where we are reminded of Augustine, who had thought that God in the Gospel reveals his will to us, but to say yes to the Gospel, that was our concern. But it became clear to Augustine that the

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 8. ... se mere på vårt eget hjerte enn på Guds hjerte - ikke det fromme menneske, men Jesus skal Være midtpunktet for vår oppmerksomhet.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. - så er vi enig med de evangel. i at det er bedre å vise søkende sjeler til Ord og sakrament enn til sin egen bønn. Here Wisløff is emphasizing what Walther said in Thesis IX. “*In the fifth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to the Word and the Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace; in other words, when they are told to keep on praying and struggling until they feel that God has received them into grace.*” C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* translated by W. H. T. Dau. (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 4.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 10. “I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.”

whole work is God's.<sup>146</sup> And Wisløff adds by way of assessment, "Augustine's misunderstanding continues on from a thousand pulpits, while there is little paying of attention to the fathers' clear light on this matter."<sup>147</sup> "The reformers determined: human beings are dead, and grace is no medicine, such does not benefit dead people, grace is nothing other than God's favor for Jesus' sake, God justifies the ungodly, he makes the dead living."<sup>148</sup> Wisløff further points out that the reformers discussed *facultas applicandi se ad gratiam*, the ability to prepare oneself or draw near to grace.<sup>149</sup> He asks, "Is there found a kind of ability in us? The preaching today on the whole leaves no doubt about it. Erasmus also thought so, yes, inevitably! The person must do *quod in se est*, - do that which is in his power. But our church's confession says no. A person has free will that can do the Law's outward deeds, but not to fear God and believe in Him."<sup>150</sup> This leaves people in a spiritual condition short of the Gospel.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 10. "What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (I Cor. 4:7). It was this passage in particular which, by St. Augustine's own statement, persuaded him to recant his former erroneous opinion as he had set it forth in his treatise *Concerning Predestination*, (*De praedestinatione*, III, 7.) "The grace of God consists merely in this, that God in the preaching of the truth reveals his will; but to assent to this Gospel when it is preached is our own work and lies within our own power." And St. Augustine says further on, "I have erred when I said that it lies within our power to believe and to will, but that it is God's work to give the ability to achieve something to those who believe and will." *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, Article II. Free Will, 27. Tappert, 526-527.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. Augustins misforståelse lever videre fra tusen prekestoler, mens det er lite å merke til fedrenes klare lys over denne sak.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 11. Men reformatorene slo fast: Menneskene er døde, og nåden er ingen medisin, slikt nytter ikke på døde folk, nåden er intet annet enn Guds yndest for Jesu skyld, Gud rettferdiggjør den ugudelige, han gjør de døde levende.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. Finnes en slik evne i oss? Forkynnelsen i dag later gjennomgående ikke til å være i tvil. Erasmus mente også ja, selvfølgelig! Står i hans makt. Men vår kirkes bekjennelse sier nei. Mennesket har fri vilje som kan gjøre lovens utvortes gjerninger, men ikke til å frykte Gud og tro på ham.

A second reason given for this lack of clarity is found in psychologizing in the preaching which has the effect of putting the person in the center. “We get the description of how the awakened person has it, what he feels in the moment of conversion, etc. During this the listener sits and feels his pulse; this I recognize, but this I do not recognize.”<sup>151</sup> Wisløff concludes, “But I think at the same time, that *the psychological (emphasis) and the preaching that emphasizes the will has created a centering on the ego, that can remind one of pietism’s repentance’s struggle (botskamp) and self-searching in its weakest form, but without possessing its ethical seriousness.*”<sup>152</sup> He adds that one must be careful of overgeneralizing and therefore forgetting that there is still much solid and good preaching in Norway today (1944).<sup>153</sup> The weaknesses described above imply that neither Law nor Gospel is delivered clearly.

Turning to the solution Wisløff asks, “What must one ask of the preaching – out from a Lutheran faith view?”<sup>154</sup> We will present this here only very briefly. 1. The preaching must distinguish between Law and Gospel.<sup>155</sup> 2. The preaching must take into account – and talk about – the Word and the sacraments (See *Augsburg Confession V* and *Smalcald Articles Part III, Article VIII, 10*).<sup>156</sup> 3. The preaching must be orthodox (i.e. prophetically proclaiming the

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 13. Vi får beskrivelsen av hvordan det vakte menneske har det, hva han følel i omvendelsens stund o.s.v. Under dette sitter så tilhørerne og føler seg selv på pulsen, dette kjenner jeg igjen, men dette kjenner jeg ikke igjen. This appears to be a reference, in part, to Hallesby’s approach.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Men jeg tenker somme tider, at *den psykologiske og viljesbetonte forkynnelse har skapt en centrerung om jeget, som kan minne om pietismens botskamp og selvransakelse i dens svakeste form, men uten å eie dens etiske alvor.*

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 14. Hva må en forlange av forkynnelsen – ut fra et luthersk trossyn?

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 15-17.

truths in our confession of faith).<sup>157</sup> 4. The preaching must be churchly. This involves: a. It must not have a party emphasis. b. It should lead into the Bible. c. It must have a wide aim.<sup>158</sup> Encouraging the preachers Wisløff drew from 2 Cor. 3: 5-6 whereby our ability is from God and that we stand as ambassadors for Christ in His stead.<sup>159</sup>

The board for *Kristiansands kristelige gymnasiastlag* asked Wisløff to speak on the theme *Sola Fide* with special attention given to the Roman Catholic Church's position on salvation by grace through faith. After it was presented, many requested for it to be available: it came in printed form in 1945. Since a later chapter will be devoted to the topic of faith our examination of this lecture here will only survey its contents.

The first part begins by identifying what is true for all religions and what is true for Christianity. Religions are the result of man's own religious thoughts while Christianity alone knows God's revelation.<sup>160</sup> The religions are into works and come no further than works while on the other hand Christianity has at its heart the Gospel which is the saving message of Jesus' great atoning work, that no person could think of by nature (Eph. 1:9; 1 Cor. 2:9).<sup>161</sup> That leaves only two religions in the world : works religion – and the religion of grace.<sup>162</sup> Over the next few pages Wisløff shows that “the Bible from beginning to end is a protest against the teaching that we are saved by something we do ourselves.”<sup>163</sup> For “it preaches

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 18-20.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>160</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Sola fide*, (1945), 6.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 7. Wisløff's point here compares to that of Pieper's in *Christian Dogmatics* I: 9-21.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Bibelen er fra begynnelsen til slutten en protest mot den lære at, blir frelst ved noe vi selv gjør.

above all God's free, sovereign grace, that saves people without any assistance from their side, - alone through faith."<sup>164</sup>

The next concern deals with the importance of the meaning of the words grace, Gospel, and faith. Grace is summarized as "*God's mercy for Jesus' sake*. Grace is an emotion in God, it is his merciful kindheartedness for Jesus' sake. The atonement is the background for God's grace. ... Grace is – God's forgiveness for Jesus' sake."<sup>165</sup> The Gospel "is the joyful message of salvation. ... The message of that which Jesus has done. It puts no obligations on you. It puts all our obligations together with our sins, on Jesus – and tells us that Jesus has made satisfaction for it all together."<sup>166</sup> Drawing from Eph. 2:8-9, "faith is the opposite of works. It is only that which from our side can answer to the fact that salvation is finished, that God in Christ is an atoned God. If Jesus has done it all, if the Gospel is only a message of that fact, so faith is no achievement from our side. Faith is only *trust/confidence in God's grace*."<sup>167</sup> This "*Gospel creates and kindles faith in the sinner's heart*. ... We are saved by grace through faith, says the Bible. Notice the prepositions. It

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid. Den forkynner over alt Guds frie, suverene nåde, som frelser mennesket uten noen assistanse fra dets side, - alene ved troen.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 9-10. Nei, nåde er: *Guds barmhjertighet for Jesu skyld*. Nåden er en affekt i Gud, den er hans miskunnelige hjertelag for Jesu skyld. Forsoningen er bakgrunnen for Guds nåde. ... Nåde er – Guds tilgivelse for Jesu skyld. -

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 10. Evangeliet er det glade budskap om frelsen. Evangeliet er budskapet om det som Jesus har gjort. Det legger ikke noen plikter på deg. Det legger alle våre plikter, sammen med våre synder, på Jesus - og forteller oss så at Jesus har gjort fyldest for det alt sammen.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. Tro er det motsatte av gjerninger. ... Troen er det eneste som fra vår side kan svare til det faktum at frelsan er fullbrakt, at Gud i Kristus er en forsonet Gud. Har Jesus gjort alt, er evangeliet bare et budskap om dette faktum, så er troen ingen fra vår side. Troen er bare *tillit til Guds nåde*.

does not say through grace, by faith! In other words; *It is in fact not faith that saves – it is grace that saves! Faith is only the empty hand, that receives.*”<sup>168</sup>

The second major part is an examination of the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in the light of Scripture and as clearly confessed in the *Augsburg Confession* Articles IV and V. Drawing from the *Tridentinum* he shows how Rome’s opposition to the word *alone* betrays a different understanding of grace and faith. The Biblical Gospel is not there and so, as Luther concluded in his struggle neither could there be any assurance of faith.

Wisløff ends by noting that just as Luther fought on two fronts, so do we. We are not only faced with Rome but on the other side there are the *svermerne*.<sup>169</sup> For them, “It is not enough that the sinner, completely passive, relies on that the promise is true and applies to him.”<sup>170</sup> “In both camps they deny that salvation takes place by faith alone; if the anabaptists do not deny it with express words, then they deny it in practice through their preaching.”<sup>171</sup> Thus Wisløff concludes that faith alone is threatened from both sides. And if this faith is - obedience - preaching shall continue to be spread, not only will faith alone go, but so will the sacraments, especially baptism.<sup>172</sup>

We have already observed that various movements and churches are having an impact on the way Lutherans were thinking and understanding their faith. In the midst of this many

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 11-12. Evangeliet skaper og tenner troen i synderhertet. ... Vi blir frelst av nåde, ved tro, sier Bibelen. Merk preposisjonene! Det står ikke ved nåde, av tro! Dvs.: *Der er i grunnen ikke troen som frelser – det er nåden som frelser! Troen er bare den tomme hånd som tar imot.*

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. Det er ikke nok at synderen helt passivt liter på at løftet er sant og gjelder ham.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 20-21. I begge leirer nekter. De at frelsen skjer sola fide; nekter ikke gjendøperne det med uttrykkelig utalte ord, så nekter de det i praksis ved sin forkynnelse.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 22.

were beginning to be concerned about their Lutheran heritage. This was a cause for rejoicing for people like Wisløff.<sup>173</sup> One of the things that came out of this interest was a lecture that Wisløff gave at a Sunday School meeting at Drottningborg, June 1945 entitled “Vår lutherske arv og hva vi eier i den.”<sup>174</sup> This interest was the result of people seeing the perilous consequences flowing from such things as the *Alliance movement*. Wisløff names an important matter. “Salvation by grace through faith can not be talked about as we have learned it in our church. We have learned that faith’s passive trust in Jesus’ finished work is enough for salvation. But that the Reformed deny. ... Is faith’s passive trust enough for salvation, or if there must be a certain degree of obedience to it, is it not then in reality our obedience that saves us?”<sup>175</sup>

In this context Wisløff takes up the truths that our Lutheran church has especially received grace to hold clear and strong.<sup>176</sup> Since most of the topics will be taken up later only a survey will be given here. The first is the human person’s inborn total sinfulness. Referencing *Augsburg Confession* II, 1, he notes that the person is born with inherited sin, that is with evil lust and without fear of God.<sup>177</sup> He further notes the significance of this teaching; the natural man has no desire for God, he lacks ability to change his will, infant baptism is needed (John 3, That which is born of the flesh is flesh.), and sinless perfection is rejected.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Wisløff, “Vår lutherske arv og hva vi eier i den,” (1945), 35.

<sup>174</sup> ET = “Our Lutheran Heritage and What We Possess in It”

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. Frelsen av nåde ved tro kan det heller ikke tales om, slik som vi har lært den i vår kirke. Troens passive tillit til Jesu fullbrakte verk er nok til frelse, det har vi lært. Men det benekter de reformerte. ... Er troens passive tillit nok til frelse, eller må det en viss grad av lydighet til, er det i grunnen vår lydighet som frelser oss?

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

“Unless a person gets to see something of his actual lost condition, he has no use for God’s free grace in Christ.”<sup>179</sup>

The second great Lutheran truth relevant to this situation is the proper understanding of and distinction of Law and Gospel. This has in many places been forgotten.<sup>180</sup> A brief exposition of both Law and Gospel is given. The third great characteristic of the Lutheran Church that must be brought, is the teaching on the means of grace. He says, “the characteristic for the Lutheran Church’s Christian view can in reality be expressed in one word: Means of grace.”<sup>181</sup> It is our conviction that God works through means. Wisløff gives a brief explanation of this doctrine and its significance for the situation. He closes with this: “Our Lutheran heritage is a rich heritage. Let us think about it, not think little of it. Let us neither waste it away in unclear alliance. Neither do we desire to stiffen in cold intolerance towards different believers; we know God has his children in all camps. But faithfully we must pray to God that we may be faithful to the rich heritage we have received in our fathers’ faith.”<sup>182</sup>

In November, 1945 Wisløff responds in a small article “Et skjult dåpsliv” to a criticism by Madland for the view of baptism Wisløff presented in the brochure “Jesu dåp og

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 39-40. Uten at et menneske får se noe av sin virkelige fortapte stilling, får han ikke bruk for Guds frie nåde i Kristus.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 42. Det karakteristiske for den lutherske kirkes kristensyn kan i grunnen uttrykkes i ett ord: Nådemidlene.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 44. Var lutherske arv – Det er en rik arv. La oss besinne oss på den, ikke tenke ringt om den. La oss heller ikke sløse den bort i uklare allianser. Vi ønsker heller ikke å stivne i kold intoleranse overfor annerledes troende; vi vet Gud har sine barn i alle leirer. Men troskap, troskap må vi be Gud om å få, troskap mot den rike arv vi har fått i våre fedres tro.

vår dåp.”<sup>183</sup> The criticism dealt with Wisløff’s agreement with Pontoppidan that every conversion from dead works and awakening to new life is a new birth. Madland’s position is that baptism is the one and absolute means of rebirth. Once a person has been reborn he cannot be reborn again. Wisløff on the other hand sees that the consequence of Madland’s view is that there remains in the person who has fallen away from baptismal grace a hidden life of the baptism. He finds no Biblical basis for such a position. This controversy will be taken up later in the chapter on the means of grace.

Another writing project that Wisløff busied himself with was the editing and translating of three volumes of C. O. Rosenius’ works. He had been introduced to Rosenius during the Vaterland years by Anna Iensen, and we have seen what this has meant for him. The publisher not only wanted a translation but also a modernizing of Rosenius’ writing; language had gone through some changes over the last one hundred years. Wisløff acknowledged that “it has been a difficult, but precious work to translate Rosenius.”<sup>184</sup> The first volume published in 1946 is entitled *Lov og evangelium*.<sup>185</sup> It covers the Ten Commandments, freedom from the Law, and the Gospel. The second *Troen og livet* includes chapters on such topics as conversion and faith, joy in heaven, the son who stayed home, sanctification and the Holy Spirit, crucified with Christ, and God’s child – born of God.<sup>186</sup> The third *Bønne og nådemidlene* deals with the Lord’s Prayer, prayer in general, baptism, the

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<sup>183</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Et skjult dåpsliv,” *Luthersk Kirketidende* (Nr. 10, 17 november 1945), 223-228.

<sup>184</sup> C. O. Rosenius, *Lov og evangelium* Oversatt av Carl Fr. Wisløff (Bergen: A. S. Lunde, 1946.) Forord.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> C. O. Rosenius, *Troen og livet* (Faith and Life) Oversatt av Carl Fr. Wisløff (Bergen: A. S. Lunde, 1947.)

Lord's Supper, and the use of God's Word.<sup>187</sup> In addition to these translations Wisløff wrote a scholarly article on Rosenius' understanding of sanctification.<sup>188</sup> This list of publications indicates that Wisløff took the advice of Anna Iensen serious and wanted others to benefit from Rosenius' works. There is no doubt that Rosenius became one of Wisløff's important teachers even though he does not list him as one of his master teachers.<sup>189</sup>

The last writing in this period that we will give consideration to is Wisløff's doctrine book for lay people *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror*, a book that Wisløff regards as his most important. Sverre Seim, General Secretary of the Norwegian Sunday School Association, asked him to write a dogmatics for Sunday School teachers. The book was written during the war under conditions where he had very few books available. The Sunday School refused the manuscript because it was too fundamentalistic, that is, it asserted that there are no errors in the Bible and was too polemical.<sup>190</sup> Feeling as small as a penny he went to an old friend Tormod Vågen, general secretary for the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, requesting that perhaps he could have a look at it. Vågen replied, "No, I will not read it before it is printed. It will go to Lunde Forlag in Bergen on the night train this evening."<sup>191</sup> Since that day the book has gone through 4 editions, 17 printings totaling 73,000 copies, and is translated into at least 14 languages. It is used for personal study, in Bible Schools, study groups, and in a correspondence course.

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<sup>187</sup> C. O. Rosenius, *Bønnen og nådemidlene* (Prayer and the means of grace) Oversatt av Carl Fr. Wisløff (Bergen: A. S. Lunde, 1947.)

<sup>188</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Helliggjørelsen hos Rosenius" *TTK*, (1946), 144-155. Wisløff has continued to lecture and write articles on Rosenius and his theology.

<sup>189</sup> Odd Sverre Hove in a note to the writer has observed that Wisløff has made a whole generation of Norwegian preachers into Rosenians.

<sup>190</sup> Sjaastad, 86. Wisløff's view of the Bible will be presented in the next chapter.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 87. Da svarte Vågen resolutt: <<Nei, den vil jeg ikke lese før den er trykt. Den går til Lunde forlag i Bergen med nattoget nå i kveld.>>

The title is taken from 1 Timothy 1:12 “I know in Whom I Believe.” Through the years this has become characteristic for Wisløff. He desired to give the readers a clear grasp and a clear view on Christianity’s truths. He intended it to be a clear formulation of the important things.<sup>192</sup> Fæhn described the book as a “robust, orthodox-pietistic view of Christianity with a very strong underscoring of the Bible as the word of revelation from God, especially in the opening chapter, ‘Faith’s Foundation.’”<sup>193</sup>

The book had two parts: I. Faith’s Foundation, and II. Faith’s Content. The first part was devoted to the Bible as revelation, inspired, inerrant, and its relation to the church’s confessions. The second part was divided into five topics each with several subsections: What the Bible proclaims about God, What the Bible teaches about man, What the Bible proclaims about Jesus and his work of salvation, What the Bible proclaims about the way to salvation, and What the Bible proclaims about the means of grace and the church. Much of the material that we have met in Wisløff’s lectures and writings are now made use of in this book. It thus provides a kind of summary of his theology at this point in his life. Since we will be drawing from this work in later chapters this brief survey must here suffice.

This has been a very rich and productive period for the pastor at Birkenes. He has given many lectures, written many articles, done translating and even produced a small book of 219 pages. His writings have expressed a concern to establish the Biblical Lutheran faith in the midst of the winds of the Reformed and Alliance movements. He has indicated a clear

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Fæhn, 278. Boken er preget av et håndfast, ortodokst-pietistisk kristendomssyn med en meget sterk understrekning av Bibelen som åpenbaringsordet fra Gud, særlig i det innledende kapittel “Troens grunnlag”. Fæhn also comments that “this nearly fundamentalistic view of the Bible that Wisløff came forth with in the middle of the 1930s

concern for the proper distinction between Law and Gospel and the Lutheran understanding of the means of grace. He has spoken against the optimistic view of human nature and the anthropocentrizing of preaching that is too much influenced by psychology and the focus on the will. What Wisløff met during the Vaterland years prompted application to the present situation.

### Rector at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology: 1947-1960

September 1, 1947 was the opening of a new chapter in the life of Pastor Wisløff with his call to serve as rector of the Practical Theology department at The Free Faculty, a position that would put him more into the center of Norwegian church life. This involved teaching pastoral theology, homiletics, and liturgics, all very large fields of study. Wisløff was somewhat prepared after fifteen years of pastoral ministry in two different congregations. In addition he had written three major papers on homiletical issues.<sup>194</sup> Wisløff also spent the Spring semester of 1946 on a study leave in Lund, Sweden funded by a stipend from The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology. It deserves mentioning that Wisløff at this time began to receive individual votes to be nominated for bishop but he refused the nomination to the Adger bishopric in 1946 and again in 1951.<sup>195</sup>

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was not least under the influence of the Missouri Synod's dogmatician Franz Pieper, which was recommended to him by his older colleague Olav Valen-Sendstad. Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (Oslo: Norsk Søndagsskoleforbunds Forlag, 1939). idem, "Schartaus prekener. Forsøk på en systematisk oversikt, særlig med tanke på forkynnelsen av nådens ordning." *Tidsskrift for teologi og Kirke* No. 2 & 3, 1942. idem, "Forkynnelsen og noen ord om de krav som må stilles til den." Norges Kristelige Studentlag, 1944.

<sup>195</sup> Fæhn, 279.

and the church debate.”<sup>196</sup> He was named a member of the *Presteforeninges Liturgiske nemnd* in 1948 and he served as chairman from 1950 to 1962.<sup>197</sup> He continued his involvement in the *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* on both the international and local levels. And in 1959 he began serving as a member of the main board of the *Indremisjon Society* on which he remained until 1968. Also in 1959 he spent three months as a preacher in the Norwegian Department of the 59<sup>th</sup> Street Lutheran Brethren Church, Brooklyn, New York.<sup>198</sup> This included his participation in many meetings in the midwestern states as well.<sup>199</sup> Along with these he continued to be active as a preacher in churches and prayer houses throughout Scandinavia.

In his practicing and teaching of pastoral theology Wisløff recognized the many aspects of this important discipline. The care of souls (*sjelesorg*) must be carefully distinguished from psychology.<sup>200</sup> Soul care is to get God’s Word into its concrete situation and to hear the word of the forgiveness of sins. A preacher should remember that he ought also be a soul carer when he stands in the pulpit. Another important aspect is confession and absolution. Wisløff notes that many have had a great blessing from it, including Luther.<sup>201</sup> He believes that today, however, there is a tendency to focus on what the person does, such as talking it out, putting things away, getting released from the burdens, and emptying the heart

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<sup>196</sup> Oskar Skarsaune, “Professor dr. teolog. Carl Fr. Wisløff 80 år” *LK* 124:1, (January 13, 1989).

<sup>197</sup> Pastor’s Association’s Liturgical Commission. (He was a member from 1948-1962.)

<sup>198</sup> Steinar Hunnestad, “Hyrde og stridsmann. Professor Carl Fr. Wisløff 60 år” *Fast Grunn* no. 1(1969),13.

<sup>199</sup> One of the lectures given during this visit was published as “The Unity of the Church and the Message of Christ” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31:1(January 1960), 30-37.

<sup>200</sup> Sjaastad, 82.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

of its needs. As important as these may be, he asserts that the most important is the affirmation in the Gospel on the forgiveness of sins, which was what Luther strongly emphasized.<sup>202</sup> Along with the above should be included the visiting of the sick, a ministry that should involve all believers.<sup>203</sup> Wisløff's interest in the pastoral office is also shown by his choice of topic for his test lecture for the doctor's degree in theology. He lectured on "The Clerical Office and the Universal Priesthood in Norwegian Pastoral theology from W. A. Wexels to Gustav Jensen."<sup>204</sup>

For Wisløff preaching is at the core of both the pastor's and the congregation's work, and so the teaching of preaching received the central place in practical theology.<sup>205</sup> In order to put something into the hands of the students he made available, via stencil, his Lectures in Homiletics in Outline form in 1949. Then he began working on *Ordet fra Guds munn (The Word from God's Mouth)*, the title itself expressing in part his view of preaching. He made use of the material presented in class and the notes and other materials he had gathered during the study leave in Lund. Also during this time he was actively reviewing books on preaching. His preaching text came out in book form in 1951.<sup>206</sup>

He wanted to show that the preacher is a message bringer of God's holy Law and Gospel to people.<sup>207</sup> People are to meet God in the preaching. People are not to set the

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>204</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Det geistige embete og det almennelige prestdømme i norsk pastoralteologi fra W. A. Wexels Til Gustav Jensen" *TTK* 29:2(1958), 49-68.

<sup>205</sup> Sjaastad, 84.

<sup>206</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn: homiletiske hovedspørsmål* (Oslo, Lutherstiftelsen forlag, 1951) 2<sup>nd</sup> printing 1963 (shortened and partly revised.); 3<sup>rd</sup> printing 1972; 4<sup>th</sup> printing 1977; 5<sup>th</sup> printing 1988 by Lunde forlag.

<sup>207</sup> Sjaastad, 84.

agenda with their questions but rather the preacher by way of God's Word teaches people to ask the right questions, which are in turn answered by the Word. He also seeks to warn against and correct the misleading view that regeneration happens in baptism and only there and not through the Word, especially in the case of those who have fallen away from baptism.<sup>208</sup> In general he wanted to get across to preachers that God calls each individual into a personal, conscious relationship with Jesus.<sup>209</sup>

The textbook in homiletics covers the basic subjects that pertain to preaching, such as its task, preaching's relevancy to the contemporary situation, the listeners, preaching on various kinds of texts, themes, and the church year.<sup>210</sup> However, the major focus is the three center chapters that deal with Law and Gospel in preaching, preaching for awakening and conversion, and preaching for sanctification. These chapters present Wisløff's understanding of how God through preaching brings people into the personal, conscious relationship with Jesus as noted above. It can also be said that here Wisløff articulates the theology that he believes will result in the kind of preaching that steers a course between sacramentalism and spiritualism. The substance of this material will be taken up in the appropriate chapters later in this work.

In the area of liturgics Wisløff wrote one of his first major articles in 1948. "Den Liturgiske bevægelse og 'Mediator Dei'" is primarily a historical overview of the Liturgical

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 85-86.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>210</sup> Two chapters had previously appeared as journal articles. Chapter IV appeared as "I hvilken forstand skal prekenen være aktuell?" *TTK* (1948): 69-80 and in a somewhat revised form was given in English and published as "The Relevance of Our Preaching to the Contemporary Situation" in *Faith and Fellowship* as Part I in Vol. 26, no. 23 (December 1, 1959) and as Part II in Vol. 27, no. 1 (January 1, 1960). The second was the *Ekskurs* which was published as "Kristi kamp og seier som motiv i forkynnelsen" in *TTK* (1950).

Movement's basic view.<sup>211</sup> The article was in response to Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei et hominum* given November 29, 1947. Wisløff sees the key questions being: "Why do we have the divine service? and "How shall we best order the divine service?" For him these questions are key because they lead right into the most important theoretical and practical deliberations on the liturgy. And the answer one gives to them will at the same time disclose one's basic view, not only on the liturgy, but at the same time on Christianity itself and its nature.<sup>212</sup>

He concludes in this article that evangelical theology does not find an ally in the Liturgical Movement.<sup>213</sup> Any hope in this direction remains only an illusion. The Liturgical Movement's big word is "transfiguration" (*verklarung*), *deificatio* – not repentance and faith. Evangelical Christianity's decisive word is, on the contrary, the Gospel of the once for all finished sacrifice (Heb. 10:14), and this Gospel accords with neither the one nor the other Catholic theory of the eucharistic sacrifice.<sup>214</sup> Wisløff's diagnosis is that the point of departure for the Liturgical Movement – self evidently – is not the Scripture, but tradition, explained in the light of a cultural dimension.<sup>215</sup> He asserts that we can not take our point of departure from there.<sup>216</sup> Whether one sets out from the "natural law foundation" for each cultus, or if one tries to "explain the mystery's concept with the help of the history of

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<sup>211</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Den liturgiske bevægelse og 'Mediator Dei'" *TTK* 19(1948): 172-188. (ET = "The Liturgical Movement and Mediator Dei")

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

religions” the meaning can not be much different or lead to very different results.<sup>217</sup> The approach Wisløff took here continued to be the pattern for his analysis of the liturgical issues that were increasingly becoming a part of discussion in the church.

Wisløff wrote several other articles on liturgics that deserve mentioning. One that stimulated much discussion was “To liturgiske spørsmål i lys av vår liturghistoriske tradisjonssammenheng.”<sup>218</sup> It deals first with the question of “after – consecration” that is, if one runs out of consecrated bread and wine and then gives out unconsecrated bread and wine brought in from the sacristy is it only bread and wine? Wisløff says that “it is to the Scripture we must go, not to the history of liturgy.”<sup>219</sup> He concludes that “after – consecration is a liturgical custom that has its roots in the scholastic teaching of transubstantiation that takes place through the reading of the words of institution.”<sup>220</sup> The second question takes up the matter of reintroducing confession before communion. For Wisløff “the demand of confession and absolution before communion is not present in the early church.”<sup>221</sup>

In the summary he states, “All liturgical renewal must be regulated by the Scriptures. Before we can consider the question: How should the divine service be? – we must know the

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “To liturgiske spørsmål i lys av vår liturghistoriske tradisjonssammenheng.” *TTK* 21:1(1950):18-32.(ET = “Two Liturgical Questions in light of our Liturgical History’s Traditional Connection”) See also Bjarne Skard, “Omkring ‘Etterkonsekrasjonen’” *TTK* 26:1(1955): 11-24; Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Des sacraments ym wortt warnemen” *TTK* 26:4 (1955): 160-173; Bjarne Skard, “Etterkonsekrasjonen nok en gang” *TTK* 27:1(1956)11-19; Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Replikk om etterkonsekrasjonen” *TTK* 27:2(1956): 85-87.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 24. Det er til Skriften vi må gå, ikke til liturghistorien.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 28. Etter-konsekrasjon er en liturgisk skikk som har sin rot i skolastikkens lære om at transsubstantiasjonen finner sted ved lesningen av Innstiftelsesordene.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 25. Kravet om skrifte og absolusjon for nattverden er ikke oldkirkelig.

answer to this question: What is New Testament Christianity?"<sup>222</sup> It is also his conviction that "we need a renewal of our understanding of communion as the divine service's ceremony, such that we are freed from a one-sided subjective focus, and such that we are released to a new understanding and experience of communion as the congregation's *communio*, sacrifice-thanksgiving and praise."<sup>223</sup> "The necessary guard of the communion's holiness is above all the task of preaching. The confession has another, an independent function."<sup>224</sup>

An article in *Prismet* entitled "Liturgi og oppdragelse" discusses the relationship of liturgy and the upbringing/training of children. The liturgy has great value. "We can teach the child to pray, we can accustom it to go and hear God's Word, we can lead it to the church and show it how one should be prepared in God's house. It has altogether a valuable meaning, a meaning that we all too often have overlooked."<sup>225</sup> However, we must here face its limitation for "nothing can be more tragic than if we will act as if it did not exist. With our training one cannot bring anyone all the way to faith. *For what is needed here is something more than training, here is needed a new birth.* John 3:6."<sup>226</sup> We must be careful that we do not proceed as if they all believe, for with God "as if" is not enough. "What matters to him is given us

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 31. All liturgisk fornyelse må justeres på Skriften. Før vi kan besvare spørsmålet: Hvordan skal gudstjenesten være? - må vi vite svaret på dette spørsmålet: Hva er nytestamentlig kristendom?

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 31. Vi trenger en fornyelse av vår forståelse av nattverden som gudstjenestlig akt, slik at vi løsgjøres fra en *ensidig* subjektiv innstilling, og slik at vi frigjøres til en ny forståelse og opplevelse av nattverden som menighetens *communio*, takksigelse og lov-offer.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 31. Det nødvendige vakthold om nattverdbordets hellighet er i første rekke forkynnensens sak. Skriftemålet har en annen, selvstendig funksjon.

<sup>225</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Liturgi og oppdragelse" *Prismet* (1951), 244. Vi kan lære barnet å be, vi kan venne det til å gå og høre Guds ord, vi kan følge det til kirke og vise det hvordan en bør ferdes i Guds hus. Det har alt sammen en veldig betydning, en betydning som vi altfor meget har oversett.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 244. Men vi kommer til en grense. Og det kan ikke tenkes noe mer tragisk enn om vi ville late som om den ikke eksisterte. Vi kan ikke oppdra noen helt frem til troen. *For her trengs mer enn oppdragelse, her trengs en ny fødsel.* Johs. 3, 6.

with words: The one who has the Son, has life. The one who does not have the Son, he does not have life. 1 John 5:12.”<sup>227</sup> As parents “we should take the children and the young people by the hand and lead them to the church and prayer house. We should lead them into the life of piety that lives there. But while we do it, we should at the same time do two other things. We should preach: Except you are born anew, you can not see God's kingdom. But with Jesus is life! And so we shall pray: Come, Holy Spirit, with creating power!”<sup>228</sup>

Other writings on liturgics include Wisløff putting together an outline form of a suggested liturgy for a divine service for youth,<sup>229</sup> and also a preaching divine service.<sup>230</sup> In an article in 1958 he also raised the question of whether or not a reform of the church's liturgy was needed.<sup>231</sup>

A very significant study in liturgics, that was stimulated by Wisløff's interest in the eucharistic sacrifice, was his doctoral dissertation *Nattverd og messe. En studie i Luthers teologi* done in 1957 and defended June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1958.<sup>232</sup> This in-depth study in Luther's theology

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid. For ham gjelder det: Den som har Sønnen, har livet. Den som ikke har Sønnen. Han har ikke livet. I Johs. 5,12.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. Vi skal ta barn og ungdom ved hånden og føre dem til kirke og bedehus. Vi skal føre dem inn i det fromhetsliv som leves der. Men mens vi gjøre det vi skal vi samtidig gjøre to andre ting. Vi skal *forkynne*: Uten at du blir født på ny, kan du ikke se Guds rike. Men hos Jesus er livet! Og så skal vi *be*: Kom Hellig And. Med skapermakt!

<sup>229</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “En liturgi for ungdomsgudstjenester” LK 92:8(20 april, 1957):113-115.

<sup>230</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “En preken-gudstjeneste” LK 92:19(26 October, 1957):321-322.

<sup>231</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Er vår kirkes Gudstjenesteformer hensiktssvarende – eller trenger vi en liturgisk reform?” TTK 29:4(1958):173-185.

<sup>232</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe. En studie i Luthers teologi* Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen Forlag, 1957. For his doctorate he had to complete the following program. On 5 June, 1958 6:15pm Wisløff gave his first test lecture on the appointed theme: “Å oversette og fortolke Kol. 2, 9-15” (“To translate and interpret Colossians 2:9-15”). On June 6<sup>th</sup> he gave the second test lecture on the self-chosen theme: “Det geistlige embede og det alminnelige prestedømme I norsk pastoralteologi fra W. A. Wexels til Gustav Jensen” (“The Clerical Office and the Universal Priesthood in Norwegian Pastoral theology from W. A. Wexels to Gustav Jensen”) On June 7<sup>th</sup> 10:15 am The disputation for the dissertation was held under the direction of the dean of the University of Oslo's Theological Faculty Professor dr. Nils

was a very significant event in Norwegian theology and church life and it is very important for Wisløff's understanding of the sacraments and the liturgy. It is not our intention to present an analysis of this work here but rather to give only an overview of its contents. Those aspects that relate more directly to our theme will be dealt with in the appropriate later chapters.

As we have already noted, the sacraments are to be understood by way of the Word. This is the formal principle. The Words of Institution summarize the Gospel. Thus "when the essence of the sacrament is expressed in and with the promise character of the Words of Institution, it is plain that from the side of man, nothing else but *faith* corresponds to the sacrament."<sup>233</sup> This is in contrast to the understanding of the mass as a work and on the basis of Scripture this must be rejected.<sup>234</sup> This is the material principle of salvation by grace through faith. The mass also must be rejected as a sacrifice.<sup>235</sup> In the third place, Wisløff concludes that "according to Luther's view the sacrifice of the mass is rendered impossible by the priesthood of all believers."<sup>236</sup> For, "in the new covenant there is no special priesthood, no external material sacrifice to be offered, and only one priestly function, which is to mediate between God and man: the proclamation of God's Word."<sup>237</sup> Foundational to Wisløff's

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Alstrup Dahl. The first opponent was Professor Dr. Regin Prenter from Aarhus. The unofficial examiner (Opponent ex-auditorio) was Dr. theol. Helge Fæhn. The ordinary opponent (ordinære opponent) was Professor Dr. Reidar Hauge. The doctor of theology degree was conferred from the University of Oslo on Friday June 13, 1958. The dissertation has been translated into English, *The Gift of Communion* (1964) and German, *Abendmahl und Messe* (1969). At the initiative of Odd Sverre Hove, the book was reprinted in 1994 by Pensumtjeneste, Oslo.

<sup>233</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion: Luther's Controversy with Rome on Eucharistic Sacrifice*, translated by Joseph M. Shaw. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 42.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-55.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-72.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

thinking is what he calls the “third basic idea of the Reformation, namely, the priesthood of all believers, which also forms a starting point in the controversy regarding the sacrifice of the mass.”<sup>238</sup>

Wisløff recognizes that Luther teaches that the *Verba* of the Lord’s Supper are not only addressed to the people but are also at the same time words of consecration. He says that for Luther “the words of Institution are clearly interpreted as ‘action words,’ by means of which the miracle of consecration takes place.”<sup>239</sup> In addition “in his liturgical writings Luther regarded the recitation of *Verba* as *benedicto* and *consecratio*, which are the traditional expressions.”<sup>240</sup> Wisløff does not give any indication that his viewpoint differs from Luther’s teaching on this point, which Wisløff calls the traditional view.

Luther’s theology is also related to “The cross and the Lord’s Supper;” “The merits of Christ and their distribution;” and “The real presence and the sacrifice of the mass” with an excursus on the elevation of the host. A very important key to Luther’s new understanding of the mass is the Real Presence. “The sacrifice of the mass is not conquered in Luther’s case by an anti-sacramental spiritualism, but by a pronounced sacramental realism” says Wisløff. For “the doctrine of the Real Presence does not lead to the idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice; it is rather the most absolute defence against any mention of sacrifice in connection with the sacrament.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 73. Vi skulle Videre kunne si at også en tredje grunntanke i reformasjonen, nemlig det alminnelige prestedømme, danner et utgangspunkt for Kontroversen om messeofferet.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 141. (Original, 154)

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 155.

The study concludes by noting the liturgical consequences that follow from such a theology. Luther eliminated all prayers which spoke of the sacrifice.<sup>242</sup> The breaking and mixing of the host is discontinued.<sup>243</sup> The private mass was abolished.<sup>244</sup> These parts were eliminated “because they do not harmonize with the sacrament’s Word, which sums up the Gospel.”<sup>245</sup> In disagreement with those who believe that for Lutherans the divine service has two peaks: the Word and the Lord’s Supper, Wisløff states “as Martin Luther saw it there are not two high points, but one: the proclaimed Word of God. This is supported not only by a series of clear statements, but above all it is a necessary consequence of the view of God’s Word as the source of faith and with that the life in God.”<sup>246</sup>

In making reforms to the mass Luther sought to maintain its *communio* character for “the communion is itself the expression for fellowship in God’s congregation; as Christ takes an interest in the individual Christian and becomes one with him, so all Christians become ‘one cake’ at the communion.”<sup>247</sup> In Luther’s approach “liturgical forms can never become any matter of salvation.”<sup>248</sup> According to Wisløff this results in a disposition to a certain indifference to liturgical forms and a leaning in the direction of flexibility of the order.<sup>249</sup> One guiding criterion is suggested: “The worship service (*Gudstjenesten*) can be given a form that

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

is found to be suitable, as long as the order serves ‘for the strengthening of faith and love.’”<sup>250</sup>

What comes through from Luther as dominant for Wisløff is that everything is subjected to the Word, and that preaching is crucial in teaching people what Christianity is. He says in a later writing, “In the worship (divine) service of the congregation, said Luther, nothing is more important than the sermon. You may forget about everything else. The Word of God must not be forgotten.”<sup>251</sup>

Sjaastad comments that he has heard many say that Wisløff is number one in Norway when it comes to liturgics, which seems strange for one who is known for his low-church emphasis and associations.<sup>252</sup> Wisløff responds saying, “I think that the church’s liturgy has great meaning.”<sup>253</sup> He points to the old prayers and the Confession of Sin’s strong words “I have sinned against you in thoughts, word, and deeds and know the evil desires in my heart ...”<sup>254</sup> He comments: “these words have meant much more than we suspect when it concerns forming people’s thoughts about themselves and their relationship to God. So the liturgy has been a part of shaping people’s thoughts about what Christianity is.”<sup>255</sup> Concerning the developments in liturgical renewal, however, Wisløff expresses sorrow about the way things have gone. He regrets that his efforts for liturgics have not borne fruit in his students who later have had a part in making the new liturgy.<sup>256</sup> Also the changes and new viewpoints of the Liturgical Commission become such that he could no longer remain on the commission

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid. Original, 198. Refer to WA 19, 113. 14 (AE 53:90), also WA 30.2, 421. 30.

<sup>251</sup> Wisløff, *Do The Work of an Evangelist*, 55.

<sup>252</sup> Sjaastad, 80.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

and be responsible for them.<sup>257</sup> He gives one example: “The old prayers were marked with the Reformation’s clear view of God’s Word, Law and Gospel, faith and unbelief.”<sup>258</sup> The collect prayer for the sixth Sunday after Trinity is given as an example.

Dear Lord, Father in Heaven: We thank Thee because Thou by Thy Word hath [hast] helped us out of the bondage of fear under the Law and led us to the light of Thy grace. We pray Thee, take not that light from us, but keep us graciously from all error and falsehood, and grant that we with all our hearts may receive Thy Word and direct our lives according to the Word, and put all our trust in Thy grace and the precious redemption of Thy Son, etc.<sup>259</sup>

“But the new ones that replaced them were flat and religious only in a general way.”<sup>260</sup>

He gives as an example this prayer for the same Sunday from the 1977 liturgy.

Father in Heaven, we thank Thee for the life Thou hath given us, and for Thy instruction (veiledning) and Thy commandments. Help us to live after Thy good will, so we deny ourselves and follow our Lord Jesus Christ, in faith and obedience, He who etc.<sup>261</sup>

The old prayer is spoken conscious of the vertical dimension, *coram deo* by a person “who knows that he is a sinner, lost in himself, dependent on God’s grace as his only hope. He expects nothing from himself, but everything from God, because Jesus died for all of us.”<sup>262</sup>

The new prayer runs the way of the horizontal with the focus on that “I should live in the right way, that I should have the ability to follow in Christ’s steps.”<sup>263</sup> Thus the “image of a

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid. Den off. Liturgikommisjon 11 November, 1965 That should revise all of the church’s liturgical books. See TTK (1958):173-185; LK(1957):113-115; LK (1959):86-90; Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Prøveliturgien bør legges bort” *Fast Grunn* (1971). Wisløff was appointed in 1965 and resigned in 1969.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Wisløff, *Do the Work of an Evangelist*, 86-87.

<sup>260</sup> Sjaastad, 80. Men de nye som kom, var flate og allmenreligløse.

<sup>261</sup> Wisløff, *Do the Work of an Evangelist*, 87.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

Christian is quite different. He possesses more of an awareness of all the oppression and injustice in the world than of personal conversion, and his goal is the terrestrial city, not a celestial one. The City of Man has taken the place of the City of God.”<sup>264</sup> This is a clear indication of a change in theology. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, (law of praying, law of believing) what is prayed indicates what is believed. And we might add that what we pray ultimately shapes what we believe.<sup>265</sup>

We conclude this survey of Wisløff’s focus on liturgics by quoting the assessment of Helge Fæhn. “Next after Gustav Jensen no Norwegian rector of Practical Theology has done so much for the liturgical field as Wisløff, as involved in his teaching, research and popularizing.”<sup>266</sup>

Beginning in 1952 Wisløff began to be active in the ecumenical discussions going on in Norway. He entered the discussion with an article entitled “Til Rom via Canterbury?”<sup>267</sup> This was followed by a major lecture “Vår tids ekumenikk som teologisk problem” given at the Pastor’s Association’s General Assembly (Presteforeningens generalforsamling) in November, 1952.<sup>268</sup> It was a comprehensive and powerful criticism of the basis, method, and goals of the World Council of Churches. He noted that the World Council of Churches does

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Wainwright has said on this point, “But from the grammatical point of view it is equally possible to reverse subject and predicate and so take the tag as meaning that the rule of faith is the norm for prayer: what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed.” *Doxology*, 218.

<sup>266</sup> Fæhn, 280. Nest etter Gustav Jensen har ingen norsk praktikumsrektor gjort så mye for faget liturgikk som W., og det gjelder både i undervisning, forskning og popularisering.

<sup>267</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Til Rom via Canterbury?” *LK* (1952), 189-195. (ET = “To Rome by way of Canterbury”)

<sup>268</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Vår tids ekumenikk som teologisk problem” *TTK* (1952), 160-176. This lecture has been translated into English. (“Our Time’s Ecumenicity as a Theological Problem”)

not have a clear confessional basis nor does it build upon Scripture as the sole norm, which means that the WCC is not Protestant since it does not build upon the formal principle of the Reformation.<sup>269</sup> He was convinced that one theological consequence of modern ecumenicity is “that it trains people to be indifferent in matters of doctrine.”<sup>270</sup> Wisløff considers this one of the most important lectures he has given.<sup>271</sup> A few days later the main viewpoints of this lecture were given in popular form at the Forbundssalen in Oslo and published as “De kristnes enhet og ulikhet.”<sup>272</sup> Wisløff’s approach was strongly opposed by Bishop Eivind Berggrav.<sup>273</sup> They engaged in debate by way of the pages of the Norwegian Christian newspapers. C. Tidemann Strand has written that the “tension between Wisløff and Berggrav can in great part be explained by personal conditions: Wisløff’s thorough study of the sources, and Berggrav’s many years participation in the ecumenical work.”<sup>274</sup>

The influence of Wisløff is summarized by Lars Østnor: “The conclusion must be drawn that the Norwegian ecumenical debate in the first period after the war was in its *content* decided by the approach to the problems revealed through C. F. Wisløff’s criticism of the World Council of Churches.”<sup>275</sup> For Wisløff “the mistake that was made from the beginning

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 167. ... den, at den oppdrar til indifferentisme i trossaker.

<sup>271</sup> From personal conversation.

<sup>272</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “De kristnes enhet og ulikhet.” *Fast Grunn* 6:1(1953), 15-25. (ET = “The Christian’s Unity and Differences”)

<sup>273</sup> Østnor, 228ff. In an unpublished lecture Wisløff states that Berggrav was angry at him for his article in *LK* and for his lecture at the Pastor’s Association’s General Assembly. Berggrav wrote to Wisløff desiring to speak to him about Matthew 18:19. Note from Odd Sverre Hove.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. Quoted from C. Tidemann Strand i “Året 1953” *LK* (1954), 18.

<sup>275</sup> Lars Østnor “Den Økumeniske bevegelse og Den norske kirkes: Fra debatten i den første etterkrigstid om vårt engasjement i Kirkenes Verdensråd,” in *Misjonskall og forskerglede: Festskrift til professor Olav Guttorm Myklebust på 70-årsdagen 24. juli 1975*. Redigert av Nils E. Bloch-Hoell. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975), 242.

has been that men have asked, 'How can we get everyone in Christendom along into the ecumenical movement?' Instead they should have asked, 'What is Christian truth?'"<sup>276</sup> Thus Wisløff remained a critic of the ecumenical movement on the basis of Scripture, the formal principle of the Reformation. As Østnor has said, "The main weight of opposition to ecumenicity and the WCC came from Carl Fr. Wisløff the whole period. He expressed continuous criticism through lectures, articles in *Fast Grunn* and *Dagen*, but foremost in *Luthersk Kirketidende*, where he was co-editor from July 1948 to the end of 1960."<sup>277</sup> By his thorough documentation and solid arguments he became the leading anti-ecumenical. "Typical is the heading for an article from 1959, 'What should we think about the World Council of Churches?'"<sup>278</sup> Much of the other ecumenical criticism was a repetition of the main viewpoints of Wisløff."<sup>279</sup> This seems to clearly indicate that Wisløff and the leaders of the Church of Norway were on different courses. This was Wisløff's third major debate.

On Sunday January 25, 1953 Hallesby preached on the radio that the unconverted will go to hell. This caused a real turmoil. One of the people to respond against what Hallesby had preached was Bishop Kristian Schjelderup of Hamar; he said that "for me the teaching of eternal punishment of hell does not belong in a religion of love."<sup>280</sup> Wisløff, as editor of

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<sup>276</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Vår tids ekumenikk som teologisk problem" *TTK* (1952), 167. Feilen har fra begynnelsen av vært den, at man har spurt: Hvordan skal vi få med oss alle i hele kristenheten? Mens man i stedet skulle spurt: Hva er den kristne sannhet?

<sup>277</sup> Østnor, 227-228. Hovedtyngden av motstanden mot okumenikken og KV kom hele perioden fra Carl Fr. Wisløff. Han eksponerte seg stadig kritisk, gjennom foredrag, i *Fast Grunn* og *Dagen*, men fremfor alt i *Luthersk Kirketidende* der han var medredaktor fra juli 1943 til utgangen av 1960.

<sup>278</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Hva skal vi tenke om Kirkenes Verdensråd?" *Fast Grunn* (1959), 273-277.

<sup>279</sup> Østnor, 228. Typisk er overskriften på en artikkel fra 1959: <<Hva skal vi tenke om Kirkenes Verdensråd?>> Mye av annen økumenikk-kritikk var etterplapring av hovedsynspunkter fra Wisløff.

<sup>280</sup> *Aftenposten* and *Arbeiderbladet* 31, januar., 1953.

*Luthersk kirketidene*, commented on the situation in support of Hallesby, and pointed out that the Bishop was in conflict with both the Scriptures and the Confessions.<sup>281</sup> There were also a number of articles in *Vårtland* and the *Dagbladet* that involved Wisløff.<sup>282</sup> He cited *Augustana* 28, which states that if a bishop says something in conflict with God's Word then the congregation must not listen to the bishop.<sup>283</sup> People became aware of the liberal theology that was present in the church.<sup>284</sup> This became Wisløff's fourth major debate.

Wisløff also found time in the midst of all of this to revise his doctrine book *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* and add an ethics section of 75 pages, *Det kristne livet*, to it.<sup>285</sup> The newly added section had three main parts: A. The Standard for the Christian life: God's will; B. The place where we should live according to God's will; and C. Exercise in living according to God's will. In 1977 this section was expanded and became its own book.<sup>286</sup>

In 1960 Wisløff wrote "Luthersk sakramentsyn. Veien mellom sakramentalisme og spiritualisme" an important essay for our topic.<sup>287</sup> This piece came after Wisløff had completed his dissertation on Luther's understanding of communion and the mass. He makes use of what he discovered there on Luther's understanding of the sacraments. Both

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<sup>281</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Biskop Schjelderup og kirkens bekjennelse," *LK* 88 no. 3 (7 febr. 1953), 34.

<sup>282</sup> *Dagbladet* (25 febr. 53; 26 febr. 53).

<sup>283</sup> Sjaastad, 89.

<sup>284</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Merkelige dager," *LK* 88, no. 4 (21 februar 1953), 49-50.

<sup>285</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1959).

<sup>286</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Det kristne livet* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1977). In 1987 the book was revised and expanded to nearly double its original size.

<sup>287</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Luthersk sakramentsyn: Veien mellom sakramentalisme og spiritualisme" a chapter in *Ordets svar på livsspørsmål I kirken* (Nomi, 1960). Also reprinted as a chapter in Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Fullfør din tjeneste!* (Oslo: Lunde forlag, 1993), 140-150. (ET = "The Lutheran view of the Sacrament: The Way between Sacramentalism and Spiritualism")

sacramentalism and spiritualism err by considering only the sign in determining the meaning of the sacraments. Luther on the other hand gave place to the Word.

At points in this essay Wisløff seems to address Leiv Aalen's view of the sacraments and his understanding of their relationship to the Word without specifically naming him. Wisløff expresses disagreement with the teaching that the Sacraments give something distinct from the Word and that there remains something of baptism in the person who is no longer living in relationship with God.<sup>288</sup> Wisløff sees this as moving in the direction of sacramentalism. These views are characteristic of Aalen. This seems to indicate that Wisløff is now writing as a corrective to these views.

In response to errors on either side Wisløff believes that the key is not to say more or less about the sacraments but to have the right view of them. Such an approach flows out of God's Word and results in a rejoicing in God's wonderful gifts given through Word and Sacrament.<sup>289</sup> The content of this essay will be given more in depth treatment in later chapters.

Even though Wisløff does not name a master teacher for this period, there is evidence that shows support that Martin Luther is certainly one of those at whose feet he has sat. He has indicated that it was in the 1950s when he began to study Luther seriously.<sup>290</sup> The writing he did during this time also gives evidence of working seriously with Luther for citations from Luther's works are found throughout Wisløff writings. The impact of Wisløff in the discipline of Practical Theology continues today through his students and writings; many of

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<sup>288</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>289</sup> See Appendix 2 for a translation of this essay.

<sup>290</sup> From a personal conversation.

those written during this period are still in print. The period has been occupied with homiletical, liturgical, and ecumenical issues. As it relates to the theme of this study, there appears to be a growing concern and response on the part of Wisløff to a sacramentalistic understanding of the sacraments within Lutheranism during this time, especially toward the later part.

### Professor of Church History at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology: 1961-1975

The Council of Professors at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology at their November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958 meeting decided to call Rector Dr. Carl Fr. Wisløff to succeed professor Andreas Seierstad, who would retire in two years, as professor of church history.<sup>291</sup> The vote was unanimous and the Council of Professors believed that of those who were able to fill this position it was Wisløff who had the best prospect of completing the requirements for professorship in reasonable time.<sup>292</sup>

The preparation for this new position was quite extensive. There was an official examination of a collection of his previous works by Professor Dr. Knud Andersen, København, Professor Dr. Sven Kjöllnerström, Lund, and Professor Dr. Andreas Seierstad, Oslo.

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<sup>291</sup> Sele, 14. The five professors who made up the council were: L. Aalen, S. Aalen, A. Seierstad, I. P. Seierstad and J. Nome.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid. Even though the vote was unanimous, Professor Sverre Aalen (1909-1980) gave an additional opinion expressing his concern about Wisløff's view of the church and put this up against "the now departed generation of teachers at The Free Faculty." "He stated that Wisløff's view of the church could be characterized as spiritualistic." Sverre Aalen expressed a desire that Wisløff would not in the future put forth his view in such a challenging and programmatic form as till now in part has happened. If this happened it would make working with him in the Council of Professors a great burden for Aalen. He says, "Because I hope that my fear on this point will reveal itself to be ungrounded, I find that I can vote for the proposal. Wisløff's theological and professional ability, that presumably will put him decidedly above the other possible candidates, plus his outstanding ability as preacher, will mean a valuable contribution to the Council of Professors." Quoted in Sele, p. 14.

In addition Wisløff wrote a second dissertation *Den kristelige stat – og den radikal politikk. En studie omkring oppropet 'Til Christendommens venner i vort Land' (Januar 1883)*.<sup>293</sup> The book is about an event in 18<sup>th</sup> century Norway where Professor Gisle Johnson, the Christian people's leading man along with some others, made a proclamation calling their Christian friends to support the right and not the left.<sup>294</sup> However, a great part of the Christian people did not listen to Johnson in the matter even though they highly regarded him as a preacher.<sup>295</sup> Fæhn has observed that "the presentation shows clearly that Wisløff is glad to to be able to document that among the awakening's people Gisle Johnson's proclamation was not to their liking, and that to obey slogans from church and clergy was not something to recommend, even if Professor Johnson himself was leading."<sup>296</sup> Wisløff says that "the whole episode was for me a thought-provoker as it relates to the Christian and politics. One should be extremely cautious about mixing Christianity into party politics."<sup>297</sup> This is a substantial work and clearly demonstrates Wisløff's ability as a church historian. The examining committee on November 11, 1960 approved Wisløff as professor in church history along with the history of dogma and symbolics at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, to begin January 1, 1961.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> TTK 3:4(1960), 208. The dissertation was later published as a book, *Politikk og kristendom: en studie omkring oppropet 'til christendommens venner i vort land' (Januar 1883)* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1961).

<sup>294</sup> Sjaastad, 71. Oddvar Johan Jensen has pointed out that it is not precise enough to say that it was for the right and against the left. It was against the introduction of parliamentarianism as a political principle which Johnson thought was the devil's power. Comment to the writer.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Fæhn, 281.

<sup>297</sup> Sjaastad, 71.

<sup>298</sup> TTK 3:4(1960), 208.

When Wisløff became professor of Church History he resigned his position as editor for *Luthersk Kirketidende*, although he continued to contribute material from time to time. In 1961 he became a steady contributing editor of *Fast Grunn*, a journal published by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission.<sup>299</sup> This journal was started in 1948, and Wisløff was listed as one of many contributing editors at that time, but now he was listed as one of the four regular contributing editors. Wisløff's articles are also found in other periodicals as well, but it can be said that the bulk of them appeared in *Fast Grunn*.

In addition to his teaching at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, Wisløff, who had a strong interest in missions, was a guest lecturer several times on various mission fields. In 1967 he spent three and a half months teaching at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Kobe, Japan. While there he preached in the West Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church (which has connection with the *Norwegian Lutheran Mission*) and in the Kinki Lutheran Church (which is connected to the *Norwegian Mission Society* and the Norwegian Lutheran Free Church). Wisløff also appeared at large gatherings and meetings especially in connection with The Christian Student Organization (IVF in Japan) and The Evangelical Theological Society.<sup>300</sup> He also visited the Norwegian Lutheran Mission's fields in Taiwan and Hong Kong. He was a guest lecturer in Japan again in 1972-73. In 1968 he was a guest lecturer for seven weeks at the Pastor's School of the Norwegian Mission Society's field in Madagaskar. At the same time he visited the Norwegian Lutheran's Mission's field in Ethiopia, the

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<sup>299</sup> *Fast Grunn* stated at its beginning that it was not an organ for any individual organization but would turn itself to all who have sympathy with the paper's program of (1) the Bible as the solid ground that stands in all storms and ages and (2) a Lutheran, low-churchly view. *Fast Grunn* 1:1(1948):2.

<sup>300</sup> Gyoji Nabetani, "Kristendommens framtidsutsikter i Japan," a chapter in *På ordets grunn*, 219.

Preacher's School in Awasa, the school and hospital center in Irgalem. Wisløff also taught at the *Det Norske lutherske Indremisjonsselskaps bibelskole* in Oslo and preached on the Norsk Rikskringkasting and Norea Radio.

We turn now to a brief survey of his literary production during the time of his professorship. When Wisløff took over as Professor of Church History there was a need for a text book for Norwegian Church History. He went immediately to work on this project. Using his lecture notes from 1962-1963 and additional materials, he wrote *Norsk kirkehistorie*, Volume I, with students in mind.<sup>301</sup> It covers from the beginning to about 1617. Helge Fæhn considers this work to be "without a doubt his best after his doctoral dissertation," even though there is a "certain anti-catholic tendency and a corresponding weak view of catholicism's inner side in the life of the divine service and life of piety."<sup>302</sup> The second volume in this series was written by Andreas Aarflot and covers up to about 1900.<sup>303</sup> Wisløff authored volume III, which dealt with the period from about 1870/80 to the 1950s.<sup>304</sup> In Fæhn's judgment this volume does not stand as high as Volume I. This is due to Wisløff's writing from a low-churchly, pietistic, and theologically conservative view which is often present and sometimes predominant. Fæhn believes that this is expressive of a general development in Wisløff at this time.<sup>305</sup> Nils E. Bloch-Hoell has also reviewed volume

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<sup>301</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie* Bind I, (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1966), 528 pages.

<sup>302</sup> Fæhn, 281. Men i høyere grad enn i denne merkes i dette bind I en viss antikatolsk tendens og en tilsvarende svak forståelse for katolisismens innerside i gudstjenesteliv og fromhetsliv.

<sup>303</sup> Andreas Aarflot, *Norsk kirkehistorie* Bind II. (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1967). 535 pages.

<sup>304</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie* Bind III. (Oslo:Lutherstiftelsen, 1971). 526 pages.

<sup>305</sup> Fæhn, 281.

three.<sup>306</sup> While recognizing Wisløff's emphasis on the conservative side of issues, some places where his treatment of matters may be a bit extreme, his main reaction is certainly positive, and he concludes that "Wisløff has produced a well-integrated high quality work, characterized by his great scholarship, clear intelligence, and fine art of depiction."<sup>307</sup>

Wisløff's writing was not limited to church history. We will not be able to touch upon all that he has written but will rather select that which may help us understand the issues of this period as seen by Wisløff. In the early 1950s the issue of ecumenicity received considerable attention.<sup>308</sup> This issue is now dealt with in relationship with the various mission organizations in a pamphlet entitled *Misjonen og evangeliet. Et ord i alvor om norsk misjon og Kirkenes Verdenråd*.<sup>309</sup> There was a debate about to what extent the *Norwegian Mission Council* should seek "consultative status" in the WCC's *International Mission Council*. Many spoke for it because it was not a full membership but only a contact. The pamphlet shows how serious this matter was. Consultative status is only the first step on the way.<sup>310</sup>

Wisløff answers the question "Why do we not have confidence in the World Council of Churches (WCC)?" Four major reasons are given. 1. Because the WCC has an unclear basis that gives room in the Council's leadership and activity for even an extreme liberal

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<sup>306</sup> Nils E. Bloch-Hoell, "Carl Fr. Wisløff: *Norsk kirkehistorie* III, Oslo 1971, Lutherstiftelsens forlag, 527 s., ill." *TTK* 42 Årgang (1971), 308-311.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. Men min hovedreaksjon er så avgjort positiv. W. har levert et helstøpt kvalitetsarbeid, preget av hans store lærdom, klare intelligens og iine fremstillingskunst.

<sup>308</sup> At that time Wisløff's primary opponent was Bishop Eivind Berggrav. Refer to the preceding section for a discussion of the debate.

<sup>309</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Misjonen og evangeliet: et ord i alvor om norsk misjon og Kirkenes Verdenråd* (Oslo: A. S. Lunde Forlag, 1961). (ET = Mission and the Gospel: A word in seriousness concerning the Norwegian Mission and the World Council of Churches) It was published as a pamphlet that was included with the Norwegian Lutheran Mission's magazine *Utsyn* and sent out to the subscribers. See also Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Bibelen og tradisjonen i ekumenikken" a chapter in *Ditt ord är sanning*, Dedicated to David Hedegård. Edited by Seth Erlandsson. 1971, 259-274.

<sup>310</sup> Sjaastad, 94.

theology. 2. Because high-churchly, catholicizing tendencies have free play within the WCC. 3. Because the WCC is a powerful instrument in the hands of people who will work for a world church. 4. Because the WCC is an effective manner to create a certain “ecumenical” spiritual climate, where one is inspired to “unity,” but forgets to ask about the truth in God’s Word. At the heart of the problem is the WCC’s failure to base its approach on Scripture alone.<sup>311</sup>

The pamphlet had a certain significance for the attitude among the Norwegian mission people who have followed a clear line in these questions.<sup>312</sup> It is Wisløff’s conclusion that “in the midst of the tension and development to a world church, it shows *also* constantly that the modern ecumenicity works splits.”<sup>313</sup> He expresses the seriousness of the issue by noting that “modern mission’s theology is such that non-Christian religions are also a way to God. The WCC and the Lutheran World Federation spread a theology of mission that we must set ourselves against with all power.”<sup>314</sup>

Another subject that Wisløff’s pen responded to was the crisis over the Bible. In 1961 he wrote on “Luther’s View of the Bible” in the context of the modern attempt to use Luther

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<sup>311</sup> See also Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Bibelen og tradisjonen i ekumenikken.” Here he states that the weakness and the problem of the ecumenical movement and plan is that it has laid aside the Reformation’s ‘Bible Alone.’ “The conclusion of our deliberations can only go in one direction: the guiding star for us today must be the same as for evangelical Christians in bygone days: The Scripture Alone,” 274. “As Lutherans we believe our Lutheran Confessions are a true expression of Biblical teaching. Without owning this conviction one has no right to step into the Lutheran Church’s service as preacher and administrator of the sacraments. But the great guiding star must be to the last God’s Word. We must all turn to the Scriptures, and with prayer for the Spirit’s guidance in the Word we must say: ‘Teach us, Lord, your way!’ Psalm 27:11,” 274.

<sup>312</sup> Sjaastad, 94.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 95. For midt i tendensen og utviklingen mot en verdenskirke, viser det seg også stadig at moderne økumenikk virker splittende.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. Moderne misjonsteologi – slik den blir hevdet i bøker og på store konferanser – går ut på at også ikke-kristne religioner er veier til Gud. Kristenfolket må være oppmerksom på hva som foregår. Kirkenes Verdensråd og Det lutherske Verdensforbund sprer faktisk en misjonsteologi som vi må sette oss imot av all kraft.

as a supporter for the modern view of the Bible in contrast with the so-called “fundamentalism.”<sup>315</sup> Making use of E. Thestrup Pedersen’s 1959 doctoral dissertation “Luther som skriftfortolker” and his own Luther research, he shows that Luther sees the Scriptures as God’s own Word. “The Gospel should not be proved, says Luther – it should only be heard and believed.”<sup>316</sup> It is contrary to Luther to use the expression “what preaches Christ” to test all chapters and verses in the Bible. That is what moderns do but not what Luther did.<sup>317</sup>

An aspect of Luther’s view of Scripture that became significant for Wisløff was the role it has in Luther’s view of the church. For Luther the true church on earth is “the little flock of believers who belong to Jesus, and *who hold to God’s Word in the Holy Scripture.*”<sup>318</sup> “The *true* church teaches and preaches that which God’s Word teaches and preaches.”<sup>319</sup> Thus for Wisløff “God’s real church on earth is the little flock who believes this Word.”<sup>320</sup> For Wisløff, both the formal, as is here emphasized, and the material principle of the reformation have a very significant place in determining ecumenical and fellowship issues among Christians.

In another piece that Wisløff wrote on the Bible he stated in the foreword “that in the Spring of 1963 he has been asked three times to speak at Pastor’s Associations about the crisis

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<sup>315</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Luthers bibelsyn” *Fast Grunn* 14:2(1961), 84-87.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 85. Evangeliet skal ikke bevises, sier Luther – det skal bare bli hørt og trodd.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 86. Det er den lille flokk av troende som hører Jesus til, og *som holder seg til Guds ord i den Hellige Skrift.* This is discussed at length in a very important essay by Wisløff. See Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Luther-tanker om kirken” *Luthersk Kirketidende* 89:1 (9 Januar 1954), 1-8. Refer to the SA.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.* Den *sanne* kirke lærer og forkynner det som Guds ord lærer og forkynner.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 87. Guds rette kirke på jorden er den lille flokk som tro dette Ord.

we now experience on the view of the Bible.”<sup>321</sup> Wisløff also wrote other pieces that were in response to this situation.<sup>322</sup> There is nothing to indicate that his view on the Bible has changed since he engaged in the discussion back in 1937, as we have previously noted.

In 1966 Wisløff wrote on the recent developments in Catholicism.<sup>323</sup> The analysis begins with a brief look at the First Vatican Council and the succeeding modernism in the Roman Catholic Church. A more in-depth attention is given to the Second Vatican Council, looking at “The Apostolic Constitution on the Church,” the “Decree on Ecumenism, Bible and Tradition,” and “Religious Freedom.” He sums up the present situation by saying, “the fathers of the Reformation emphasized the word ‘alone’: Scripture alone, faith alone, Christ alone. But the Catholics still have Scripture and Church tradition, faith and works, Christ and saints and Mary. In this regard there are absolutely no changes whatsoever.”<sup>324</sup> But it can be said “on the other hand there has, sorry to say, taken place quite a change on the ‘evangelical’ side. Scripture alone has a weak position in present day theology; faith alone was not stated strongly and courageously at the gathering of the Lutheran World Federation in Helsinki 1963, but faintly and stammering.”<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Vår tillit til bibelen: finnes det vei ut av bibel-krisen vi nå opplever?* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1963). (ET = *Our Confidence in the Bible: Is there to be found any way out of the Bible-Crisis we now experience?*)

<sup>322</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Biblens selvvitnesbyrd” *Credo* no. 5 (1963). *Guds ord står fast* Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1966. This work includes a reprint of *Vår tillit til Bibelen. Finnes det vei ut av bibel-krisen vi nå opplever?* And a second chapter “Luthers tanker om skriftens autoritet.”

<sup>323</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Vaticanum II*. (Oslo: *Credo*, 1966). Also translated by Audun Leif Thorsen and published in English as *New Catholicism?* (Kobe, Japan: Kobe Lutheran Seminary, 1967).

<sup>324</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *New Catholicism*, 20.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

One of the courses that Wisløff taught was Symbolics, for which a concise textbook was needed. To meet that need he wrote *Kristne kirkesamfunn* which was based in part on lectures he had given to the theological students.<sup>326</sup> He divided the book into eight chapters: 1. The Catholic Churches; 2. Reformation Churches; 3. Communions with roots in the Reformation Churches; 4. Excursus: Puritanism; 5. Free Churches; 6. Some Norwegian Free Churches; 7. Excursus: Communions on the edge of Christendom; 8. The Ecumenical Movement.

There were several other publications that we will just mention. They include a book of sermons,<sup>327</sup> a collection of devotional studies and radio talks,<sup>328</sup> a collection of relevant articles and lectures that had been previously published in various places between 1956 and 1974.<sup>329</sup> Other topics dealt with included an essay on the fate of the unbaptized child, the Bible's message on the Spirit's work, pamphlets on baptism and Law and Gospel in preaching, plus numerous editorials and smaller writings in various publications.

Before taking up Wisløff's early retirement we need to consider a pamphlet entitled *En grunn å stå på, en kurs å følge* that came out with the Norwegian Lutheran Mission's magazine *Utsyn* June 1972.<sup>330</sup> Wisløff sets forth why he believes the Bible is God's Word, that we meet Jesus through his Word, that Jesus shows us what to think about the Bible, what the Bible teaches about itself and several other issues related to the Bible's nature and

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<sup>326</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfunn* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1974. 2<sup>nd</sup> printing 1975, 4<sup>th</sup> published by Lunde Forlag, 1988). (ET = *Communities of Christian Churches*) Torleiv Austad has reviewed this book in *LK* no. 20 (30 november 1974), 519-520. He recommends it as a very useful book.

<sup>327</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1973).

<sup>328</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *I Jesu navn* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1972).

<sup>329</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Alvorlig talt* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1974). (ET = *Seriously Speaking*)

<sup>330</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *En grunn å stå på, en kurs å følge* (Oslo: Evangelisk Litteraturmisjon, 1972). (ET = *A ground to stand on, a course to follow*)

authority. It is a strong polemic for the Bible as the sure foundation on which we can stand. With the Bible as his foundation and starting point he says “we can evaluate all the difficult questions that meet God’s children here in the world.”<sup>331</sup> In the second half Wisløff takes up some of these questions, such as evangelism, missions, salvation through faith, religious syncretism, and the Gospel and politics. He concludes with a strong statement calling for the freedom to hold and follow the view of faith that belongs to the evangelical, pietistic, and low-churchly faith-view in the midst of clericalism, the denial of the Bible alone and the Gospel as the only way of salvation, and the ecumenicity of the WCC.<sup>332</sup>

In July Docent Andreas Aarflot at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology and a colleague of Wisløff’s responds critically in an editorial in *Luthersk Kirketidende*, where he disassociates himself from “(in his opinion)” this fundamentalistic, biblicistic, and unhistorical view of the Bible which cannot be supported in any way. Aarflot considers more serious Wisløff’s suggestion that there ought not to be room for cooperation in a churchly and organizational relationship with people who have another understanding of the questions. This, he thinks, will without doubt result in a cold climate in our church.<sup>333</sup> In a response on July 8<sup>th</sup> Wisløff questioned whether or not Aarflot had seriously read the pamphlet and replied that his present position at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology and his past record indicates that he does work together with those who have a different understanding.<sup>334</sup> He noted that he had not stated anything new in relationship to what he had earlier written or said,

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 12. Med Bibelen som grunnlag og utgangspunkt kan vi dømme om alle de vanskelige spørsmål som møter Guds barn her i verden.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 22-24.

<sup>333</sup> *Fast Grunn* 25:4 (1972), 228-229.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 231.

either in the view of the Bible or in the view of the church.<sup>335</sup> He also said “if such a view of the Bible and view of the church can not be respected in our church and at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, *then* it is quite possible that we will have a cold climate. The blame lies in such case with Aarflot and his fellow partisans.”<sup>336</sup> It was clear that there were definite ideological differences between Aarflot and Wisløff concerning the Bible and the structure of the church. Aarflot desired to incorporate the organizations more and more into the structure of the church whereas Wisløff strongly emphasized their independent status.

In October of 1974 Leiv Aalen stated that Wisløff’s view of the Bible was a biblicism foreign to The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology.<sup>337</sup> This comment along with the events from the summer of 1972 lie in the background of Wisløff’s letter in March 1975 to the Board of The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, giving notice that he desired to retire three years early, i.e., when he reached the age of 67. He stated at the time: “this step is essentially motivated by my reaction to the situation among the faculty as this has developed. The theological and churchly opposition among the colleagues, and certain related known public episodes, are a burden on the freedom in the work.”<sup>338</sup> And in this way Professor

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid. Wisløff states in *Norsk kirkedebatt gjennom 100 år* that my view of the Bible lies ‘to the right’ of the traditional Free Faculty view was known before I was called to the faculty, and my thoughts on the independence of the various organizations was also put forth many times before. But the pamphlet was received with a challenging attack from one other Free Faculty teacher that attracted general attention. It became clear those who would support the thoughts of this pamphlet would have hardship at the Free Faculty(137).

<sup>336</sup> Ibid. Dersom et slikt bibelsyn og kirkesyn ikke kan bli respektert i vår kirke og på vårt Me-nighetsfakultetet, da er det nok mulig at vi får et klima. Skylden ligger i så fall hos Aarflot og hans meningsfeller. See also Sjaastad, 107-108, 125-128. Wisløff believes that the problem was first and foremost his view of the church and his cooperation with the *Misjonssambandet* (Norwegian Lutheran Mission) and the *Vestlandske Indremisjon* that one could not stand. Sjaastad, 127.

<sup>337</sup> Leiv Aalen, “Hilsen fra en kollega” in T. Austad og T. Wigen, utg. *Tro og norm. Festskrift til professor, dr. philos. & theol. John Nome på 70-årsdagen 2 oktober 1974*. Oslo, 1974, note 34, 236.

<sup>338</sup> *Fast Grunn* (1975), 359. <<Mitt ønske om å tre tilbake ved oppnådd pensjonsalder, i stedet for å fortette fremover mot aldersgrensen 70 ar, er vesentlig motivert ut fra min

Wisløff ended his active teaching career as professor of church history at the end of December 1975.

There do not seem to be any new developments in Wisløff's emphases or theology during this period that would be different from what we have met before. In addition to the outstanding contributions to the study of church history he continued to emphasize the truths we have met earlier as he applied them to the new situation. However, there do appear to be some significant developments in the church during this time. There are developments in the view of the Bible, liturgy, the women pastor issue, missions, and ecumenical issues. Even though these are not the primary subjects of investigation of this study, it does seem that the tension which developed was due primarily to a shift in the theology and resulting practices in the church and The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology rather than to a shift in Wisløff's theology and practice.

#### After The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology Years, Retirement: 1976-Present

His early retirement from The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology did not in any way mean retirement from involvement in the Lord's work of teaching, preaching, or writing. At the time of this writing Wisløff is 89 and he is still engaged to some extent in these activities.

In the post The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology years he has lectured at The Lutheran Theological Seminary, Kobe, Japan 1976-1977. He has also taught at Fjellhaug Skoler, Oslo, the missionary training school for the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. The Fall of

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reaksjon på situasjonen ved fakultetet slik denne har utviklet seg. De teologiske og kirkelige motsetninger innen kollegiet, og visse dermed sammenhengende offentlig kjente episoder,

1978 he lectured at the Association Free Lutheran Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Fergus Falls, Minnesota on the theme: "Martin Luther – Still A Lode Star." In honor of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday a Festschrift entitled *På ordets grunn (On Basis of the Word)*, a title that reflects a major theme of his theology, was published.<sup>339</sup> He has also visited various mission fields including China, the place of his wife Ingrid's birth, giving lectures and encouraging the workers. In February 1993 he visited Kenya and gave a seminar on "Lutheran Theology and the Ecumenical Question" at the Theological Seminary, Matango.<sup>340</sup>

Wisløff's pen was no less active. He continued to write editorials, articles and book reviews for *Fast Grunn*. Contributions were also made to *Dagen*, *Vårt Land*, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, and other periodicals. At the beginning of this time Wisløff was engaged with responding to the issues surrounding his early retirement and the developments at The Free Faculty. The Christian papers *Dagen* and *Vårt Land* and the periodical *Fast Grunn* included extensive discussions for months on the matter. He answers the accusation of being a fundamentalist by seeking to make clear what fundamentalism is and that he is not a fundamentalist.<sup>341</sup>

A major project that he and two others, Arthur Berg and Thoralf Gilbrant, worked on for ten years was a new translation of the Bible into Norwegian. The goal of the translation was to put the Biblical text in the clearest possible modern language and at the same time

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er en belastning på frimodigheten i arbeidet.

<sup>339</sup> Hunnestad, Kvalbein and Prestegård.

<sup>340</sup> *Dagen*, 11 mars 1993.

<sup>341</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Fundamentalisme – hva er det?" *Fast Grunn* 29:2 (1976):77-80.

preserve the traditional Biblical terminology such as grace, justification, etc. but adapted for a new time.<sup>342</sup> The translators consciously worked within the Norwegian Bible tradition, maintaining the old terms and expressions that are found in the devotional literature and treasury of hymns.<sup>343</sup> This work was completed in 1988 and has been very well received, selling over a two hundred thousand copies.

A number of books of sermons on the pericope texts of the church year, Bible lectures and talks were also published.<sup>344</sup> In 1981 a devotional book *Daglig brød* came out.<sup>345</sup> The 366 devotionals are the result of what Wisløff has written and preached over fifty years. In gathering the material he started in Genesis and went through the Scripture passages he had spoken on over the years, and with the recognition that of the more in the last than he had seen earlier points and upbuilding thoughts came in due course. He says, “things I had previously preached for others became living for me again.”<sup>346</sup> His books on doctrine and ethics were revised and reprinted.

He wrote several books in the field of church history. *Norsk kirkedebatt gjennom 100 år* discusses the church’s relationship to the state and the churchly reform movement.<sup>347</sup> It also includes the conflict with liberal theology. Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms and

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<sup>342</sup> Bibelen, Den Hellige Skrift, Oversettelse 1988, en redegjørelse, p.4, 7.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>344</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Lyset skinner i mørket* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1976). Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Utvelgelsen i Kristus* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1978). Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Vitnebyrd om Jesus* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1979). Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Å være fri* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1980). Contains Bible hours given during Ungdommens landsmøte (Youth Meeting for the entire country) (sponsored by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission) the summer of 1980.

<sup>345</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1981).

<sup>346</sup> Sjaastad, 9. Ting jeg tidligere har grunnet på og forkynt for andre, ble levendegjort for meg igjen.

<sup>347</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Norsk kirkedebatt gjennom 100 år* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1979). This book is reviewed by Even Fougner in *LK* no. 13 (1980), 351-352.

their introductions were freshly put into Norwegian.<sup>348</sup> In his forward Wisløff emphasizes the value of the catechisms pointing out that the material should be learned, meditated on, and prayed personally and in the family.<sup>349</sup> In 1985 he revised his translation for a new edition of the *Book of Concord*.<sup>350</sup> For the celebration of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Augsburg Confession and the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Book of Concord*, three essays were published in *Den lutherske bekjennelse og katolicismen 1530 og 1980*.<sup>351</sup>

A major work was *Martin Luthers teologi*, a concise and popular presentation of the main points of Luther's theology.<sup>352</sup> The book was the result of his many years of working with Luther's writings and theology. The Reformation came when Luther during his work with the Bible found his way to its message of salvation through faith alone for Jesus Christ's sake alone.<sup>353</sup> For Wisløff the new that Luther came with is what we call the "main article": "the message that Jesus died for our sins and rose for our justification, and that this must be received through faith alone, without any works or merits."<sup>354</sup> But this message was not new;

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<sup>348</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Luthers katekismer. Oversettelse og innledning* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1979).

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>350</sup> Jen Olav Mæland, editor *Konkordie boken. Den evangelisk-lutherske kirkes bekjennesskrifter* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1985).

<sup>351</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Den lutherske bekjennelse og katolicismen 1530 og 1980* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1980).

<sup>352</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1983).

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 39. Reformasjonen kom da Luther under sitt arbeid med Bibelen fant frem til dens budskap om frelse ved tro alene for Jesu Kristi skyld alene.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. In his review of Wisløff's book, Professor Dr. Torleiv Austad says "the book's greatest merit is that it draws a clear and sharp picture of justification through faith alone. It is a refreshment to read such theology." He also comments that when Wisløff explains Luther's concept of grace in relation to the Roman Catholic view of grace as power, Austad would have also compared the Lutheran understanding of grace with the tendencies in pietism to interpret grace as a transforming power. *Luthersk Kirketidende* 118:16 (17 September 1983), 442.

it was as old as the Bible. The message of the Scriptures that had been hidden for a long time, came forth clear again.

The book has chapters on the following themes: “Many views about Luther;” “The Reformation’s Time of Dawning;” “What was the ‘new’ Luther came with?;” “The Glorious Light: The distinction between Law and Gospel;” “The Scripture as Judge;” “Before God’s Judgment Seat;” “Life under grace;” “The Means of Grace;” “Baptism;” “Communion;” “The Church;” “The Church’s Servant: Mass Priest or Preacher;” and “Spiritual and Worldly Governments.” He concludes by saying, “Luther’s greatness lies first and foremost in his strong confession: The Scripture alone shall set forth articles of faith, and nothing else. And Christ alone is our Savior, He whom we believe in and confess. Luther is a dependable guide for those who will find the Scripture’s saving truth of Jesus Christ.”<sup>355</sup> Wisløff had found in Luther further help in understanding the Scriptures, confirmation of what he had met in the Bible, and resources for the battles of the day, all of which he now brings forward in this work.

Wisløff lectured at the 1987 Lutheran Confessions Symposium at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana on “How does the Augsburg Confession Communicate?”<sup>356</sup> Later that year he taught at the Summer Institute of Theology at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary. These lectures have since been published as *Do the Work of an Evangelist: The Theology of Lutheran Evangelism* and will soon be

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 228. Luthers storhet ligger først og fremst i hans sterke bekjennelse: Skriften alene skal oppstille trosartikler, og ellers ingen. Og Kristus alene er vår frelser, han som vi tror på og bekjenner. Luther er en pålitelig veileder for dem som vil finne Skriftens frelsende sannhet om Jesus Kristus.

<sup>356</sup> This is available on cassette tape from Concordia Theological Seminary. On January 20, 1989 he was given an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree by Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

published in Norwegian.<sup>357</sup> It deals with the obstacles to Lutheran evangelism, baptism and Lutheran evangelism, Law and Gospel in Lutheran evangelism, preaching in Lutheran evangelism, and pietism and Lutheran evangelism. The lectures were designed to put the theology of Lutheran evangelism in the context where people are having difficulty balancing an emphasis on experienced salvation with the Lutheran understanding of the means of grace.<sup>358</sup> Wisløff makes very clear in this work his disagreement with Leiv Aalen's view of baptism as the only means of regeneration and thus "the kind of sacramentalism that makes revival (awakening) impossible."<sup>359</sup> He is at the same time critical of Hallesby's view of an abiding effect of baptism in the life of the one who no longer believes.<sup>360</sup> Therefore we can say that Wisløff seeks to be a corrective to both Hallesby and Aalen, as mentioned earlier. Further treatment of the material related to our study will be given later.

In honor of his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday a collection of his articles was published under the title *Fullfør din tjeneste!*<sup>361</sup> The editors in their foreword state that "Wisløff has been especially occupied with two or three main matters: the attitude to the Bible's authority and inspiration, the free organization's mission work within the church and our Lutheran heritage. His insight into church history has given him the possibility to put the current matters in a historical perspective."<sup>362</sup> The book contains articles that are not so readily available and that at the

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<sup>357</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Do the Work of an Evangelist: The Theology of Lutheran Evangelism* Edited by Robert L Lee and Francis W. Monseth. (Minneapolis: AFLC Seminary Press, 1990). In Norwegian it will be Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Gjør en evangelists gjerning* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1998).

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>361</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Fullfør din tjeneste!* Edited by Bernt T. Oftestad, Svein Granerud, Egil Sjaastad, and Ole Abel Sveen. (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1993).

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 7. Wisløff har særlig vært opptatt av to-tre hovedsaker: holdningen til Bibelens autoritet og inspirasjon, det frivillige misjonsarbeid innen kirken og vår lutherske arv. Hans

same time will give a good picture of Wisløff as a spiritual and churchly instructor with a solid desire for faithfulness to the Scriptures, with a Lutheran teaching profile and a low-churchly posture.<sup>363</sup> The material is divided into the four categories of: Mission and ecumenics; Means of Grace and faith; view of church and church life; and Sermons. The various pieces date from 1952 to 1992. This book in a sense is a good summary to this period even though it has not come to an end, for Wisløff's clock is still running.

The theological emphases during this period do not indicate any shift in position or new developments. However, this period is marked by Wisløff more distinctively identifying and cooperating with those organizations who confess the Biblical faith as he understands it and distancing himself from those who do not hold the same convictions.<sup>364</sup> An example is his response to the decision of the organization in which he was once a leader. The *Indremisjonsselskapet's* main board in December 1987 broke with their previous position that women's ordination was contrary to the Bible by now expressing that it was not contrary to the Bible. Wisløff, who in the 60s was a member of this board for nine years, said they had broken with the direction that the fathers had followed in faithfulness to God's Word.<sup>365</sup> In addition Wisløff, on the basis of his convictions on this matter, would not be a speaker at the *Indremisjonsselskapet's* main meeting hall that Spring.<sup>366</sup>

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innsikt i kirkehistorie har gitt ham mulighet til å sette de aktuelle sakene i et historisk perspektiv.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>364</sup> We noted in the previous period his resignation from The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology.

<sup>365</sup> Reported in *Fast Grunn* 40:1 (1987), 43-44.

<sup>366</sup> Reported in *Fast Grunn* 40:2 (1987), 81.

Some observers have noticed and believed that there is throughout Wisløff's life a movement in his view of the church that goes in the "personal side" or low-church direction, and that it has become more marked with the years.<sup>367</sup> However, what Wisløff writes in 1946 in *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* about the church does not anticipate the developments that would later come in the church such as a bishop denying hell, women pastors, a critical view of the Bible, woman bishop, liturgical reforms, ecumenical developments [WCC, LWF, Porvoo, etc.] abortion, homosexuality, etc.. He wrote following what could happen if the state goes against God's Word.<sup>368</sup> In this case the free church is the last resort.<sup>369</sup> But what is the last resort if the folk church itself goes against God's Word is not addressed. Wisløff wrote in 1979 that he had at a point in time a notion when he tried to get himself "to believe that it would be possible to keep the laymens organizations within a folk church that is free from the state."<sup>370</sup> However, he says, "It was not long before I realized that this was impossible, and that the work for the state church's dissolution is actually in conflict with my own basic view."<sup>371</sup>

In 1954 he wrote an article on Luther's thinking about the church.<sup>372</sup> It appears that what Wisløff met in Luther and the Confessions is the background for his coming to see the

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<sup>367</sup> See Solli in *På ordets grunn*, 20-21. Also comments by Svein-Arne Therodorsen and Sverre Aalen noted previously. It is Odd Sverre Hove's suggestion that there was also a shift in Wisløff's view of the church in the 1960s. Personal note to the writer.

<sup>368</sup> This was very real in 1946 for Norway had just been released from the control of the Nazi government.

<sup>369</sup> Wisløff, 1946, 212.

<sup>370</sup> Wisløff, *Norsk kirkedebatt gjennom 100 år*, 110. Jeg hadde på det tidspunkt en raptus da jeg forsøkte å få meg til å tro at det gikk an å beholde frie lekmannorganisasjoner innen en folkekirke som er fri fra staten.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid. Det varte imidlertid ikke lenge før jeg innså at dette var umulig, og at arbeidet for statskirkens oppløsning egentlig er i strid med mitt eget grunnsyn.

<sup>372</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Luther-tanker om kirken" *Luthersk Kirketidende* 89:1 (9 januar 1954), 1-8.

church from the personal side. In the 1959 edition of *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* Wisløff adds that the church “is also a fellowship of persons. It consists of all persons who believe, and who in faith live with Jesus Christ. The church is not primarily an institution, an organization, or arrangement, but a number of persons.”<sup>373</sup> This is followed by supporting references in *Luther and the Confessions*.<sup>374</sup> This “personal side” view of the church becomes more visible as the developments occur in the Norwegian Church. For Wisløff this church appears to be moving away from the formal and material principles of the Reformation and instead by way of Canterbury on to Rome. This ultimately puts Wisløff, in regard to the institutional church, in a somewhat similar situation to Luther at the time of the Reformation. Thus Wisløff appears to be working out in his practice of fellowship the theology of the church that he has found in *Luther and the Confessions*.

### Summary

We have given a brief survey of the various periods of Wisløff’s ministry, his life and its context. We have considered his teachers, activities, and writings. We have observed as Einar Solli has said, “Wisløff’s efforts span over many fields: theological instruction, lecture activity and preaching, literature production, debates on issues of current significance,

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<sup>373</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror*, (1959), 137 Den kristne kirke er altså *et samfunn av personer*. Den består av alle de mennesker som tror, og som i troen lever med Jesus Kristus. Kirken er ikke primært en institusjon, en ordning eller innretning, men et antall mennesker. The italics are from the original. In regards to the doctrine of the church Kurt Marquart points out that A. Buchrucher “singles out the Norwegian theologian C. F. Wisløff (Wisløff) as being one of the few to have recognized “that the counterpart to the one church in Luther is the pseudo-church, hence not the visible side of the invisible church, consisting of many churches.” Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, And Governance*, (Waverly, Iowa: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, Inc., 1990). The church as a fellowship of persons fits with what Wisløff has said in *The Gift of Communion* on the universal priesthood of believers.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

leadership in organizations and institutions, to name some of the most important.”<sup>375</sup> At the heart of the major themes taken up by him are the formal principle of Scripture alone, the material principle of justification by grace on account of Christ through faith alone, and the priesthood of all believers. From the late 30s and the early 40s and thereafter, these principles and their corollaries are the starting point for Wisløff’s responses to the various situations in the church such as the questions of authority, issues of ecumenicity, liturgical reforms, and missions.

A fair amount of Wisløff’s writings, especially the smaller works, fall into the category of occasional works which are directed to specific situations. As a result his emphasis may at times seem to be one-sided and perhaps in tension with what he has said in another place. It is therefore important, when reading him, to ask, “What is he emphasizing here and why?” We have pointed out the various issues Wisløff has responded to over the years and in what ways he has sought to be a corrective.

Helge Fæhn says that “Wisløff has been one of the most pronounced figures in Norwegian Church life after the Second World War. Not least through his endless lectures and preaching activity has he reached all around in Scandinavia especially through summers and the Student Association meetings.”<sup>376</sup> The amount of material that has flowed from his pen is no less phenomenal. His ability to say the profound and complex in clear and simple language has made his writings easy to read and understand. They have continued to remain

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<sup>375</sup> Soli, *På ordets grunn*, 11. Professor Carl Fr. Wisløffs arbeidsinnsats spenner over mange fel-ter: teologisk undervisning, foredragsvirksomhet og forkynnelse, litterær produksjon, dagsaktuell debatt, lederskap i organisasjoner og institusjoner - for å nevne noen av de viktigste.

<sup>376</sup> Fæhn, 282. W . har vært en av de mest markante skikkelser i norsk kirkeliv etter den annen verdenskrig. Ikke minst ved sin utrettelige foredrags - og forkynner - virksomhet har han nådd langt utover, i Norden særlig ved sommermøter og studentlagssamlinger.

in print long after their original publication. The lecture of 1939, on preaching Law and Gospel to our children, the doctrine book of 1946, the book on preaching of 1951, the doctoral dissertation of 1957 are all still in print today, even though some are in a revised form. These have also contributed to Wisløff's influence. In recognition of both his scholarly theological work and an exceptional and substantial lifelong contribution in and for the Norwegian Church and Christian life, Wisløff was awarded the King's Gold Medal of Honor by His Majesty King Harald on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1997. We will now turn from this biographical survey to a consideration of Wisløff's theological foundations and framework.

## Chapter Four

### **An Overview of Wisløff's Theological Framework and Distinctive Features**

Before going into the more specific theme of the dissertation it is important to give an overview of Wisløff's theological framework. This framework provides the context and orientation for the manner in which Wisløff understands faith and the means of grace.

Wisløff presents this most formally when he discusses preaching. He states: "All that shall be preached from the pulpit must stand in an inner relationship to the whole Bible's way of thinking and conception of the world. Or the preaching will not be Christian."<sup>1</sup> In working through Wisløff's theology it was discovered that he orientates and formulates his theology on faith and the means of grace from the perspective of the themes that will be discussed in this chapter. Therefore because of the fundamental criticalness of this material for his understanding of faith and the means of grace we will go into some detail.

#### The Source of Theology

The first aspect of Wisløff's theological understanding that we will deal with in this section is his thinking on the Bible as the source of theology.<sup>2</sup> This will reveal Wisløff's

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<sup>1</sup> Wisløff, *Lyset skinner i mørket*, 181. "Alt som skal forkynnes fra prekestolen må stå i indre sammenheng med hele Bibelens tankegang og forestillingsverden. Ellers blir prekenen ikke kristelig."

<sup>2</sup> The primary resource that will be used for Wisløff's thinking on this issue is Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1987). Other important works are: idem., "Vår Tillit Til Bibelen" *Fast Grunn* 13:4 (1960), 206-215; idem., "Vårt Skriftsyn" *Fast Grunn* 18:4 (1965), 201-208; idem., *Gud ord står fast* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1966); idem., *En grunn å stå på en kurs å følge* (1972); idem., "Skriften som dommer," chapter 5 (pp. 54-78) in *Martin Luthers teologi* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1983).

understanding of the formal principle of the Reformation as it applies to the church today. There are three major elements that we will consider: First the origin of the source, i.e. the Bible and revelation; second, the nature of the source, i.e., the Bible's inspiration; and third, the authority of the source, which considers the implications of the first two elements for theology and the church. A brief look at his understanding of the relationship of the Bible and the confessions will also be included.

Wisløff believes that the knowledge available through what God has created belongs to the realm of Law and it therefore falls short for salvation.<sup>3</sup> This then leads us to ask, "How has God revealed himself for salvation and where can we find his revelation?" That, God has done by speaking through His prophets and apostles.<sup>4</sup> For our knowledge of God and salvation "we are therefore for all times dependent on the words of the prophets and apostles."<sup>5</sup> For "to them and only to them, has God directly revealed his mysteries."<sup>6</sup> The understanding we should have is also given to us in Wisløff's citing of Luther in his comments on David's words "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me" in 2 Samuel 23:2.<sup>7</sup> Luther says, "No one who is not a prophet dares to speak like that. We are allowed to boast that we are the prophets' catechumens and students, who only repeat that which the prophets

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<sup>3</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* (1987), 11-15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 16. Gud har åpenbart seg på den måten at han har talt til sine profeter og apostler. Hebr. 1:1; Ephes. 3:3f.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Derfor er vi for alle tider avhengige av profetenes og apostlenes ord.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Til dem, og bare til dem, har Gud direkte åpenbart sine hemmeligheter.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

have said before.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore it is not our religious ideas which mean nothing that get a hearing but rather “we are only to sit at the feet of the prophets and apostles.”<sup>9</sup>

Even though we are not able to literally sit at the feet of the prophets and apostles as people did when they lived, God has bridged the gap and provided also for us by giving us their “*written* word in the Bible.”<sup>10</sup> And it is important to note that “the apostles themselves have placed their spoken and written word on the same level.”<sup>11</sup> In spite of the facts that these writings came into being over a long period of time and that there exists a variety of kinds of writings and that the authors were quite different in nature and character, the Bible is one book, filled with *one* Spirit in which “we meet everywhere the one and same God.”<sup>12</sup> Wisløff notes that we are agreed about seeking the truth, but what is our point of departure when seeking the truth about the Bible? “Do we reckon with a God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, do we reckon with a living God who enters into and does miracles? Or don’t we reckon with such a God? Do we only go out from the laws of reason...?”<sup>13</sup> “What one can say about God outside the Bible, is philosophy. *Here* God has given us his revelation, and only here.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. AE 15:275-276 (WA 54:34, 35.) Pieper 1:195

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Wisløff cites 1 John 1:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 14:37 for support.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 17. Likevel er Bibelen en bok. Den er fylt av en And. Vi møter overalt den ene og samme Gud.

<sup>13</sup> Wisløff “Vårt skriftsyn *Fast Grunn* 18:4(1965), 204. Vi søker sannheten. Vi er enige om det. Men når vi så går av sted for å søke sannheten om Bibelen, hva er da vårt utgangspunkt? Regner vi med en Gud som har åpenbaret seg i Jesus Kristus, regner vi å med en levende Gud som griper inn og gjør under? Eller regner vi ikke med en slik Gud? Går vi bare ut fra at årsaksloven gjelder uavbrutt i alle livets forhold? Hva er i så måte vårt utgangspunkt?

<sup>14</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 17. Det en kan si om Gud utenom Bibelen, er filosofi. *Her* har Gud gitt oss sin åpenbaring, og bare her.

The comprehending or appropriating of the testimony of the prophets and apostles does not happen “without the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore it follows that “theology (the teaching about God) is in reality a matter for only the regenerated person.”<sup>16</sup>

We turn now to the inspiration of the Bible, the second element of the source of the theology. Wisløff approaches this subject Christocentricly. He points out that “to be a Christian means to live in a fellowship of faith with Jesus Christ God’s Son.”<sup>17</sup> And “a person comes into this fellowship with Jesus through hearing the believing congregation’s witness about Jesus. This witness is drawn from the Bible.”<sup>18</sup> Thus “one meets Jesus through encountering the Bible and Biblical preaching.”<sup>19</sup> As a result “the one who has come to faith in Jesus knows no higher authority than him. All he says is true including what he has said about the Scripture. No one knows better information than Jesus. The believer’s relationship to the Bible sticks closely together with his relationship to Jesus.”<sup>20</sup> When faced with the question “Why do I believe that the Bible is God’s Word?,” Wisløff says, “I must take my point of departure in Jesus himself, my Lord and Savior, whom I believe in.”<sup>21</sup> It is by way of Jesus the Savior and his Gospel that Wisløff comes to his understanding of and belief in the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. See 1 Corinthians 2:14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Derfor er *teologien* – læren om Gud – i grunnen bare det gjenfødte menneskes sak.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 18. Å være en kristen vil si å leve i troens samfunn med Jesus Kristus, Guds Sønn.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Inn I dette samfunn med Jesus kommer et menneske ved å høre den troende menighets vitnesbyrd om Jesus. Dette vitnesbyrd er hentet fra Bibelen.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. En møter Jesus ved å møte Bibelen og den bibelske forkynnelse.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Den som er kommet til tro på Jesus, kjenner ingen høyere autoritet enn ham. Alt han sier er sant, også det han har sagt om Skriften. Ingen vet bedre beskjed enn Jesus. Den troendes forhold til Bibelen henger nøye sammen med hans forhold til Jesus. See also “Vårt Skriftsyn” *Fast Grunn* 18:4 (1965), 204.

<sup>21</sup> Wisløff, *En Grunn å stå på en kurs å følge*, (1972), 4. Hvorfor tror jeg da at Bibelen er Guds ord ? Når jeg skal svare på det spørsmålet må jeg ta mitt utgangspunkt i Jesus selv, min Herre og Frelser, som jeg tror på.

Bible's inspiration. And so "now Jesus is my highest authority in all questions."<sup>22</sup> "If we, everything considered, would have faith in the Bible, we must first and foremost consider what the Bible says about itself. We must hold ourselves to the view of the Bible that Jesus and the apostles had."<sup>23</sup>

Just what do Jesus and the apostles then teach about the Old testament? A study of all the Gospels "reveals that Jesus held the Old Testament to be God's own Word."<sup>24</sup> We note that Jesus "pointed to Moses and the prophets (Luke 24:27), and to Moses and the prophets and the psalms (Luke 24:44), i.e., to the entire Old Testament."<sup>25</sup> Jesus believed concerning what David wrote that "David spoke by the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 22:43)" and that the "Scripture witnesses about Him" (John 5:39)."<sup>26</sup> In addition the "Word of the Scriptures decides all things (Matthew 5:16; John 10:35; Matthew 4:1-11)."<sup>27</sup>

Turning to what the epistles assert in regards to the Old Testament we find Paul teaching that all Scripture is God-breathed and Peter stating that "those who wrote the Holy Scriptures were enlightened, guided and taught by the Holy Spirit."<sup>28</sup> Wisløff emphasizes that "the New Testament's witnesses are convinced that the Scripture's word is spoken and written

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p.5. Nå er Jesus min høyeste autoritet i alle spørsmål.

<sup>23</sup> Sjaastad., 121. Hvis vi i det hele tatt vil tro på Bibelen, må vi først og fremst ta hensyn til det den sier om seg selv. Vi må holde oss til det syn på Bibelen som Jesus og apostlene hadde.

<sup>24</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 18. Alle evangelistene viser at Jesus holdt det Gamle Testamente for å være Guds eget ord.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Han viste til Moses og profetene (Luk. 24, 27), og til Moses og profetene og salmene (Luk. 24, 44), dvs. Til hele det Gamle Testamente.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. <<David talte ved den Hellige And>>. Mt. 22,43. Skriften vitner om ham, Jesus. Joh.5,39.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Skriftens ord avgjør alle ting. Mt.5, 16. Joh. 10, 35. Mt. 4, 1-11.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. De som skrev de hellige skrifter var opplyst, ledet og undervist av den Hellige Ånd. Som det heter i 2. Pet. 1, 21: <<Aldri er noe profetord fremkommet ved et menneskes vilje, men mennesker som var drevet av den Hellige Ånd, talte ord som kom fra Gud.>>

‘in the Spirit.’”<sup>29</sup> Thus he concludes that “there can not be any doubt that Jesus and his witnesses in the New Testament hold the Old Testament to be God’s Word, to which one must show obedience and trust.”<sup>30</sup>

But what about the New Testament? Wisløff answers by saying “the New Testament writings are a message from the apostles and evangelists that claims to speak on behalf of the living God,” for “Jesus sent out his witnesses and said to them, ‘those who hear you, hear me.’”<sup>31</sup> Also “those who wrote the letters in the New Testament make it clear that they spoke with apostolic authority,” “because the Christian congregations realized that an apostle had the right to be heard as if it was God’s own voice that spoke.”<sup>32</sup> The writings of the New Testament are given the strongest word used to characterize writings with divine authority, namely ‘Scripture.’<sup>33</sup> There are New Testament passages that are cited as Scripture, such as in 1 Timothy 5:18, where Luke 10:7 is quoted along with Deuteronomy 25:4, and before the quotes it states the ‘Scripture says.’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 19. Skrifstens ord er talt og skrevet <<i>Anden>>, det er de nytestamentlige vitner overbevist om.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Det kan ikke være noen tvil om at Jesus og hans vitner i det som en må vise lydighet og tillit.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 19-20. Svaret må være at de nytestamentlige skrifter er et budskap fra apostler og evangelister som gjør krav på å tale på den levende Guds vegne. ... Jesus sendte sine vitner ut og sa til dem: <<De som hører dere hører meg.>> Luk. 10, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 20. De som skrev brevene i NT gir tydelig til kjenne at de taler med apostolisk myndighet. Paulus begynner sine brev med å si: Paulus, Jesu Kristi apostel. – Galaterbrevets 1. og 2. Kapittel viser hvilken vekt han legger på at han er Jesu apostel, kalt av Herren selv, ikke av noe menneske. Hvorfor var dette så viktig? Fordi de kristne menigheter var klar over at en apostel har krav på å bli hørt som om det var Guds egen røst som talte.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 21. En også *nytestamentlige* steder blir som sagt anført som <<skrift>>. I 1. Tim. 5, 18 blir Luk. 10, 7 sitert ved siden av 5. Mos. 25, 4, og foran betes det <<Skriften sier>>. I 2. Pet. 3, 15 blir apostelen Paulus’ brev stilt ved siden av <<de andre skrifter>>. Disse <<andre skrifter>> må være gammeltestamentlige skrifter.

Wisløff considers 1 Peter 1:10-12 to be a very important passage. Here Peter speaks about Christ's Spirit being in the prophets and in the same breath he "speaks about the message that he and the other apostles preached, and asserts that this message was given 'by the Holy Spirit.'"<sup>35</sup> This has the effect of putting his and the other apostles' words on the same level as the prophets' words in the Old Testament, for it is the same Spirit who speaks in us as in the old prophets.<sup>36</sup> Therefore we can say that the whole Bible is God's inspired Word.<sup>37</sup>

However, the fact that the Bible is inspired does not mean "that they were will-less instruments who only wrote down what the Spirit dictated without using their thoughts."<sup>38</sup> Wisløff recognizes that a study of the Scriptures indicates that the Holy Spirit made use of a variety of styles, different manners of expressions, careful investigation on the part of the writers, and historical knowledge the writers had gathered. "The Bible is therefore God's Word – and man's word."<sup>39</sup> Just as the fact that David spoke by the Holy Spirit's inspiration, and the Spirit spoke by David's mouth is one and the same matter.<sup>40</sup> What is crucial at this point according to Wisløff is to realize that "it makes no sense to distinguish – as some have attempted – between that which is divinely inspired and that which is pure human speech in

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. II. Pet. 1, 10-12 taler Peter om at Kristi And var i profetene. I samme åndedrett taler han om det budskap som han selv og de andre apostler forkynte, og slår fast at også dette budskap ble gitt <<ved den Hellige And>>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Hans og de andre apostlers ord blir satt på linje med profetenes ord i det Gamle Testamente. Et er den samme And som taler i oss som i de gamle profetene, sier han.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Hele Bibelen er Guds inspirerte ord.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. At profeter og apostler var inspirert av Guds Hellige And, v41 ikke si at de var viljeløse redskaper som bare skrev ned det Anden dikterte, uten å bruke tankene sine.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

the Bible.”<sup>41</sup> We must maintain that “all together is human, for it was people who wrote, and they wrote not according to mechanical dictation, but used their own abilities and thoughts,” and “all is at the same time divine, for the Holy Spirit filled these men’s minds and gave them both what they should write and the manner in which they should write it.”<sup>42</sup> This is something that transcends our understanding and so “we must simply bow before it – as we must bow before all that which comes from God.”<sup>43</sup>

On the basis of 2 Timothy 3:16, Wisløff sees along with Bengel that inspiration means that the Holy Scripture is the Holy Spirit’s tool today. As Bengel put it, “The Scripture was divinely inspired, not merely while it was written, God breathing through the writers, but also while it is being read, such that the Scripture breathes of Him.”<sup>44</sup> Speaking of this ongoing work of the Spirit through the Word Wisløff says, “(1) The Spirit of God inspired the holy authors when they wrote the books of the bible. (2) The Spirit of God works on us through the words of the Bible when we read or hear them. (3) And thereby Scripture casts light upon God, so that we learn to know Him.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore it is profitable.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit that convinces one that the Scriptures are the Word of God. Wisløff quotes Luther on this point as saying, “The Holy Spirit must say in your heart,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Det har ingen mening a skjelne – slik som noen har forsøkt – mellom det som er guddommelig inspirert og det som bare er rent menneskelig tale, i Bibelen.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Alt sammen er menneskelig, for det var mennesker som skrev, og de skrev ikke etter mekanisk diktat, men brukte sine evner og tanker. Alt er samtidig guddommelig, for den Hellige Ånd fylte disse menns sinn og ga dem både det de skulle skrive og måten de skulle skrive det på.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Her står vi overfor noe som vi ikke helr forstår. Vi må bare bøye oss for det – slik som vi må bøye oss for alt som kommer fra Gud.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Skriften er inspirert på guddommelig vis, ikke bare slik at Gud inspirerte forfatterne da den ble skrevet, men også slik at Gud inspirerer ved Skriften idet den blir lest, og slik at Skriften ånder av Ham.

<sup>45</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet...* (1951), 36. (1) Guds Ånd inspirerte de hellige forfattere da de skrev Bibelens boker. (2) Guds Ånd virker på oss gjennom Bibelens ord nar vi leser og borer dem, og (3) derved kaster Skriften lys over Gud, så vi lærer ham å kjenne.

this is God's Word."<sup>46</sup> Wisløff adds, "Theologians therefore speak about 'the Holy Spirit's inner witness;' when the Bible is read or is heard, the Spirit is active in the hearts, and convinces us that it is really God's Word we read or hear," as it did for Lydia when Paul spoke.<sup>47</sup>

The present modern skepticism about the Bible, which began about two hundred years ago, contrasts with the longer part of the church's history during which she was clear about the Bible as God's inspired Word, which is completely dependable, clear, and understandable so it can make us wise unto salvation. Wisløff believes that it doesn't lead to anything to consider at length how a divine inspiration must be reasonable.<sup>48</sup> This approach would subject the Bible to our judgement, when it should rather be turned around so that the Bible should judge us and put us in our place.<sup>49</sup> In summary of inspiration Wisløff says that "the prophets and the apostles do not in the Biblical writings give expression of thoughts that arose in their own hearts, it is not more or less valuable experiences and feelings we meet there. They give expression of that which lives in God's heart. And this is the Bible's inspiration."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 22. Luther sier det på denne måten: <<Den Hellige And må si i ditt hjerte: Dette er Guds ord.>>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Teologene taler derfor om <<Den Hellige Ånds indre vitnesbyrd>>; når Bibelordet leses eller høres, er Anden virksom i hjertene, og overbeviser oss om at det virkelig er Guds ord vi leser eller hører. <<Herren åpnet Lydias hjerte, så hun ga akt på det som Paulus talte.>> Ap. gjern. 16, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 23. Det fører ikke til noe å overveie frem og tilbake om hvordan en guddommelig inspirasjon fornuftigvis må være.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Bibelen blir da ganske underlagt vår vurdering. Men det skulle være omvendt: Bibelens ord skulle få dømme oss og sette oss på plass.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Profetene og apostlene gir i de bibelske skrifter ikke uttrykk for tanker som er oppstått i deres eget hjerte; det er ikke mer eller mindre verdifulle religiøse opplevelser og følelser vi møter der. De gir uttrykk for det som bor i Guds hjerte. Og det er Bibelens inspirasjon.

This leads us to the authority of the Bible.<sup>51</sup> Because the Bible is God's inspired Word we do not meet thoughts that invite us to discuss but a divine message that we must bow before.<sup>52</sup> "The New Testament writings tell us with divine authority about Jesus and salvation in his name."<sup>53</sup> Key for Wisløff's teaching on the authority of the Bible is apostolic authority. The apostolic authority guarantees the truth of that which is told about Jesus Christ.<sup>54</sup> The apostolic authority also guarantees the truth of the *interpretation* of Jesus' work that the apostles deliver.<sup>55</sup> In spite of the variety of interpretations about Jesus' death "the Lord's apostles say that Jesus' death was a substitutionary punishment in our place, to atone for our sins."<sup>56</sup> "The Bible's account of Jesus is accompanied by an *interpretation* of what this work *means*: He died for our sins. We have to bow before this apostolic interpretation. It is given with God's authority. If anyone interprets Jesus' work differently, then he denies the Bible's authority."<sup>57</sup> The Bible is the Word of the prophets and apostles and we must carefully note that "*the apostles' authority is not only a legitimatization of the message, it is at the same time an important part of the message itself.* The New Testament message is among other things

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<sup>51</sup> In the 1946 edition of *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* Wisløff entitled this section *Bibelens ufeilbarhet* ("The Bible's Infallibility"), 29.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* De nytestamentlige skrifter forteller oss med guddommelig autoritet om Jesus og frelsen i hans navn.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* Den apostoliske autoritet inntår for sannheten i det som blir fortalt om Jesus Kristus. This is referenced to 2 Peter 1:16.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* Den apostoliske autoritet inntår også for sannheten i den *tolkning* av Jesu gjerning som apostlene bringer.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* Men Herrens apostler sier at Jesu død var en strafflidelse i vårt sted, til soning for våre synder. Wisløff references this to Rom. 3:25 ff.; 2. Cor. 5:18 ff.; Col. 1, 20.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* Bibelens beretning om Jesus er ledsaget av en *tolkning* av hva denne gjerning betyr: Han døde for våre synder. Vi har å bøye oss for denne apostoliske tolkning. Den er gitt med Guds autoritet. Tolker noen Jesu gjerning annerledes, så fornekte han Bibelens autoritet.

this: Jesus, God's Son has chosen the apostles whom he has furnished with his authority, and given of his Spirit in an unique manner."<sup>58</sup>

The Bible is not one among other equal authorities. It is to be heard as "Scripture alone." Wisløff joins in confessing with the Lutheran fathers the teaching of the *Formula* "We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged ... Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scripture ...."<sup>59</sup> Within Christianity there are many opinions on this matter, such as the Roman Catholic Church with its papal authority on the one hand and those who embrace an inner revelation or "inner light," such as Schleiermacher, on the other. In all such cases where the Bible is not alone the authority from God it is replaced by human thinking and understanding.<sup>60</sup>

Given that "the Bible is the Christian congregation's only authority in all matters that have to do with Christian faith and morals" it is important to consider some basic principles for interpreting the Bible.<sup>61</sup> Wisløff believes that "the Bible has an *infallible* teaching authority" and that it "cannot err."<sup>62</sup> This means that there is a doctrinal unity in the Bible so "we are also certain that the Scripture's words *cannot contradict each other* in any question

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 25. *Apostlenes autoritet er ikke bare en legitimasjon for budskapet, den er samtidig en viktig del av budskapet selv.* Det nytestamentlige budskap er blant annet dette: Jesus, Guds Sønn, har utvalgt apostler som han har utstyrt med sin myndighet og gitt sin And på en egen måte.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. This *Formula* quote is from the Tappert edition FC, Part I Epitome, 1-2. Pp. 464-465.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 27. Bibelen er den kristne menighets eneste autoritet i alle saker som har med kristen tro og moral å gjøre.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Bibelen har en *ufeilbar* læreautoritet. Skriften kan ikke feile.

that has to do with our salvation.”<sup>63</sup> Another basic principle is that “*the clear words should cast light over the difficult.*”<sup>64</sup> The point of departure should always be the clear and plain words when seeking to understand the passages that are not so easy to grasp.<sup>65</sup>

Wisløff was asked in an interview about what in the Bible is time bound and what is not. A whole part of the ordinances in the Old Testament are time bound because the Bible itself tells us so in Paul’s letters and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Even though this is the case, these words are, just the same, God’s Word to us which tells us something about God and his relationship to his people, his holiness and his love.<sup>66</sup> Also certain things in the New Testament are time bound, such as women having a veil on when they pray. But the *attitude* that the admonition aims at is not, and neither are such foundational things as subordination, which we meet many places in the Bible as an expression of the order of creation.<sup>67</sup> Here human opinions must not determine our view but we must keep to God’s Word which can not err.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Derfor er vi også visse på at Skriftens ord *ikke kan motsi hverandre* i noe spørsmål som har med vår frelse å gjøre.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. En annen hovedregel for tolkningen av Skriften er denne, *at de klare ord skal kaste lys over de vanskelige.*

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Man skal alltid ta utgangspunktet i ord som er klare og tydelige. Ut fra disse ordene kan vi forsøke å nærme oss de bibelsteder som vi synes ikke er så lette å få tak i.

<sup>66</sup> Sjaastad, 122-123. En hel del forordninger i Det gamle testamentet er tidsbestemt, for det forteller Bibelen oss selv – f.eks. i Paulus-brevene og i Hebreerbrevet – Allikevel er også disse <<tidsbestemte>> ord Guds ord til oss. De sier oss noe om Gud og hans forhold til sitt folk, hans hellighet og hans kjærlighet.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 123. Visse ytre ting i NT er også tidsbestemt, f.eks. når det sies at kvinner skal ha slør når de ber og har ordet i forsamlingen (1. Kor. 11). Ærbare kvinner hadde all tid slør, og menigheten skulle ikke gå i bresjen for en falsk kvinnefrigjøring. Her er selve sløret tidsbestemt. Men den *holdningen* som formaningen sikter til, den er *ikke* tidsbestemt. Og slike grunnleggende ting som underordningen, den er ikke tidsbestemt. Den møter vi mange steder som uttrykk for en skaperordning.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Her må ikke menneskers oppfatninger få bestemme vårt syn. Vi skal holde oss til Guds ord som ikke kan ta feil.

In the light of the many difficulties in regards to the Bible is it possible to maintain its trustworthiness? Wisløff responds to four basic kinds of difficulties. He rejects the solution to the historical problems which says that the historicity of the events is not important. “We should remember that our salvation is tied to certain historical deeds, as God’s election of Israel, his leading of this people, and first and foremost God’s salvation work through Jesus Christ.”<sup>69</sup> Wisløff says further that “we believe that this goodness and love of God has revealed itself in *history*” and so he speaks of “salvation’s history.”<sup>70</sup> The implications of this activity of God in space-time history is of utmost significance. For “if the Bible’s account of Jesus’ death and resurrection is not *true*, then we Christians live in a lie; universal ‘religious-ethical ideal,’ even God’s great love, then can not help us.”<sup>71</sup> This being the case “we must not then think that the Bible only has meaning for us on the basis of some timeless ‘truths’ that it contains, and as if it was immaterial for our faith if salvation’s history was reliably told or not.”<sup>72</sup>

The historical difficulties must not be minimized nor should “we make our confidence in the Bible dependent upon the testimony of archeology.”<sup>73</sup> Rather we read the Old Testament’s and the New Testament’s accounts, which include the early history (Gen. 1-11),

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<sup>69</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 28. Vi skal huske at vår frelse er bundet til visse historiske hendinger, som Guds utvelgelse av Israel, hans førelse med dette folk, og først og fremst Guds frelsesgjerning ved Jesus Kristus.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 28-29. Vi tror at denne Guds godhet og kjærlighet har åpenbart seg i *historien*. ... Vi tror at Gud har åpenbart seg i historien; derfor taler vi også om <<frelshistorien>>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 29. Hvis ikke Bibelens beretning om Jesu død og oppstandelse er *sann*, så lever vi kristne på en løgn; en alminnelig <<religiøs-etisk ide>> om Guds store kjærlighet kan da ikke hjelpe oss. Wisløff references this to 1 Corinthians 15:7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Men da må vi ikke tenke at Bibelen bare har betydning for oss på grunn av noen tidløse <<sannheter>> som den inneholder, og som om det var likegyldig for vår tro om frelshistorien var pålitelig fortalt eller ikke.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Vi skal likevel ikke gjøre vår tillit til Bibelens troverdighet avhengig av vitnesbyrd fra arkeologien.

patriarchial accounts, the accounts about Jesus and the apostles' works of miracles, with confidence because we believe that the Bible is God's Word.<sup>74</sup> "So that we believe that God is all powerful, and that he has revealed himself through the prophets and apostles, there is nothing in the Bible's accounts that is not trustworthy."<sup>75</sup>

Wisløff believes that those difficulties that belong to the category of self-contradictions within the Bible are better dealt with by being humble before God's Word and waiting for more light than to conclude that this is erroneous.<sup>76</sup> Wisløff concedes that "we can not explain all the difficulties" and we should remember that "wiser and more learned people than we who live today have seen these problems without losing faith in the Bible as God's inerrant Word."<sup>77</sup>

The Bible's picture of the world has been a theme of discussion for a long time. And the question of how to reconcile the account of the world's creation as given in Genesis 1 with today's knowledge of the universe with its solar system and the galaxies has received many different answers. Wisløff rejects the answer that the Biblical account simply reflects the culture of the time. He points out that the Biblical account does not resemble what is found in mythology. The Bible teaches that the world was created by God through his word.<sup>78</sup> Wisløff

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Så sant vi tror at Gud er allmektig, og at han har åpenbart seg ved profeter og apostler, er det intet i Bibelens fortellinger som ikke er troverdig.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>77</sup> Sjaastad, 121-122. Vi kan ikke forklare alle vanskeligheter. Det får vi innrømme. Men klokere og mer lærde folk enn oss som lever i dag, har sett disse vanskene uten å miste troen på Bibelen som Guds ufeilbare ord.

<sup>78</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet på ...* (1987), 30.

calls attention to the fact that “the Bible often speaks about nature as it directly appears to us — just as we do today.”<sup>79</sup>

The Bible’s account of creation needs to be studied remembering that “the Bible is God’s Word of revelation to us. We must never agree to reducing Biblical testimony to something other than this.”<sup>80</sup> In saying that the Bible is not a science textbook, which is certainly true, Wisløff adds that “when the Bible speaks about how the world came to be, then we must pay attention to what it says, and take it very seriously.”<sup>81</sup> He does not see anything in the Bible that would prevent understanding the days of creation as long periods of time.<sup>82</sup> What is important is that “in each case God’s Word must decide what we should think about this matter, as about all others.”<sup>83</sup> We are to read the account of creation as a prophet looking back, for just as God gave his prophets knowledge of how the world shall one day go under, so he has also allowed one of them (Moses) to look back and showed him how the world in the beginning came to be.<sup>84</sup> We do not learn from the Bible what today’s science has made clear about these things and there will most likely be revisions in many areas. Without diminishing what the Bible reveals about the created world we must remember that “the Bible gives us something else and more. It tells us the greatest of all the truth of the world around

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Bibelen taler ofte om naturen slik den umiddelbart tar seg ut for oss — akkurat som vi gjør den dag i dag.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 31. Bibelen er Guds åpenbaringsord til oss. Vi må aldri gå med på å redusere bibelske utsagn til noe annet enn dette.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. Det blir ofte sagt at Bibelen ikke er noen lærebok i naturvitenskap. Og det er ganske sant. Men her er mer å si. Når Bibelen uttaler seg om hvordan verden ble til, så må vi merke oss det den forteller, og ta det på fullt alvor.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. I hvert fall må Guds ord avgjøre hva vi skal tenke om denne saken, som om alt annet.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Vi kan lese skapelsesberetningen som en <<tilbakeskuende profeti>>. Moses var en profet, Bibelen kaller ham det. 5. Mos. 34,10. Og likesom Gud har gitt sine profeter kjennskap til hvordan verden en gang skal gå Gud har gitt sine profeter kjennskap til hvordan verden en gang skal gå verden i tidens morgen ble til. See also 2 Peter 3:10.

us: 'For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To him be the glory forever!' (Romans 11:36)."<sup>85</sup>

Wisløff sums up his view of the Bible in this way: "The Bible is God's own Word. It came into being by God's inspiration, and is in all parts trustworthy and reliable, without error and self-contradiction. It is necessary to read the Bible and understand it in accordance with the Spirit's and the holy authors' own viewpoint, that is the person's salvation to the glory of Jesus' name."<sup>86</sup> In characterizing Wisløff's view of the Bible, Yngve Sagedal in his survey of the various uses of Luther in theological debates regarding Scripture identifies him as "orthodox."<sup>87</sup>

Before we leave this section we will briefly consider Wisløff's understanding of the relationship between the Bible and the church's confessions. The confessions came about as the church drew from the Scriptures her defence against false teaching and put it in written form.<sup>88</sup> In this way we have the Apostle's, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds. The Lutherans confessed the true teaching of the Bible in the *Augsburg Confession* in the context of the false teaching of the Roman church.<sup>89</sup> The break in the church was not brought about by the Lutherans. It was rather the papacy and its followers who broke fellowship by their departure from the true faith and their refusal to be corrected by the Word of God.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Bibelen er Guds eget ord. Den er blitt til ved Guds Ånds inspirasjon, og er i alle deler troverdig og pålitelig, uten feil og selvmotsigelser. – Det gjelder å lese Bibelen og forstå den i overensstemmelse med Åndens og de hellige forfatters eget siktepunkt, som er menneskers frelse til ære for Jesu navn.

<sup>87</sup> Yngve Jørgen Sagedal, "Luther i norsk skriftsønsdebatt," *Ung teologi* 12, (1979),15.

<sup>88</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet på...*(1987), 34.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 35.

The Lutheran Church does not put the Scriptures and the confessional writings on equal footing when she confesses her symbols.<sup>90</sup> The decisive norm (*norma normans*) is the Scripture, and only the Scripture. The Confessional writings are a derived norm (*norma normata*). These writings say how the Scripture is interpreted and understood, they say what the church will stand for as true to God's Word.<sup>91</sup>

Wisløff underscores that the Scripture is the decisive standard.<sup>92</sup> Therefore if it can be shown that the church on some point has wrongly understood Scripture, then the church is willing to change her confession.<sup>93</sup> "But it must then in such a case be shown *out from Scripture*."<sup>94</sup> However, Wisløff adds "that a disputed teaching point alleged or actual is in conflict with the religious feeling or with 'the modern person's' thinking, is not any sufficient reason for the church to depart from her confession."<sup>95</sup>

What about Luther, since we call ourselves Lutherans? Here Wisløff quotes Luther himself, "I ask that one keep quiet with my name and not call themselves Lutheran, but Christian. What is Luther? The teaching is not mine."<sup>96</sup> For "Luther's words have no weight in themselves. They obligate us only as long as they can be defended from the Bible."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Men hvis det kan vises at kirken på noe punkt har forstått Skriften galt, så er kirken villig til å forandre sin bekjennelse.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 36. Men det må da i så fall bli påvist *ut fra Skriften*.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. At et omstridt lærepunkt formentlig eller virkelig er i strid med den religiøse følelse eller med <<det moderne menneske>> tenkning, er ikke noen tilstrekkelig grunn for kirken til å vike fra sin bekjennelse.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Jeg ber at man tier stille med mitt navn og ikke kaller seg lutherske, men kristne. Hva er Luther? Læren er da ikke min.>>

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Luthers ord har ingen beviskraft i seg selv. De forplikter oss bare så langt som de kan hevde seg ut fra Bibelen.

Wisløff reminds us of another Luther word that needs a place in this matter. “Be not too quick to reject Luther, for it is namely Luther’s *teaching* it stands for.”<sup>98</sup> So Wisløff concludes the matter, saying, “Those who reject Luther, shall see to it that he does not at the same time reject precious truths.”<sup>99</sup>

Wisløff believes that the “rapid changes that have occurred in so many people’s thinking” are due to the fact that “they don’t believe the Bible to be the Word of God, given by inspiration through prophets and apostles.”<sup>100</sup> The preaching should include the inspiration and authority of the Bible as part of the message itself and not just as a starting point.<sup>101</sup> Since the historical-critical method has undermined the authority of the Bible in the minds of so many people today there is a great need “to proclaim the revealed truth that the Bible is the Word of God, written by prophets and apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>102</sup> The authority and infallibility of the Bible has been a very important theme of Wisløff’s theology and preaching.

### The Bible’s Way of Thinking

The second major element of Wisløff framework is the Bible’s way of thinking. He states:

That which gives the Bible’s message its meaning is always these tremendous contrasts: God’s wrath - God’s grace; I stand before God as a lost sinner, I meet God without being able to answer for myself. There is an eternal risk connected with being a human person, and I am either under His wrath for the sake of my sins or under His

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Vær ikke altfor snar til å forkaste Luther, sier han. For det er nemlig Luthers lære det står om. Det er den motstanderne vil til livs, ikke bare mannen Luther.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. Den som forkaster Luther, skal se til at han ikke samtidig forkastet dyrebare trossannheter .

<sup>100</sup> Wisløff, *Do the Work of an Evangelist*, (1990), 12.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 14.

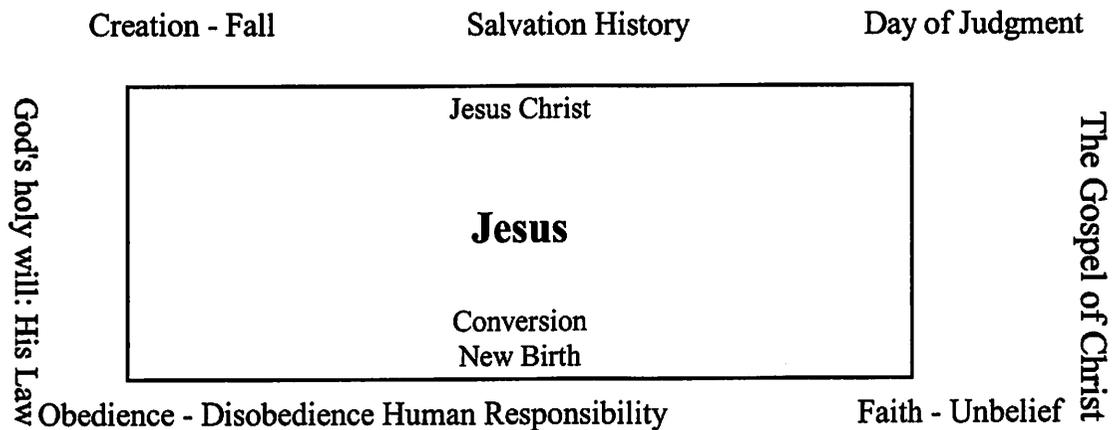
<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

grace for Jesus sake. - Faith or unbelief, saved or lost, life or death - this is the frame of all that is said in the Bible.

The background for all this is again: God has created us, but we are fallen creature who lie bound in sin, while the evil power carries on his game with us. But God has stepped in, He has sent His son to atone for our sins, and to put an end to the devil's works.

That which does not fit into this Biblical frame does not belong in the pulpit.<sup>103</sup> Wisløff diagrams this as follows.<sup>104</sup>

Christian Preaching and its Frame of Reference



Wisløff explains the various aspects of his frame of reference for preaching. The top line represents the time element in the Biblical revelation and is called salvation history. “The Bible does not speak in paragraphs but in situations. The prophets and apostles always speak with a view to the powerful acts of God in history.”<sup>105</sup> We see that “the Bible begins by

<sup>103</sup> Wisløff, *Lyset skinner i mørket* (1976),182. “Det som gir Bibelens budskap dets mening, er jo alltid disse veldige motsetninger: Guds vrede - Guds nåde; jeg står for Gud som en fortaapt synder, jeg møter Gud uten å kunne svare for meg. Det er en evig risiko forbundet med å være menneske, og jeg står enten under hans vrede for mine synders skyld eller under hans nåde for Jesu skyld. - Tro eller vantro, frelse eller fortapelse, liv eller død - dette er rammen om alt som blir sagt i Bibelen.

“Bakgrunnen for alt dette er igjen: Gud har skapt oss men vi er falne skapninger som ligger bundet i synden, mens onde makter driver sitt spill med oss. Men Gud har grepet inn, han har sendt sin Sønn til soning for våre synder, og for å gjøre ende på djevelens gjerninger.

“Det som ikke passer inn i denne bibelske rammen, det hører ikke hjemme på prekestolen.”

<sup>104</sup> Wisløff, *Do The Work of an Evangelist*, (1990), 56.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

telling us of the creation 'in the beginning.' It continues by relating the history of the fall of man, rendering him subject to God's righteous wrath. Moreover, it continues with the history of God's chosen people . . . God has spoken to the fathers by the prophets, and in these last days He has spoken to us by the Son (Hebrews 1: 1-2)."<sup>106</sup> Jesus Christ is the climax and center of this salvation history. Finally, "the Bible promises that Christ shall return, and on its last pages final judgment and the fulfillment of salvation are preached for our hope and expectation."<sup>107</sup> This Biblical perspective is very different from the thinking of the Greek philosophers who tried to look into the secret of existence, listening to the harmony of celestial spheres. In contrast, "the Hebrew prophets listened for the steps of God in the history of mankind."<sup>108</sup>

Wisløff says that everything in the Bible can be related to salvation history. He points us to a "phrase like 'love of God.' What is the pagan concept of God's love? Well, God is merciful, willing to forgive, caring for those who obey Him. What is the Biblical concept of the love of God? 'God shows His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8). Here we are pointed to the history of salvation."<sup>109</sup>

Next, the two lines on the right and left sides indicate the revelation of God to humankind. As noted above, God has acted in history, and He has spoken. On the left is the revelation of the holy will of God, His Law. All men have "the work of the Law written in their hearts"(Romans 2:15), but this does not mean that they have a full knowledge of the Law

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

of God. Therefore, God gave His commandments. Because we are sinners, the Law of God creates the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20) and works wrath (Romans 4:15).<sup>110</sup>

Then, “on the right side is the saving Gospel of Christ, the message that Jesus died for our sins and that all who put their trust in Him shall have eternal life and full salvation. The message of Jesus, the Saviour, has the power to create the confidence of faith in the heart of men.”<sup>111</sup> People always venture to substitute their own religious sentiments for the Law of God. However, Jesus said to the Pharisees “The Word of God is made of no effect through your traditions,” (Mark 7:13).<sup>112</sup>

The bottom line represents the fourth side of his frame of reference: “the human responsibility towards the revelation of God. On the one hand, the Law speaks to us. We are responsible. We will either obey or disobey, for no one can be neutral. Our responsibility is to obey.”<sup>113</sup>

On the other hand, God speaks to us His Word through the joyful message of the Gospel. Everything has been done, our debt is paid, our sins are taken away by the lamb of God. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” (Isaiah 53:5). “He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us; that we might be the righteousness of God in Him” (II Corinthians 5:21). We are responsible. The answer can be faith or unbelief. No one can be neutral. All must be born again to enter the kingdom of God since it is only through the new birth that a sinner can have his eyes opened to turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 58.

unto God (Acts 26:18). Just as we see Jesus in the center of the diagram, so He must be at the center of this Gospel message.<sup>114</sup>

This is a brief sketch of Wisløff's understanding of the Bible's way of thinking. He believes that all Christian preaching should have its orientation and content determined by this frame of reference. It is critical that at its heart, preaching be related to God's holy Law and His merciful Gospel of salvation.<sup>115</sup> We will consider this in greater detail in a later section.

### The Doctrine of Salvation

The third aspect is Wisløff's understanding of salvation. What is salvation? The basis for salvation is Jesus' once for all finished substitutionary death and victorious resurrection. The sins of all people have been atoned for.<sup>116</sup> However, not all people have come into the right relationship with God for "that which Jesus has won for the whole world must become each individual person's possession."<sup>117</sup> Wisløff puts this in the terms of reconciliation. "The world is reconciled to God. That which now remains is that we allow ourselves to be reconciled with God," as it states in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.<sup>118</sup> "Each individual must

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 87. Ved Jesu stedfortredende død for våre synder og hans seierrike oppstandelse til vår rettferdighet er frelsesverket fullbrakt. Vår Gud er en forsonet Gud, det er sonet for alle menneskers synder. See pages 77-84 for a fuller treatment of Christ vicarious work.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Men med dette er ennå ikke alle mennesker kommet i det rette forhold til Gud. Det som Jesus har vunnet for hele verden, må først bli hvert enkelt menneskes eiendom.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. Verden er forlikt med Gud. Det som nå står tilbake, er at vi lar oss forlike med Gud. 2. Kor. 5, 18-21. Wisløff does not speak in the terms of objective and subjective justification. He mentioned in a personal conversation that this was one area in which he could not follow Francis Pieper's dogmatics. He preferred the approach set forth by Olav Valen-Sendstad in *Ordet som aldri kan dø* (Bergen, Lunde Forlag, 1949), 115-134. See also the English translation *The Word That Can Never Die* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 81-95.

participate in the salvation.”<sup>119</sup>

Wisløff begins his definition of salvation by noting that the opposite of salvation is damnation. Of this humankind became deserving by the fall into sin which has separated people from God. Because of sin’s guilt we are under God’s wrath, and this wrath’s judgement comes over the whole world.<sup>120</sup> Salvation, then, is by forgiveness to come out of this dreadful position that our sin has brought us into. Salvation is therefore to be understood as receiving the forgiveness of sins.<sup>121</sup> Therefore those who have not received forgiveness for their sin are lost and remain under God’s wrath. But those who have received forgiveness for sins are saved and are under God’s grace and delight.<sup>122</sup>

Wisløff makes a distinction between salvation and experience without totally separating them. He recognizes that a person who is saved has an experience that may be more or less strong which engages the emotional life. But this experience is not to be equated with salvation. “To be saved is also not the same as to experience a religious ecstasy, an overwhelming emotional experience. It is necessary to make this clear. For there are many who think that salvation is something that happens in me; to be saved, they think, is to have a strong and blessed experience.”<sup>123</sup> Here Wisløff seeks to be a corrective to the pietistic

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. Det motsatte av frelse er fortapelse. Menneskeheten gjorde seg fortjent til fortapelse ved syndefallet. Det er synden som har skilt menneskene fra Gud. For syndens skyld er vi under Guds vrede, og for syndens skyld kommer vredens dom over verden. Es. 59, 2. Mika 3, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Frelsen er da å komme ut av denne forferdelige stilling som vår synd har brakt oss i. Og det skjer ved at vi av Gud får tilgivelse for våre synder.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Den som ikke har fått tilgivelse for sin synd, er forlatt; for han er under Guds vrede. Den som har fått tilgivelse for syndene, er frelst, for han er under Guds nåde og velbehag. Salme 32. Rom. 8, 1.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 87-88. Å bli frelst er altså ikke det samme som å oppleve en religiøs henrykkelse, en overveldende følelsesbetont erfaring. Det er nødvendig å gjøre dette klart. For det er mange som mener at frelsen er noe som skjer i meg; å bli frelst, mener de, er å få en sterk og salig opplevelse.

tendency to focus on experience. Biblical salvation is “something that happens in heaven, in God, when he declares that he has forgiven me my sins. Romans 8:33f. 1 John 2:1ff. With my sins forgiven I am saved, whether I ‘feel’ it or not. With unforgiven sins I am lost whatever I believe to have experienced (Matthew 7:22f).”<sup>124</sup>

The person’s relationship to God’s wrath is an important emphasis in Wisløff’s understanding of salvation. “Those who are under God’s wrath are lost. Those who are under God’s gracious disposition for Christ’s sake are saved. Thus to be saved also means to be moved from God’s wrath into under God’s grace. It is God himself who undertakes this ‘moving,’ this change of my position before Him. God’s grace [in Christ] saves me from God’s wrath. Rom. 5:9, 1 Thess. 1:10.”<sup>125</sup> Wisløff’s understanding of salvation thus runs the way of Law and Gospel. God makes this change in our position before Him through His Son. In Him God has delight and in Him the world is reconciled to God. It is this finished work of the Son that should be preached. And it is such preaching “that has the remarkable ability to work faith in the hearts, a faith that is nothing other than *confidence* in that what God says about Jesus’ saving work is *true*. Romans 10:17.”<sup>126</sup> This faith clings fast to Jesus and thereby the believer possesses the forgiveness of sins. “Whoever believes in the Son has

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 88. Frelsen er noe som skjer i Himmelen, i Gud, idet han nemlig erklærer at han har tilgitt meg mine synder. Rom. 8, 33 f. 1. Joh. 2, 1 f. Med tilgitte synder er jeg frelst, om jeg <<føler>> det eller ikke. Med utilgitte synder er jeg fortaapt, hva jeg enn mener å ha opplevd.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Den som er under Guds vrede, er fortaapt. Den som er under Guds nådige velbebag for Jesu skyld, han er frelst. Å bli frelst, vil altså si Å bli flyttet fra Guds vrede – inn under Guds nåde. Denne <<flytting >>, denne endring av min stilling overfor Gud den er det Gud selv som foretar. Guds nåde frelser meg fra Guds vrede. Rom. 5, 9. 1.Tess.1,10.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Og det gjør han ved Sønnen. I ham har han velbebag. I ham er verden forlikt med Gud; det er en fastslått kjensgjerning, ... Han lar denne fullbrakte frelse *forkynne*. Denne forkynnelse har en merkelig evne: Den virker tro i hjertene, en tro som ikke er noe annet enn *tillit*, til at det Gud sier om Jesu frelsesverk er *sant*. Rom. 10, 17.

eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."  
John 3:36; 5:24.<sup>127</sup>

The final dimension of salvation that Wisløff considers in this brief overview is its completion at the coming of Jesus Christ, when He will put all things in order. At this time God will wipe away every tear, death shall be no more, and gone will be sorrow crying and pain.<sup>128</sup> "In the resurrection all the evil consequences of sin both to the body and the soul shall be put away."<sup>129</sup> Wisløff stands against any kind of univeralism or sacramentalism that excludes the necessity of faith which he makes clear by adding that "only those who during the time of grace have their sin forgiven and become God's children through faith in Jesus have a part in this completion of salvation."<sup>130</sup>

### The Doctrine of Law and Gospel

A very important part of Wisløff's theological thinking is the Bible's teaching on Law and Gospel. This is especially so for our theme, since this teaching provides the context and point of departure for the way he understands faith and the means of grace. The proper distinction of Law and Gospel is the key to the right understanding of the Bible and salvation,

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Troen henger seg fast ved Jesus. Og dermed eier troende syndenes forlatelse. <<Den som tror på Sønnen, har evig liv, men den som ikke vil tro på Sønnen, skal ikke se livet, men Guds vrede blir over ham.>> Joh. 3, 36. 5, 24.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Bibelen lærer oss å se frem mot den fullkomne frelsen, når Jesus har kommet og har satt alle ting i stand. Da skal Gud <<tørke bort hver tåre av deres øyne, og døden skal ikke være mere og ikke sorg og ikke skrik og ikke pine skal være mere>>. Ap. 21, 3 f.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. I oppstandelsen skal altså alle de onde følger av synden både til kropp og sjel være borte.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Denne fullkomne frelse får bare de del i som her i nådetiden får sin synd tilgitt og blir Guds barn ved troen på Jesus. This particular paragraph was not a part of the earlier editions which perhaps indicates that the present climate calls for this teaching to be clearly noted.

and accordingly Wisløff believes it should be considered the masterpiece of theology.<sup>131</sup> He has observed that Luther was led to full clarity and insight into God's Word because he received light into the distinction between Law and Gospel.<sup>132</sup> He supports his conviction of its importance by citing the *Formula of Concord* Article V: "The distinction between Law and Gospel is an especially brilliant light which serves the purpose that the Word of God may be rightly divided (II Timothy 2:15) and the writings of the holy prophets and apostles may be explained and understood correctly. We must therefore observe the distinction with particular diligence lest we confuse the two doctrines and change the Gospel into Law."<sup>133</sup> Wisløff develops his teaching on Law and Gospel out from the Scriptures with supporting references from Luther and the Lutheran Confessions.

Relating to the understanding of salvation Wisløff states, "When we shall speak about the way of salvation, there are certain truths in God's Word that we must first and foremost be clear about. It involves above all the message that the Bible gives us about Law and

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<sup>131</sup> Wisløff, *Do the Work...* (1990), 58. Wisløff's reference to Law and Gospel as the masterpiece of theology may be a translation of höchste kunst in der Christenheit, St IX, 798, 1. See also Francis Pieper *Christian Dogmatics* vol. 3, 244; WA 36, 25, 29. The following are the primary texts for understanding Wisløff's teaching on Law and Gospel. *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (1939, 1975, 1995). *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* (1946, 1965, 1975, 1987). *Ordet fra Guds munn* "Lov og evangelium i forkynnelsen" pp. 103-146 (1951). *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelsen* (1975). *Martin Luthers teologi* "Det herilge – forskjellen mellom lov og evangelium" pp. 41-53 (1983). "Lov og evangelium i forkynnelsen" *Credo* (1984). *Do The Work of an Evangelist: The Theology of Lutheran Evangelism* "Law and Gospel in Lutheran Evangelism" pp. 33-53 (1990). In *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelsen* (1975) and *Do The Work of an Evangelist: The Theology of Lutheran Evangelism* "Law and Gospel in Lutheran Evangelism" pp. 33-53 (1990) Wisløff makes reference to C. F. W. Walther's monumental work *Die rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium*. He does not make specific references to Walther's work in his discussion of Law and Gospel but it does appear that he was influenced by this work in at least a general way. There are also the strong influences of Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and Rosenius.

<sup>132</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1983), 43.

<sup>133</sup> Wisløff, *Do the Work...* (1990), 33. Refer to Tappert, (1959), 558, FC, SD, V, 1.

Gospel.”<sup>134</sup> He adds further, “When we ask God’s Word: How is a person saved? – then we discover that the Scriptures give not one but two answers. And these are as different from each other as fire and water, as night and day.”<sup>135</sup> The answers are the Law way and the Gospel way.

The study of Scripture, confirmed by the experience of faith, reveals that “*God performs two different acts by His Word.*”<sup>136</sup> This is clearly confessed in the *Apology*, Article XII, 53: “These are the two chief works of God in men, to terrify and to quicken the terrified. One or the other of these works is spoken of throughout Scripture.”<sup>137</sup> It is these two acts of God that constitute the content of and basis for the doctrine of Law and Gospel. “Because God by His Word performs two different acts, *therefore* Scripture also conveys these two kinds of teaching: ‘One part is the Law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. The other part is the Gospel, that is, the promise of grace granted in Christ. This promise is repeated continually throughout Scripture.’”<sup>138</sup>

Through the Word of God, whether preached or read, God meets us. But Wisløff asks, “What kind of a God is this that would meet us in His Word? If I am to speak about Him, I

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<sup>134</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 89 Når vi skal tale om veien til frelse, er det visse sannheter i Guds ord som vi først og fremst må være klar over. Det gjelder i første rekke det budskap som Bibelen gir oss om lov og evangelium.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Når vi nemlig spør Guds ord: Hvordan blir et menneske frelst? – så oppdager vi at Skriften gir ikke ett, men to svar. Og disse er så forskjellige fra hverandre som ild og vann, som natt og dag.

<sup>136</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet...* (1951), 104. Den gammel-lutherske forkynnelse er orientert ut fra den erkjennelse, som var vunnet ved studium av skriften og bekreftet med troens erfaring, at *Gud gjør to forskjellige gjerninger ved sitt ord.*

<sup>137</sup> Tappert, (1959), 189.

<sup>138</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet...* (1951), 104. Fordi Gud ved sitt ord gjør to forskjellige gjerninger, >>derfor fører også Skriften disse to slags lære: Den første er loven, som viser oss vår elendighet og straffer synden, og den andre er evangeliet; for Guds løfte, hvori han tilsier nåde ved Kristus, og løftet om nåden blir gjennom hele Skriften gjentatt.>>

must know Him and portray Him (cf. the expression in Gal. 3:11) as He is.”<sup>139</sup> This confronts us with the issue of Law and Gospel. Wisløff concludes in this regard that “the preaching of Law and Gospel is not and should not be anything other than the right preaching about God and about fellowship with God.”<sup>140</sup> He points out that this understanding of Law and Gospel is not the result of purely terminological observations, for our Lutheran fathers were well aware of the lack of uniform terminology in the Scriptures.<sup>141</sup> It was rather the result of having learned “to know God in the Scripture as a God who slays and makes alive, is angry and shows mercy.”<sup>142</sup> The *Augsburg Confession* puts it this way: “This whole teaching is to be referred to that conflict of the terrified conscience, nor can it be understood apart from that conflict. Accordingly, inexperienced and profane men, who dream that Christian righteousness is nothing else than civil or philosophical righteousness, have bad judgment concerning this teaching.”<sup>143</sup> Wisløff indicates “that this conviction constitutes the background for the doctrine of Law and Gospel; and without this background, one understands nothing of the whole.”<sup>144</sup>

Wisløff contrasts this with neoprotestantism such as that represented by Karl Barth, who understands God to be performing only one act with His Word. He illustrates this with the following statement from Barth. “The Law is nothing else than the necessary form of the

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 103. Hvordan er denne Gud, som vil møte oss i sitt ord? Skal jeg tale om ham, så må jeg kjenne ham, og i forkynnelsen skildre ham (cf. uttrykket i Gal. 3,1!) slik som han er.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. ... forkynnelsen av lov og evangelium er ikke, og skal ikke være, noe annet enn den rette forkynnelsen om Gud, og om samfunnet med Gud.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 104-105. See the FC, SD, Article V, 3.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 105. Å var det fordi de i Skriften hadde lært Gud å kjenne som en Gud der dører og gjør levende, vredes og forbarmer seg.

<sup>143</sup> Tappert, (1959), 43. AC, Article XX, 17-18. (Latin text)

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 104. Her skal det bare påpekes at denne erkjennelse er bakgrunnen for læren om lov og evangelium, og uten denne bakgrunn forstår man intet av det hele.

*Gospel*, whose content is grace. This very content makes this form necessary. When it becomes evident, when it is affirmed and proclaimed, *grace* means claim and demand on men.”<sup>145</sup> Barth can say this because “he is convinced that God by His Word, fundamentally performs only one act with us. He slays and He makes alive, well, but it is all only an expression of one thing: God’s act of love.”<sup>146</sup> Wisløff says that for Barth “the commandment and the admonition of the Law are only an expression of the same love of God that speaks to us in the Gospel.”<sup>147</sup>

Wisløff believes that such an approach is “completely foreign to the old Lutheran way of thinking.”<sup>148</sup> There is grace, but it is only for the righteous. It is well with the one who keeps the Law, but for the one who falls short of complete obedience there is judgement (Deut. 28 and Gal. 3:12).<sup>149</sup> Because “the Law demands a perfect righteousness” and “*because we are sinners*, the Law becomes necessary for us for indictment and judgment.”<sup>150</sup> Therefore we must say “that God is angry is something quite different than that He is merciful. That He terrifies is something altogether different than that He comforts. That He slays is altogether different than that He makes alive. God’s *opus alienum* is something

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 105-106. Loven er ikke noe annet enn *evangeliets* nødvendige form, hvis innhold er nåden. Nettopp dette innhold gjør denne form nødvendig - -. *Nåde* betyr, når den blir åpenbar, når den blir bevitnet og forkynt, fordring og krav på menneskene - -<<.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 106. Jo, fordi han er overbevist om at Gud ved sitt ord dypst sett bare gjør en gjerning med oss. Han dører og han gjør levende – javel, men det er alt sammen bare uttrykk for en ting: Guds kjærlighets gjerning.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. Lovens bud og formaning er bare et uttrykk for den samme Guds kjærlighet som taler til oss i evangeliet.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. Den gammel-lutherske tankegang er fullstendig fremmed for alt dette.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. For vi er jo ikke rettferdige – loven krever jo nemlig en fullkommen rettferdighet. Den gjerning Gud gjør med oss I loven , er ikke bare en pedagogisk-informerende gjerning. Nei, *fordi vi er syndere*, blir loven oss nødvendig til anklage og dom.

different from His *opus proprium*.”<sup>151</sup> Even though God speaks to us to do us good, because we are sinners not all of God’s Words to us are grace and Gospel, and this must be clearly understood.<sup>152</sup>

We will present a summary of Wisløff’s understanding of Law and Gospel in the form of several theses. Some of these he has formulated (which we will note accordingly), others we have formulated as summaries of his teaching on a particular aspect. Wisløff formulated the theses with concrete situations and needs of the day in mind. Each one will be followed by a brief commentary drawn from his writings relative to the thesis.

1. The proper understanding of Law and Gospel teaches that “the preaching of the Law is everything that speaks about our sins and God’s wrath, in whatever way it happens.”<sup>153</sup>

Wisløff finds this quote from Luther’s sermon on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity to provide in essence the meaning of the Law. For the Biblical basis he directs us to Leviticus 18:5, Luke 10:28, Galatians 3:12 as the primary passages that teach the way of the Law, ‘Do this, then you will live.’<sup>154</sup> This is not a “do it as good as you can” or “as far as one is capable of with God’s help.”<sup>155</sup> “No, God means exactly to do it so perfectly that the works do not have any defect and the disposition and motives do not have one shadow of a sinful

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 106-107. At Gud er vred er noe helt annet enn at han er nådig. At han forferder er noe helt annet enn at han trøster. At han døder er en helt annen gjerning enn at han gjør levende. Guds >>opus alienum<< er noe ganske annet enn hans >>opus proprium<<.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 104. Lovens preken er alt det som preker om våre synder og Guds vrede, på hvilken måte det enn skjer. For similar statements see FC, SD, Article V, 17 and Pieper 3: 222.

<sup>154</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 89.

<sup>155</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (1939), 4. Og når Bibelen sier gjøre det, så menes ikke dermed <<å gjøre det så godt man kan >>, eller <<så langt man ved Guds hjelp formår>>.

thought.”<sup>156</sup> As James says, “the one who keeps the whole Law, but stumbles in one thing, he is guilty of all, James 2:10.

2. The proper understanding of Law and Gospel teaches that “the Gospel, on the other hand, is a sermon that shows and gives nothing else than grace and forgiveness in Christ.”<sup>157</sup>

Quoting again from Luther’s sermon on the 5<sup>th</sup> after Trinity, Wisløff points us in the way that he understands the Gospel. The Gospel stands as the exact opposite of the Law for here it is without works or performance that a person is saved. (See Eph. 2:8f. and Is. 55:1) Here it does not involve giving but receiving. Here it does not involve appearing without sin, but on the contrary the poor, tired and despairing is invited to come as one is. Matt. 11:28. “The Law depends on coming to God with works without defect, but it says here (Matt. 11:28) that those who get to come are ‘tax collectors and sinners’ the poor, the lame, blind – all kinds of poor who possess nothing and can show nothing for themselves – all who are least before God.”<sup>158</sup> In the Gospel “one does not bring, but receives. And what one receives is not something indefinite, it is told him by the one who invites. He is the giver and the gift.”<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid. Nei, Gud mener nettop å gjøre det så fullkomment at gjerningen ikke har noen brist og sinnelaget og motivene ikke en skygge av en syndig tanke.

<sup>157</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet...*(1951), 104. Derimot er evangeliet en preken som intet annet viser og gir, enn nåde og tilgivelse i Kristus. For similar statements see FC, SD, Article V, 20 and Pieper 3: 222.

<sup>158</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (1939), 4-5. Og mens det efter loven kom an på å komme til Gud med gjerninger, ja, mens det efter loven kom an på å komme med gj erninger sum ingen brist hadde, så sies det her at de som får komme er << toldere og syndere>> - fattige, vanføre, blinde – alle slags stakkarer som intet eier og intet kan vise for sig – aller minst for Gud.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 5. Her gjelder det ikke å bringe, men å få. Og det man får er ikke noe ubestemt, det er egentlig lalt ham man innbys lil. Han er giveren, han er gaven.

3. The proper understanding of Law and Gospel recognizes that they are both God's Word, both are meant seriously, therefore they are to be received as God's Word and are not to be separated.

Wisløff states, "God means them both seriously. He means what He says in the Law, for He is holy. He means it such that He does not allow us any doubt about how we are situated when judged by it. According to the Law there is not one person found who is pleasing before God."<sup>160</sup> Therefore "according to the Law there is no one who has the right to call himself a Christian. Read Romans 1 and you will see how God means what He says in the Law. Only one has kept it, only one is pleasing before God when judged by the standard, that one is Jesus."<sup>161</sup>

And in the second place, "He means the Gospel. He has shown it in that He sent His Son. He is gracious and merciful, therefore He means every word of the Gospel."<sup>162</sup>

Therefore these two words of God are to stand side by side as words from Him through which He meets us, reveals Himself to us, and does His work with us.

4. The right preaching of Law and Gospel carefully distinguishes between them by recognizing the differences.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Gud *mener* dem begge like alvorlig. Han mener det han sier i loven, for han er hellig. Han mener det slik at han ikke lar oss i noen tvil om hvordan vi er stillet, målt på den. Ifølge loven finnes det ikke et menneske på jorden som er behagelig for Gud. See also Pieper 3:224.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Ifølge loven finnes det ingen som har rett til å kalle sig kristen. Les Rom. 1, - så ser du hvordan Gud mener det han sier i loven. Bare en har holdt den, bare en er behagelig for Gud, målt med den målestokk: *Jesus*.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Og han mener evangeliet. Det har han vist derved at han sendte sin Sønn. Han er nådig og harmhjertig, derfor mener han hvert ord i evangeliet.

<sup>163</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 90-92.

Wisløff emphasizes the need to proceed cautiously according to the Word in regards to this point. This is necessary because “all peace and salvation come from this: that the preacher and those who hear can distinguish between Law and Gospel. As all doubt and weakness, and all false teaching, and dead piety have their source in that Law and Gospel are not distinguished.”<sup>164</sup>

Wisløff refers to the striking testimony of the *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration* (Article V,1). “The distinction between Law and Gospel is an especially brilliant light which serves the purpose that the Word of God may be rightly divided and the writings of the holy prophets and apostles may be explained and understood correctly.” It is Wisløff’s conviction that “there is hardly anything that can help us to better understand the Bible, than a clear insight into the distinction between Law and Gospel.”<sup>165</sup>

One must *distinguish* between Law and Gospel in order to prevent them from being *blended together*.<sup>166</sup> Wisløff takes a typical theme from a Sunday School talk to show how one can be tempted to error, and how one can be helped to speak correctly.

We talk with the children about heaven. A dear theme, they want to learn about it.

“Who are those who go to heaven, then?” Many answer, for the young lady’s question was so easy today. “Those who are nice.” “Yes, right, yes, those who are nice, remember we must be nice all the time or we will not go to heaven. But Per, don’t you have anything more to say?” – “Those who are obedient and learn the lessons.” “Right, yes.” – The Sunday School has a greater responsibility above their secular colleagues, and the teacher is happy because she has bright children. “Also, if we will go to heaven, we must be nice and obedient, do that which mother asks us to,

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<sup>164</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (1939), 5. Og her må vi fare varlig frem efter ordet. For all fred og salighet kommer av at forkynneren og den som hører kan skjelve mellom lov og evangelium. Likesom all tvil og vanmakt, all vrung lære og død fromhet har sin kilde deri ut det ikke blir skjelnet mellom lov og evangelium.

<sup>165</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 90. Det er neppe noe som bedre kan hjelpe oss til å forstå Bibelen, enn en klar innsikt i forskjellen mellom lov og evangelium.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* For det første må vi merke oss: Det må skjelles mellom loven og evangeliet, de må ikke blandes sammen.

and do our best in school.” But there is one thing more that the teacher desires to have, and so it comes, “But isn’t there something more that we must also do?” Silence, the suggestion brings nothing new. “But children, is it *enough* to be nice, then? Must we not also do something else? Is it *enough* to be nice and obedient?”

Now a light goes on for the children. “We must believe,” says one of them.

“Right, yes, we must believe, it is not enough to be nice, that is good.” – the teacher is happy both with herself and her children.<sup>167</sup>

Such teaching is in error, concludes Wisløff, for it teaches works, and nothing other than works by making faith a work, that is, a fulfillment of what one is not able to do before God. He calls such blending together of Law and Gospel the “most fatal error that can be made in preaching both to children and adults – and perhaps the most common.”<sup>168</sup> He defines this blending as “to blend together the works way and the grace way of salvation. That means making salvation to be something that God and I work together; I do my best and then God works by His grace the rest. But that is certainly not Biblical. ‘Through faith, not of works.’ The works are a fruit of salvation, not a condition for it.”<sup>169</sup>

Wisløff then makes clear what the distinction does not consist of. The distinction does not mean that the Old Testament is Law and the New Testament Gospel. On the contrary

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<sup>167</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (1939), 19-20. Vi taler med barna om himmelen. Et kjært emne, de hører gjørne om det. <<Hvem er det som kommer til himlen, da ?>> Mange svar, frøken spør så lett idag. <<De som er snilde.>> <<Ja, riktig ja, de som er snilde, husk vi må alltid være snilde ellers kommer vi ikke til himmelen. Men har dere ikke mere å si, du Per?>> <<De som er lydige og lærer lekse si.>> <<Riktig ja,>> -- søndagsskolen har et stort ansvar overfor sin verdslige kollega, og lærerinnen er glad fordi hun har flinke barn. <<Altså hvis vi vil til himmelen må vi være snilde og lydige, gjøre det som mor ber oss om, og gjøre vårt beste på skolen.>> Men så er det som lærerinnen gjerne vil ha frem en ting til, og så kommer det: <<Men er det ikke noe mere vi også må gjøre da ?>> Taushet, de forslag som nu kommer bringer intet nytt. <<Men barn, er det *nok* å være snild, da ? Må vi ikke *også* gjøre noe annet? Er det *nok* at jeg er snild og lydige?>> Nu går det et lys op for barna. <<Vi må tro!>> sier en av dem. <<Riktig ja, vi må tro, det er ikke nok å være snild, er det vel,>> - lærerinnen er fornøid både med sig selv og barna sine.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 20-21. Det mest skjebnesvangre feilgrep som kan gjøres i forkynnelse både for barn og voksne - og kanskje det mest almindelige.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 21. Blande sammen lov og evangelium – det vil si å blande sammen gjerningenes og nådens vei til frelse. Det vil igjen si å gjøre frelsen til noe som Gud og jeg virker sammen; jeg gjør mitt beste og så gjør Gud i sin nåde resten. Men det er så visst ikke bibelsk. <<Ved tro, ikke av gjerninger.>> Gjerningene er en frukt av frelsen, ikke en betingelse for den.

“Law and Gospel go hand in hand through the whole Scriptures. God is unchanging, James 1:17, - therefore His holiness as well as His love is always the same; His demand is fundamentally in reality the same and His saving remedy is always the same from eternity.”<sup>170</sup> Truth does not develop itself, it is rather disclosed and revealed for those who do not know it. In the Scriptures it was revealed “preparatorily to Israel and finally through Jesus and the apostles.”<sup>171</sup> This began early for “already on the day of the fall into sin, the glorious Gospel of the woman’s seed who would crush the serpent’s head sounds forth. Through faith in Him the Old Testament pious are saved. All of Israel’s sacrifices are pictures of God’s lamb who bears the sin of the world, and in this way they must be read.”<sup>172</sup> And the Law is also found in the New Testament. Among the preachers of the Law are John the Baptizer, Jesus, and the apostles in the letters of the New Testament.

The first distinction between Law and Gospel Wisløff calls attention to is that the Law lies in our flesh and blood and corresponds to our human way of thinking, but the Gospel comes to us as something new and unthinkable and foreign.<sup>173</sup> Wisløff illustrates this by noting that it is quite natural for us to think that we get nothing for nothing, that the one who

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 6. Lov og evangelium går hånd i hånd gjennom hele Skriften. Gud er jo nemlig uforanderlig, Jak. 1, 17, - derfor er hans hellighet så vel som hans kjærlighet alltid den samme; hans krav går I bunn og grunn ut på det samme og hans frelses råd er alltid det samme fra evighet. Sannheten kan ikke <<bli>> eller <<utvikle sig>>.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. Den kan bare avsløres og åpenbares for dem som ikke kjenner den, og det er det som skjer i Skriften, forberedende til Israel og endelig ved Jesus og apostlene.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. Allerede på synde-fallets dag lyder det herlige evangelium om den kvinnens sæd, som skal knuse slangens hode. Ved troen på ham som skulde komme blev de gammel testamenllige fromme frelst. Alle Israels offeranordninger er bilder på det Guds lam som bærer verdens synd, og som sådanne må de leses.

<sup>173</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i vår forkynnelse for barn* (1939), 7; See also Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987):91.

benefits must contribute, that everyone is the master of his own destiny, and if you help yourself, then God helps you. We readily believe in works as the way to God.<sup>174</sup>

The Gospel, however, is totally different and foreign. That God's Son has kept the Law as our substitute, that He has atoned for our sins, that we are saved through trusting in the atonement without any works is a mystery. The Gospel is what the eye has not seen, the ear not heard, and what has not come up in any human heart (1Corinthians 2:9).

The second distinction is their focus. The Law aims at our works. "It aims the entire time at me and says, 'you shall, you shall not.' Because I do not do it right it says, 'you are *guilty*.'"<sup>175</sup> The Gospel on the other hand does not aim at me or at any works, but at faith. "Therefore the Gospel does not drive at me and what I am and do, it drives the whole time at Jesus and says, 'He lived for you and died for you, He is your salvation, He is your peace.' Ephesians 2:14."<sup>176</sup>

The third distinction is the result or effect. The Law results in death. People do not believe this at first, for they think that if they take the Law seriously, surrender completely, then life will come. "But to such a degree that you are a hypocrite you must confess today, 'It became something other than life with all my surrender and seriousness. The Law was too strong, I did not control it. It brought me to despair,' (Romans 3:19; Galatians 2:19)."<sup>177</sup> The

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid. See also Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 91.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 8. Den sikter hele tiden på mig og sier: Du, du skal, du skal ikke. Og fordi den dermed også sier mig at jeg ikke gjør det rette, ja viser mig at jeg ikke vil det engang, derfor sier den: Du, du er den *skyldige*.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. Derfor driver evangeliet ikke på mig og det jeg er og gjør, det driver hele tiden på Jesus og sier: Han, han levde for dig og døde for dig, han er din salighet, han er din fred. Efes. 2, 14.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 9. Men så sant du ikke er en hykler må du idag bekjenne: Det blev til alt annet enn liv med all min overgivelse og mitt alvor. Loven var mig for sterk, jeg maktet den ikke. Den bragte mig til fortvilelse.

result of the Gospel is life. “The Gospel portrays Christ crucified for the brokenhearted, that whispers into his heart, ‘This is for you.’”<sup>178</sup> Such a message, by God’s Spirit, creates faith in Jesus.

Wisløff strongly opposes those who say that the Gospel also works the knowledge of sin. They argue “for what can crush the sinner’s heart more than the picture of this God’s Son, who dies for His enemies? What can more show one his sin and lack of power than the cross which God had to raise for the guilt of our sin?”<sup>179</sup> Wisløff responds: “For so long as you preach and say, ‘Look at this man, he dies for his enemies and loves them directly unto death. See this divine love that gives what he demands, who demands all of himself and gives himself,’ thus far you do not speak the Gospel, but the Law. For what you preach is the *pattern*, not the substitute. And to preach the pattern, that is to preach the Law, for that is to say, ‘Such you should be.’”<sup>180</sup> In summary Wisløff says, “The Law’s result is a crushed conscience in terrors before judgment, while the Gospel’s result is a comforted conscience and peace with God, on the basis of what Jesus has done for me, and it is always enough before God.”<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet maler Kristus korsfestet for den sønderknuste, det hvisker inn i hans hjerte: Det var for dig.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. For hvad kan knuse synderens hjerte mer enn billedet av denne Guds sønn, som dør for sine fiender? Hvad kan mere vise ham hans synd og avmakt enn det kors som Gud *måtte* reise for våre synders skyld?

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 9-10. For så lenge du forkynner og sier: <<Se, denne mann, han dør for sine fiender og elsker dem like inn i døden! Se denne guddommelige kjærlighet som gir det han krever, som krever alt av sig selv og gir sig selv - ,>> så lenge taler du ikke evangelium, men lov. For det du der forkynner er *forbilledet*, ikke stedfortrederen. Og det å forkynne forbilledet, det er å forkynne lov, for det er å si: Slik skal du være.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 10. Derfor: Lovens virkning er en sønderknust samvittighet skrekk for dom. Evangeliets virkning er en trøstet samvittighet og fred med Gud, på det grunnlag at hvad Jesus har gjort for mig, er evig nok for Gud.

5. “Law and Gospel are not rightly preached if one does not allow the aim and ultimate purpose of each to come to clear expression.”<sup>182</sup>

Concerning this thesis Wisløff says, “here we stand before an obvious weakness in much of the modern preaching.”<sup>183</sup> “The preaching becomes nearly an informal lecture; we hear little or nothing of our inborn corruption – *inherited sin*.”<sup>184</sup> If sin is spoken about then it is done concretely and with great caution. That the Law works wrath (Rom. 4:15), and the knowledge of sin so that every mouth becomes shut and the whole world guilty before God (Rom. 3:19f.) is seldom heard. As a result neither is there heard anything about damnation.<sup>185</sup> Wisløff asks his readers: “When did you last hear that we are lost in ourselves here and now, and that we are under God’s wrath for our sins and our unbelief’s guilt here and now such as we are in ourselves? But this is the Law speaking (Rom. 7:9ff).”<sup>186</sup>

For elucidation on the way the Law speaks Wisløff quotes Luther:

Therefore the Law is a light that illumines and shows, not the grace of God or righteousness and life but the wrath of God, sin, death, our damnation in the sight of God, and hell. For just as on Mt. Sinai the lightning, the thunder, the dark cloud, the smoking and burning mountain, and the whole horrendous sight did not make the Children of Israel happy or alive but terrified them, made them almost helpless, and disclosed a presence of God speaking from the cloud that they could not bear for all their sanctity and purity, so when the Law is being used correctly, it does nothing but reveal sin, work wrath, accuse, terrify, and reduce the minds of men to the point of despair. And that is as far as the Law goes.

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<sup>182</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse, Credo 13* (1984), 4-5. Lov og evangelium blir ikke rett forkynt dersom man ikke lar begges sikte og endemål komme klart til uttrykk.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. Her står vi overfor en åpenbar svakhet i mye av den moderne forkynnelse.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. Prekenen blir nærmest et kåseri; vi hører lite eller intet om vårt medfødte forderv – *arvesynden*.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. At vi er fortapt i oss selv her og nå, og at vi er under Guds vrede for våre synders og vår vantros skyld her og nå slik vi er i oss selv, når hørte De det sist? Men dette er lovens tale; Rom 7. 9 ff

On the other hand, the Gospel is a light that illumines hearts and makes them alive. It discloses what grace and the mercy of God are; what the forgiveness of sins, blessing, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation are; and how we are to attain these. When we distinguish the Law from the Gospel this way, we attribute to each its proper use and function.<sup>187</sup>

Wisløff calls attention to the fact that “both Law and Gospel place us *before God’s face*. Both speak about how I stand in God’s eyes. I get to know that I in myself am deserving of damnation, and that I with my best efforts come utterly short and remain standing under judgment.”<sup>188</sup> But, “under the Gospel’s promise on the other hand, through faith, as one who has received the promise, I stand before God completely and fully righteous in His eyes. I stand in another man’s righteousness – *justitia aliena*.”<sup>189</sup>

It is important to also establish that it is “not a matter of psychological experience’s data, as unrest – peace, guilt feelings – harmony. Here the preaching today often fails. God’s Word will show me how I stand in *God’s* judgment.”<sup>190</sup> It can be that “perhaps a person is harmonious, religiously adapted, with peace in the heart – and just the same lost. Perhaps a person has nervous moods, one has often anxiety and unrest in the mind” and yet “stands just the same in grace with God for Jesus’ sake through faith – the faith that can live through in the heart’s sigh and trial to Jesus.”<sup>191</sup> Both Law and Gospel must be spoken to the conscience so that they address the person in a personal manner.

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid. This citation is from the AE 26:313. (See also WA 40, 2, 485)

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. Både lov og evangelium stiller oss *for Guds ansikt*. Begge taler om hvordan jeg står i Guds øyne. Jeg får vite at jeg i meg selv er verdig til fortapelse. Og at jeg med mine beste fortsetter kommer ganske til kort og blir stående under dommen.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. Under evangeliets tilsagn derimot ved troen, som har imot løftet, står jeg for Gud helt og fullt rettferdig i hans øyne. Jeg står i en annen manns rettferdighet – *justitia aliena*.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. Det dreier seg seg altså ikke om psykologiske erfaringsdata, som uro – fred, skyldfølelse – harmoni. Her griper forkynnelsen i dag ofte feil Guds ord vil vise meg hvordan jeg står i *Guds* dom.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. Kanskje er et menneske harmonisk, religiøst tilpasset, med fred i hjertet – og likevel fortaapt. Kanskje har et menneske nervøse lager, en har ofte angst og uro i sinnet – og står

6. “The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is distorted if salvation is not first of all proclaimed as the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>192</sup>

Wisløff begins his explanation of this thesis by noting that

“in and with that God’s Word comes to us as Law and Gospel, i.e. as accusation and as the preaching of grace for Jesus’ sake, it is given a *frame of reference* within which everything that belongs to preaching should be placed. The frame of reference is given in and by the words that the Bible itself gives us: salvation and damnation, sin and grace, faith and unbelief, heaven and hell. Without this frame of reference it is not possible to speak Christianly and outside of this frame, the preacher will go astray.”<sup>193</sup>

Wisløff sees this understanding being threatened today. First there is a tendency today to broaden the meaning of salvation so that it includes political, economic, and social issues.<sup>194</sup> He supports his concern by referring to the Danish Missionary Society yearbook for 1973, in which a theologian states, “Of course God is at work among the 800 million people in China who are under the Red star. God’s salvation, which consists of the restoration of the whole of fallen man in his entire social setting, is being fulfilled in China today to a great extent. God is about to create justice in the world, and as such it fulfills His salvation, ‘Who can doubt that?’”<sup>195</sup> Other mission writers are quoted as evidence of this broadening of

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likevel i nåde hos Gud for Jesu skyld ved troen – den tro som kun består i hjertets sukk og rettethet til Jesus.

<sup>192</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 37f. See also Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 7. Det blir ikke skjelnet rett mellom lov og evangelium dersom ikke frelsen først og sist blir forkynt som forlatelse.

<sup>193</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 7. I og med at Guds ord kommer til oss som lov og som evangelium, dvs som anklage og som nådeforkynnelse for Jesu skyld, er det gitt en *referanseramme* innen hvilken alt skal plasseres som hører hjemme i forkynnelsen. Den referanseramme er gitt i og ved de ord som Bibelen selv gir oss frelse og fortapelse, synd og nåde, tro og vantro, himmel og helvete. Utenfor denn referanseramme er det ikke mulig å tale kristelig. Also see Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 39.

<sup>194</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 38.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

salvation. The result of such an approach is the distortion of the Gospel for “when it is claimed that salvation occurs in a situation where the message of forgiveness of sins is not heard, the word salvation is emptied of its real content. ... We are not talking about salvation if the word of Christ’s death for our sins is not preached.”<sup>196</sup>

That the Gospel’s gift is first and foremost the forgiveness of sin must also be kept in mind “when there appear modern success preachers who promise gold and green forests to the one who will become a Christian. A social and economic future, good marks on the exam – that one shall have.”<sup>197</sup> Wisløff concludes that “with such preaching one has placed himself far outside the frame of reference as is stated by the words sin – grace, lost – saved, Law – Gospel.”<sup>198</sup>

The preacher stands before God who hates sin. But this same God will not condemn as deserved, for He will forgive for Jesus’ sake; all this is received by faith – and by faith alone. Therefore we must always remember that salvation first of all is the forgiveness of sins. This is the frame of reference – coordinates or whatever one will call it, and within this all Christian preaching must find its place, including what the preacher says about political and social problems.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 39.

<sup>197</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 7. Det må vi minne om også når det opptrer moderne lykkepredikanter, som lover gull og grønne skoger for den som vil bli kristen. Sosial og økonomisk fremgang, gode krakterer til eksamen – det skal en få (Se Sagen 10.254).

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. Med en slik forkynnelse har man plassert seg langt utenfor den referanseramme som angis ved ordene synd – nåde, fortapelse – frelse, lov – evangelium

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. and Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 7.

7. “Law and Gospel are not rightly preached if one neglects to speak of the Gospel’s distinguishing mark.”<sup>200</sup>

Wisløff takes his starting point in the understanding that the “Gospel is a sermon that shows and gives nothing other than God’s love in Jesus Christ.”<sup>201</sup> Because people misunderstand the Gospel there is a need to clarify it with a distinguishing mark. He identifies this distinguishing mark as the word of the atonement in Christ which is the result of God’s love in sending His Son to atone for our sins (1 John 4:10).<sup>202</sup> Wisløff draws from Luther who says: “I have often said that not only does faith relate itself to God, but what salvation has cost God (*die Köste*) must also be present. The Turk and the Jew also believe in God, but without a mediator and without cost. What, then, is this cost? That the Gospel shows us, for the Gospel throughout teaches that we cannot have the Father except by the *mediator*, and that He is not pleased with those who want to come to the Father without the intermediary.”<sup>203</sup>

What makes the Gospel Gospel is what it has cost God. Therefore “it is not enough to speak about God, about love to God, about reading His Word, to believe in Him and to use the means of grace. Even with all these admonitions it is still not the Gospel. ... Without this

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<sup>200</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 5. Lov og evangelium blir ikke rett forkynt dersom man unnlater å tale om evangeliets rette kjennetegn. See also Wisløff, *Ordet*, 137-139.

<sup>201</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet* (1951), 137. <<Evangeliet er en preken som intet annet viser og gir, enn Guds kjærlighet i Jesus Kristus <<.

<sup>202</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 5. Evangeliets rette kjennetegn - det er ordet om forsoningen i Kristus. Dette er kjærlighet at han har sendt sin Sønn til soning for våre synder. 1. Joh 4, 10.

<sup>203</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 137. Luther sier: >>Jeg har ofte sagt at troen ikke forholder seg alene til Gud, men det frelsen har kostet Gud (*die Köste*) må også være der. Tyrken og jøden tror også på Gud, men uten middel og uten omkostningene. Hva er nå dette for en omkostning? Det viser evangeliet oss, for evangeliet lærer over alt at vi ikke kan ha Faderen uten ved *midlet*, og han kan ikke like at vi vil komme til Faderen uten midlet<< (138). Original is EA 12, 312.

definite, noetic content, which is given us endlessly in varied forms in the New Testament, there is no Gospel.”<sup>204</sup> Wisløff notes that some people may find this hard to understand for they believe that when they say “You must be converted, you must believe, you must come to Jesus” they think they are preaching pure Gospel. Even those who preach about loving God and admonish us to draw nearer to Him, thinking they are preaching the Gospel, are misunderstanding the reality of the Gospel.

What is lacking is “the word that God did this *for you*; this Jesus did when he endured the judgment of God’s wrath for us all. The Gospel contains in one form or another, and the forms may be many, this content; Jesus was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Rom 4:25). Without these accents, one can speak about God’s love as much as he wills, it still does not become *Gospel*.”<sup>205</sup> This Gospel has a double special *form* in which it appears. “It is partly the ‘account,’ which is the communication that God has given His Son for our sins, and partly the ‘declaration,’ that is, the word that this applies to you, has happened for your sake, imputed to you. ‘For you,’ is, so to speak, the main form of the Gospel.”<sup>206</sup>

The Gospel, even though not separated from the Law, is clearly distinguished from it as its opposite. For in the Gospel there is not a particle of accusation, judgment, or

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. Det er ikke nok å tale om Gud, om kjærligheten til Gud, om å lese hans ord, tro på ham og bruke nådemidlene. Det er ennå ikke evangelium om man oppfordrer til alt dette ... Uten dette bestemte noetiske innhold, som i NT gis oss i uendelig rikt varierte former, finnes intet evangelium.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 139. Det mangler ordet om at dette gjorde Gud *for deg*, dette gjorde Jesus i det han bar Guds vredes dom for oss alle. Evangeliet har alltid i en eller annen form – og formene kan være mange – dette innhold: Jesus er hengitt for våre overtredelser og oppreist til vår rettferdiggjørelse. Rom. 4,25. Uten disse toner kan man tale om Guds kjærlighet så meget man vil – det blir ikke *evangelium*.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. Den er dels >>beretningen<<, meddelelsen om at Gud har gitt sin Sønn for våre synder, og dels er den >>tilsigelsen<<, dvs. ordet om at dette gjelder deg, er skjedd for din skyld, tilregnes deg. >> For deg << - er så å si evangeliets hovedform.

reservation. “The Gospel does not lay so much as a feather upon us for us to bear. It is only a word that tells us, makes plain to us, and permits us to believe and to accept the message that God has given His Son in death for our sins and raised Him from the dead for our justification, and which declares to us the forgiveness of sins for His sake.”<sup>207</sup> Wisløff emphasizes that the “Scripture’s witness of Christ’s substitutionary atonement (*satisfactio vicaria*) is the most central and decisive point in the Christian congregation’s witness. It is the message of Christ’s atonement that is Christianity’s special distinguishing mark over all religions and all religiosity.”<sup>208</sup> Who Christ is, and what he has done and gone through in our place, is what makes this the Gospel.

8. “If one preaches that the Gospel can only offer grace and the forgiveness of sins, and that baptism alone can give grace, then one does not preach rightly about the Gospel.”<sup>209</sup>

This thesis Wisløff formulated primarily in response to the teaching of his former colleague Leiv Aalen who taught that baptism was the only means of regeneration while “the Gospel, the spoken Word of God, has the function of offering God’s grace to the unbeliever and it may elicit a certain initial faith in the sense of a desire for salvation” but such a faith is

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet legger ikke så meget som et dun på oss som vi skal bære. Det er bare et ord som forteller oss, legger inn på oss og tillater oss å tro og ta imot det budskap, at Gud har hengitt sin Sønn i døden for våre synder og oppreist ham fra de døde til vår rettfærdiggjørelse, og som tilsier oss syndenes forlatelse for hans skyld.

<sup>208</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 81-82. Skriftens vitnesbyrd om Kristi stedfortredende forsoning (*satisfactio vicaria*) er det mest sentrale og avgjørende punkt i den kristne menighets vitnesbyrd. Det er budskapet om Kristi forsoning som er kristendommens spesielle kjennetegn overfor alle religioner og all religiøsitet.

<sup>209</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 7. Dersom man at evangeliet bare kan tilby nåden og syndenes forlatelse, og at dåpen alene kan meddele nåden, da forkynner man ikke rett om evangeliet.

not saving.”<sup>210</sup> Put another way, it speaks to the problem of sacramentalism which Wisløff defines in this connection as “that which means the attitude of faith and preaching which stresses the sacraments at the expense of the preached Gospel, so that there is a denial of the evangelical teaching of Law and Gospel.”<sup>211</sup> This is illustrated by the words of a Norwegian Pastor who said, “Grace is given at the altar, the preaching shall only invite you there.”<sup>212</sup> This approach “has reduced the Gospel to a friendly appeal, has taken the power of life out of it – and thereby in reality made the Gospel into a Law.”<sup>213</sup> Wisløff sees this to be clearly in conflict with both Scripture and the confessions of the Lutheran Church.

He points to the fact that the confessional writings say in many places that the preached Gospel works regeneration. “One can only think on the explanation to the Third Article in Luther’s Small Catechism. And above all the Scripture says that faith comes by preaching and preaching by the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17).”<sup>214</sup> It is essential in Wisløff’s theology that “the confidence in the preached Word, that it through God’s Spirit has ability to awaken faith’s trust in the hearts, is the central point in the preaching to awakening and conversion.”<sup>215</sup> He establishes that the preaching of the Gospel is a means of grace. “For

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<sup>210</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 4, 19-20. Leiv Aalen calls this “salvation seeking faith”(frelsessøkende) in distinction from “salvation possessing faith”(frelsesbesiddende) See Leiv Aalen, 1982, 242-243. Refer to chapter 2 footnote 361.

<sup>211</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 7. Sakramentalisme – det vil si den trosholdning og forkynnelse som fremhever sakramentene på det fortynte evangeliums bekostning - er en fornektelse av den evangeliske lære om lov og evangelium.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* Nåden blir gitt ved alteret. Forkynnelsen skal bare innby dit hen.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* Ved en slik betrakning har man redusert evangeiet til en vennlig oppfordring, man har tatt livskraften ut av det – og dermed i virkligheten gjort evangeliet til en lov.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* At det fortynte evangelium virker gjenfødelse, blir sagt på mange steder i bekjennelsesskriftene. En kan bare tenke på forklaringen til den 3. Artikkelen i Luthers lille katekismus. Og frem for alt: Skriften sier at troen kommer av forkynnelsen.og forkynnelsen ved Kristi ord Rom.10,1.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* Tilleten til det fortynte ord, at det ved Guds Ånd har evne til å vekke troens tillit i hjertene, er det sentrale punkt i forkynnelsen til vekkelse og omvendelse.

it is the Gospel's content and meaning that the word of the cross can save persons through faith. 'The Gospel is a sermon that forgives sin,' says Luther."<sup>216</sup>

The preached Gospel is also a means used by God to bring about the new birth. "The liberation through the Gospel is its power to regenerate the sinner's heart – to a living faith. Let no one think lower about the Gospel than that. Let us again hear what Luther says, 'Faith is a divine work in us that changes us and makes us into new persons.'"<sup>217</sup> Wisløff supports this understanding of the Gospel's power as being in the Lutheran way by quoting Luther that "regeneration 'takes place in the manner that a person hears the Word of the Gospel, that is not revealed and preached out from human reason and will, but of the Holy Spirit. When he believes this from the heart, then he is conceived and born anew of God.'"<sup>218</sup> And also from Luther, "We must be born anew. But how? Quite simply by lending the ear to the message that says that those who believe and are baptized shall be saved."<sup>219</sup>

Wisløff wants it clearly established that the preaching of the Gospel delivers the whole Gospel with all of its saving power and benefits. That the preached Gospel has the power to regenerate is one of Wisløff's central themes. To have faith is to be regenerated, and to be regenerated is to have faith.

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid. For det er jo selve evangeliets innhold og mening at ordet om korset kan frelse mennesker ved troen. "evangeliet er en preken som tilgir synden," sier Luther. Wisløff does not identify where Luther says this.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. Det frigjørende ved evangeliet er dets kraft til å føde synderes hjerter på ny – til en levende tro. La ingen tenke ringere om evangeliet enn som så. La os igjen høre hva Luther sier: "Troen er guddommelig verk i oss som forandrer oss og gjør oss, til nye mennesker." This quote from Luther is taken from *Levende Luther Et utvalg ved Inge Lønning*. 1967, 54. Wisløff refers the reader of this article to his *Martin Luthers teologi*, 133f.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. ...skjer nå på den måten at mennesket hører evangeliets ord, som ikke er åpenbaret og forkynt ut fra menneskelig forstand og vilje, men av den Hellige And. Når han tror dette av hjertet, da er han unnfanget og født på nytt av Gud. From WA 21, 277.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. Vi må bli født på nytt. Men hvordan? Ganske enkelt ved å låne øre til det budskap som sier at den som tror og blir døpt skal bli salig. From WA 47, 30. AE 22:301.

9. “The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is distorted if salvation and the baptism in the Spirit are proclaimed as two different gifts.”<sup>220</sup>

Wisløffs directs this thesis to those who say that “a person may be born again; he may be a Christian, but God has more to give, namely, a baptism in the Spirit with all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12, 14, et.).”<sup>221</sup> It is not spiritual gifts *per se* that is the problem for Wisløff for he says: “I have a very open mind toward everything the New Testament has to say concerning spiritual gifts. I have been teaching about these matters for many years, and I know from experience that God can give gifts of healing to his congregation.”<sup>222</sup> He finds that the proponents of the doctrine of the ‘twofold salvation’ are children of John Wesley and Methodism.<sup>223</sup>

Wisløff believes that this type of preaching may result in “a concentration on specific experiences which are taught as possible to obtain” and thereby “tempts one to believe that his status as a child of God is not enough; God has more to give.”<sup>224</sup> It also has the undesirable effect that “one’s specific charismatic ‘experience’ may be considered more important than biblical doctrine,” and in terms of Christian unity, it is based on a common spiritual experience in what may be called an ‘ecumenics of experience’ rather than on what the Word of God teaches.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 39f.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.* The phrase “God has more to give,” was actually the title of a book published in Norwegian to which Wisløff was responding.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

This approach is quite contrary to the Biblical doctrine of Law and Gospel. According to this doctrine “there are no differences when we stand before God.”<sup>226</sup> The Law always accuses, which means that “the Law will always make it clear that in one’s self, he remains a sinner, lost, worthy of God’s wrath and condemnation. There is no exception to this effect. In himself the greatest “saint” is lost. There are no distinctions, for “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).”<sup>227</sup> In the Gospel on the other hand, there “is the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake and the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith alone.”<sup>228</sup> The doctrine of Law and Gospel is the key to knowing what to think about ourselves in our relationship to God. This is an area where many people are often confused. They look at their lives and see many shortcomings. “They cannot believe and pray as they want to; they are not full of love and kindness as they feel they ought to be; their inner life is not pure; they may feel pride, lust, revenge, and even hatred. And so they are tempted to despair. What shall I do?”<sup>229</sup> Then Wisløff adds that now some preacher comes along and proclaims that God has something more to give and “one needs now to pray earnestly to God that He may give the fullness of the Spirit, etc., etc.”<sup>230</sup>

In such confusion Wisløff points to the brilliant light of Law and Gospel, for by it “we are able to understand the ‘great secret’ of our relationship to God when we recognize ourselves as lost in our sins but yet righteous before God in Christ’s righteousness. This is our position and this will remain our position until we see Jesus as He is, and then ‘we will be

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

*like Him*' (1 John 3:2).<sup>231</sup> Here Wisløff finds Luther's way of speaking *coram se et hominibus* and *coram deo* is helpful. Wisløff states: "In the eyes of all others, and in our own eyes, we are sinners. ... But the Gospel reveals to us that by faith, we are righteous in the eyes of God for Christ's sake."<sup>232</sup>

Wisløff puts this into a pastoral context as he gives direction to those ministering to others in such circumstances.

Therefore, when we are in times of trial, or when we are asked to give spiritual help to others who are similarly afflicted, let us not direct anyone to seek a particular experience. Don't counsel them to pray more or to be more diligent in other spiritual exercises. Direct them rather to the Word and Sacrament. Let them hear the Gospel of Jesus, who took all our sins upon Himself; let them see Him, Who for us is righteousness, sanctification and redemption (I Corinthians 1:30). The greatest thing to consider is what I already have in Christ, not that God has more to give.<sup>233</sup>

Wisløff goes on to emphasize that whether one's faith is weak or strong the believer is in full possession of all that Christ is and has. In this way the proper distinction between Law and Gospel proclaims that the one main gift; the forgiveness of sins, is the whole gift; rejoice in it.

10. "Law and Gospel are not rightly preached if one points people to a certain experience, instead of pointing them to God's promise in Word and Sacrament."<sup>234</sup>

Wisløff begins his commentary on this thesis with a reservation indicating that it should not come as a surprise that he does not "belong to the type of Lutherans who are

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>234</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelsen. Foredrag i studentforening for Bibel og Bekjennelse*. (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1975), 12-13. *Lov og evangelium blir ikke rett forkynt dersom man viser folk til en bestemt opplevelse, i stedet for å vise dem til Guds løfte i ord og sakrament*. This thesis is quite similar to Walther's Thesis IX, Walther, 127-207.

skeptical about spiritual experiences in and of themselves.”<sup>235</sup> This is further explained in that he understands that “faith is not a pure intellectual process. To come to faith is not to be understood the same as 2 plus 2 is 4. Something *happens* to those who come to a true repentance and faith.”<sup>236</sup> This would say that in coming to faith there is an experience. The question is, what is its rightful place?

In this thesis he is addressing those, who in pointing people to certain experiences, think that this is the same as preaching the Gospel. Therefore Wisløff first takes up what the Gospel is not and what it is to clarify the matter. His concern is “that nothing must put the Gospel in the shadow.”<sup>237</sup> We need to be clear “that the Gospel is not an ‘offering’ that you receive if you want, or refused if you do not think that it pleases you. The Gospel is not an invitation to have a glorious experience of charismatic filling, of religious satisfaction – perhaps of ecstatic character.”<sup>238</sup> Quite the contrary, for “the Gospel is the promise of grace for Jesus’ sake, it is the message that Jesus has borne the wrath of God’s judgment so that we shall be released from bearing it (Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21).”<sup>239</sup> Therefore Wisløff says “the Gospel is not a kind of spiritual recipe that prescribes how you shall perform in order to have a part in certain experiences or to obtain certain gifts of grace.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 12. Et kommer forhåpentlig ikke som noen overraskelse når jeg sier at jeg ikke hører til den type lutheranere som er skeptiske overfor åndelige opplevelser i og for seg.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. Troen er ikke en rent intellektuell prosess. Å komme til troen er ikke som å innse at 2 plus 2 er 4. Det *skjer* noe med den som kommer til en sann omvendelse og tro.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. Det er bare det med det, at intet må få stille evangeliet i skyggen.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet er ikke et “tilbud” som du kan ta imot om du vil, eller avslå om du ikke synes det smaker deg. Evangeliet er ikke en innbydelse til å få en herlig opplevelse av karismatisk fylde, av religiøs tilfredsstillelse – kanskje av ekstatiske karakterer.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. Nei, evangeliet er tilsagnet om nåde for Jesu skyld, det er budskapet om at Jesus har båret Guds vredes dom for at vi skulle slippe å bære den. Gal. 3,13. 2. Kor.5,21.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. Derfor er evangeliet ikke en slags åndelig oppskrift som foreskriver hvordan du skal oppføre deg for å få del i bestemte opplevelser eller oppnå visse nådegaver.

Wisløff directs us to preach the Law as Law and the Gospel as Gospel; “then we who hear will become lost sinners who are not anything in ourselves, we have nothing in ourselves,” and who “have all our righteousness in Jesus as Melanchthon rightly says, *Christus non desinit esse mediator postquam renovati sumus*, for “we need Christ as Savior also after we are renewed and reborn.”<sup>241</sup> So “to live in God’s Law and Gospel, means to be nothing in one’s self but to have all in Him – He who died for me, He whom God’s promises witness to my conscience – such as my baptism metaphorically witnesses and the sacrament gives.”<sup>242</sup> Thus Wisløff directs us away from anything anthropocentric to Christ, who is delivered in Word and sacrament. We have noted in the previous thesis the same emphasis, where he advised against directing anyone to seek a particular experience but rather to point them to the Word and Sacrament.

11. “The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is distorted if admonitions and exhortations are claimed to be a proclamation of the Gospel.”<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 13. Bliir Guds ord forkynt rett, slik at loven blir lov og evangeliet blir evangelium, da blir vi som hører, fortapte syndere som ikke er noe som helst i oss selv, vi har intet i oss selv – vi har all vår rettferdighet i Jesus. Med rette sier Melanchthon: *Christus non desinit esse mediator postquam renovati sumus* (Bek.Schr., 193, 41). Vi trenger Kristus som frelser også etter at vi er blitt fornyet og gjenfødt.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. Å leve i Guds lov og evangelium, det vil si å være intet i seg selv men ha alt i ham – han som døde for meg, han som Guds løfter bevitner for min samvittighet – slik som min dåp billedlig bevitner og sakramentalt gir.

<sup>243</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 43-46. Odd Sverre Hove and has suggested that the message of this thesis is directed to the view held by Erling Utne. For Utne’s position see Erling Utne, “Den evangeliske egenart ved den paulinske parenese” *TTK* 34, (1963), 65-79. In *Credo* Wisløff warns against the manner of expression and thinking that in later time considers the admonitions in the NT to be Gospel and not Law. “For example, one says that the admonitions of Paul are to be understood as grace-creating words; they create what they command.” He cites Erling Utne’s article in *TTK* 34 (1963). Wisløff believes that this manner of expression is far away from the Reformation way of thinking and speaking, for according to the Reformation way, the Gospel demands nothing; it is only a message of what God has done in Christ. *Credo* 13 (1984), 5.

Wisløff begins by reiterating that the Law word is a word that “demands something from us” and the Gospel is a word “that does not demand anything from me, but only preaches Christ for me.”<sup>244</sup> However, there are those, to whom this thesis is directed, that have a third category of words called exhortation. They understand it to be “a word that effects grace from God like a sacrament,” thereby creating what it says. Therefore the words that exhort, even though they demand, these people in reality consider them to be Gospel in the strict sense. Wisløff says in response to such thinking, that any type of exhortation is Law.<sup>245</sup>

The Gospel can be made into Law if it is preached one-sidedly in this tone of voice. “If you will be converted, if you will surrender yourself completely to God, then God will be gracious and receive you.”<sup>246</sup> The Gospel is made a Law when “the Gospel is surrounded with so many reservations and conditions that no one can see that it is God’s unconditional promise of grace for Jesus’ sake.”<sup>247</sup> Therefore, says Wisløff, one “should not say, ‘If you believe, God is gracious.’ But rather, ‘Believe in Jesus, God is gracious for His sake!’”<sup>248</sup>

Wisløff’s analysis of the approach that confuses the Gospel with exhortations points to several results from this type of preaching. “First we have deprived the Gospel of its distinctive characteristic: What it cost God to forgive us, the word that Christ is the Lamb of

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 96. Det er det som skjer når det blir forkynt ensidig i denne toneart. *Dersom* du vil omvende deg, *dersom* du vil overgi deg helt til Gud, så vil Gud være nådig og ta imot deg.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. Med andre ord: Hvis evangeliet blir omgitt med så mange forbehold og betingelser at ingen lenger kan se at det er Guds betingelsesløse tilsagn om nåde for Jesu skyld, da gjør man evangeliet til en lov.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. Enkelt uttrykt: Det skulle ikke hete: Dersom du tror, er Gud nådig. – En skulle heller si: Tro på Jesus, Gud er jo nådig for hans skyld!

God who took the sins of the world upon himself. Without this ‘cost’ (Luther), one is back into confusion with Law and Gospel mingled together.”<sup>249</sup>

Secondly, the preacher who has been exhorting “his congregation to commit themselves to God, to let the Holy Spirit fill them, to ask for the gift of speaking in tongues, the gift of healing, etc.” believes that he has been preaching the Gospel.<sup>250</sup> However, this is far from the case, concludes Wisløff. “He has not told his listeners what God has done for their salvation.”<sup>251</sup> He has said nothing that can create faith. He has said nothing that can help a troubled conscience battling with the righteous wrath of God.

In the third place this kind of exhortation runs “the risk of creating a false understanding regarding the source of sanctification.”<sup>252</sup> Wisløff identifies the secret and source of sanctification to be fear and love for God. And this “love toward God is to be found only in those who have a free conscience by faith in Christ, whose righteousness has become their righteousness by faith.”<sup>253</sup> He refers us to Luther who says: “But, now, since the Gospel teaches that the Law and works do not justify, but faith in Christ does, knowledge, a sure understanding, a joyful conscience, and a true judgment about every way of life and about everything else follow.”<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, it is not the Law that brings the Holy Spirit but rather the Gospel. Wisløff quotes the *Apology*, “We cannot love God until we have received

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<sup>249</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 45.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. Wisløff directs the reader to Luther’s commentary on Galatians (1535) as a good source for help in this issue.

<sup>254</sup> AE 26:212; WA, 40, 341, 342.

His mercy by faith. Only then does He become an object that can be loved (*obiectum amabile*).”<sup>255</sup>

Wisløff therefore rejects any understanding of exhortations that lets them slip out from the Law category into the way of the Gospel.

12. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel proclaims them side by side and therefore the one is never to be preached without the other as long as the world continues.<sup>256</sup>

The basic principle out from which Wisløff works is “that the Law is to be preached to secure, sleeping self-righteous sinners, for they need to hear how radical God’s demand of them is, then they can learn to understand that there must happen a thorough change with them, if they shall not go lost.”<sup>257</sup> The Law shall be preached as a discipline to the flesh of the believers, because they “always have the old flesh in them as long as they are in this world.”<sup>258</sup> On the other hand, “the Gospel shall be preached to those who are frightened at the Lord’s word, the brokenhearted, those who in themselves are lost. To them no demand shall be directed, neither shall they be directed to their works or their motives, for they have already judged themselves, thoroughly judged as they are by the Law.”<sup>259</sup> Here it is necessary to clearly distinguish between Law and Gospel for “they shall get to hear only the Gospel. And

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<sup>255</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 46. *Apology* IV, 129. Tappert, 125.

<sup>256</sup> See Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 95-96. See also Pieper 3:224-227.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 95. Oven skal forkynnes for de sikre, sovende, egenrettferdige syndere. De skal få høre hvor radikalt Guds krav til dem er, så de kan lære å forstå at det må skje en grundig forandring med dem, om de ikke skal gå fortapt. Compare with Walther’s *Law and Gospel* Thesis VIII. Walther, 101-124.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* Og fordi også de troende alltid har det gamle kjød i seg så lenge de er i denne verden, må loven forkynnes også for dem som en tukt over deres kjød.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96. Men evangeliet skal en forkynne for dem som er forferdet for Herrens ord, de sønderknuste, de som er fortapte i seg selv. Til dem skal en ikke rette noe krav, verken til

the Gospel is not a demand. It does not put on us so much as a feather that we shall bear. It only tells us about Jesus, that he died for us, and says, those who come to Jesus will not be pushed out.”<sup>260</sup>

Wisløff points out that “this ‘contemporaneousness’ of Law and Gospel belongs, to be sure, to those mysteries of God’s Spirit which we must never dare to believe that we thoroughly understand and control. God’s Spirit uses the Word as He wills.”<sup>261</sup> It can happen “that word of the Gospel which has comforted the one in his terror and distress, has perhaps, for another, become the sting of conscience which brought him to think of his sin and his responsibility to God.”<sup>262</sup>

This “contemporaneousness” must not in any way lead to some sort of oneness between Law and Gospel. “It is not the Gospel that terrifies and judges; it is the Law. The Gospel does not ever judge anyone or anything.”<sup>263</sup> Therefore it is as “Luther says, ...that as long as the word about Jesus’ death ‘preaches God’s wrath and terrifies man, thus far it is not yet the Word of the Gospel or Christ’s own sermon, but Moses and the Law as over against

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deres gjerninger eller deres motiver; de har allerede dømt seg selv, grundig dømt som de er av loen. Compare with Walther’s *Law and Gospel* Thesis VIII. Walther, 101-124.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 96. De skal bare få høre evangeliet. Og evangeliet er ikke et krav. Det legger ikke på oss så mye som et dun som vi skal bære. Det bare forteller oss om Jesus, at han er død for oss, og sier: Den som kommer til Jesus, blir ikke støtt ut.

<sup>261</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 126. Denne >>samtidighet<< av lov og evangelium hører nok til de Guds Ands hemmeligheter som vi aldri må driste oss til å tro at vi helt gjennomskuer og forføyer over. Guds And bruker ordet som han vil.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. Det evangeliets ord som trøstet den ene i hans foderdelse og anfektelse, ble kanskje for en annen det stikk i samvittigheten som fikk ham til å tenke på sin synd og sitt ansvar overfor Gud.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. Men vi må riktignok ikke derav slutte at >>samtidigheten<< av lov og evangelium innebærer noen som helst slags >>enhet<< dem imellom. Det er ikke *evangeliet* som forferder og dømmer, men det er loven. Evangeliet dømmer aldri noen eller noe.

the impenitent.’ What happens is that ‘the Law with its teaching is illuminated and explained by the Gospel.’<sup>264</sup>

Wisløff refers to Luther’s comparison of the juxtaposition of Law and Gospel “to the two cherubs on the ark of the covenant, that stood turned to each other (Exodus 25:20).”<sup>265</sup>

Wisløff contends that they both need to sound forth simultaneously in order for the preaching to be Christian. For “the Gospel is not God’s true Gospel if the Law is not also preached. It becomes a general religious talk about God’s love without God’s word’s vitality and power and seriousness. In the same way the Law will not be God’s Law if the Gospel is not preached at the same time. It becomes then only a general moral chat.”<sup>266</sup>

13. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel does not postpone the preaching of the Gospel.<sup>267</sup>

This point addresses the erroneous thinking that what our secularized society needs is the preaching of the Law and that the Gospel should be delayed until people understand their need for it, for it is only then that they will understand. Wisløff’s analysis concludes that this way of thinking is a blending of right and wrong. It is certainly right that the Law must be

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid. Derfor sier også Luther i fortsettelsen av det ord vi siterte ovenfor, at så lenge ordet om Jesu død >>preker Guds vrede og forferder mennesket, så lenge er det ennå ikke evangeliets eller Kristi egen preken, men Moses og loven over de ubotferdige<<. Det som skjer er at >>loven med sin lære blir stillet i lyset og forklaret ved evangeliet<<.

<sup>265</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 96. Luther sammenligner dem med de to kjerubene på paktens ark, som sto vendt mot hverandre. 2. Mos. 5, 20.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet er ikke Guds sanne evangelium, hvis ikke også loven blir forkynt Det blir en almenreligiøs tale om Guds kjærlighet uten Gudsordets saft og kraft og alvor. – På samme vis vil loven ikke være Guds lov, hvis ikke evangeliet forkynnes på samme tid. Det blir da bare alminnelig moral-prek.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 96-97. Odd Sverre Hove has referred the writer to Wisløff’s analysis of the preaching during the Second World War, which he found to be weak on this point in his *Norsk kirkehistorie* III, (1971), 470.

preached so that people can come to see their true condition *coram Deo*. However, it is wrong to conclude that this can happen without the Gospel. It is only when the Gospel is preached simultaneously with the Law that true Law is preached.<sup>268</sup> For “the word about Jesus must be preached so they get to see that the greatest sin is to reject Him. Jesus says that God’s Spirit shall convince the world of sin ‘because they do not believe in me.’ John 16:9.”<sup>269</sup> “If the Gospel is not heard, the Law can, to be sure, disclose and punish other sins. But it will not be able to disclose and punish the root-sin itself, which is unbelief and enmity against God, because these things come to light only in the presence of the Gospel.”<sup>270</sup> Thus “not until the Law is proclaimed together with the Gospel can the person’s enmity to God and God’s wrath be actually revealed.”<sup>271</sup>

He further adds that “if it is true that people do not understand the Gospel ( that is unfortunately true at *all* times ), then one should indeed put emphasis on preaching the *Gospel*, so that they can come to understand it.”<sup>272</sup> The importance of preaching the Gospel is also based on the fact that “nothing else can save than the Gospel about Jesus.”<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 97. Ordet om Jesus må forkynnes, så de får se at den største synd er å forkaste ham. Jesus sier at Guds And skal overbevise verden om synd “fordi de ikke tror på meg.>> Joh.16, 9.

<sup>270</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 125. Får da ikke evangeliet lyde, så vil loven visstnok kunne åpenbare og straffe andre synder. Men selve rot-synden, som er vantro og fiendskap mot Gud, vil den ikke kunne åpenbare og straffe, for dette kommer først til syne overfor evangeliet.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. Først når loven lyder sammen med evangeliet kan menneskets gudfiendskap og Guds vrede over mennesket virkelig bli åpenbaret.

<sup>272</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 97. Og hvis det er sant at menneskene ikke forstår evangeliet (det er dessverre sant til alle tider), da skulle en nettopp legge vekt på å forkynne *evangeliet*, så de kan komme til å forstå det.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. Intet annet kan freise enn evangeliet om Jesus.

14. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel recognizes that in the preaching of the Law there are three uses that function simultaneously in three different ways.<sup>274</sup>

Wisløff is among those who believe that it is not only customary but right within the Lutheran Church to speak of the Law as functioning in three ways. He cautions against becoming schematic in understanding the divisions. “At all times, it is the one and the same Law of God that is dealt with. But with this Law of His God would accomplish various things.”<sup>275</sup> This is also the interpretation of the *Formula of Concord*.

The first use is the Law serving “to maintain external respect for justice and for divine ordinances in society (*usus politicus*).”<sup>276</sup> “With all the power we possess we must proclaim that God’s commands are holy; that they apply to all people, and that they embrace all human conditions.”<sup>277</sup> “The commandments must be preached as something that applies to the whole human society.”<sup>278</sup> And it is important to proclaim them “in love as something that affects the whole of a person’s life,” for a “judging condemning tone that only bewails the ungodliness and increasing decay of the times does not have prospects to bring about especially good results.”<sup>279</sup> The focus of this use is not primarily chastisement and punishment but rather positive guidance which if followed will be a blessing to the individual and to society.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

<sup>275</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 113. Det er hele tiden den ene og samme Guds lov det er tale om. Men med denne sin lov vil Gud utrette forskjellige ting.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid. For det første skal loven tjene til å holde oppe utvortes respekt for rett og guddommelige ordninger i samfunnslivet (*usus politicus*).

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 115. Med all den kraft vi eier må vi forkynne at Guds bud er hellige, at de gjelder alle mennesker, og at de omfatter alle menneskelige forhold.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid. Guds bud må forkynnes som noe som gjelder hele menneskelivet.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. Men – og dette er viktig – det må forkynnes i kjærlighet. En dømmende og fordømmende tone, som bare jamrer over tidens ugudelighet og voksende forfall, har visat ikke utsikter til å bringe særlig gode resultater.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 116.

Wisløff cautions against thinking that we can Christianize society and solve the political problems. “Christ is no alternative to the UN.”<sup>281</sup> Wisløff sees that this use of the Law often gets to be part of a theocratic tendency as if it were a part of the Gospel, and that a right ordering of society had something to do with salvation. This is a confusion of the two realms. “When the sermon in this manner deals with God’s laws of life, it must not by so much as a syllable imply that it is the *kingdom of God* that comes in this way.”<sup>282</sup> It must also be remembered that “in the demand of the Law God comes to us and because His demand, in the final analysis, implies perfection, the Law is always an accuser. Even according to its ‘first use,’ the Law is a revealer of God’s wrath.”<sup>283</sup>

In the second use of the Law “it serves as a chastener to bring people to Christ (*usus elenchticus*).<sup>284</sup> Wisløff calls this the annihilating Law.<sup>285</sup> He notes with agreement that Luther calls the “most important use of the Law.”<sup>286</sup> The understanding of the second use of the Law Wisløff says is the test of whether we have understood what God’s Law really is.<sup>287</sup> In his *I know in whom I believe* he draws from Galatians 2:19f.; 3:24f.; Romans 3:19, 20; 4:15 as the primary passages to establish the second use as ‘pedagogical’ tutoring us to Christ, bringing the knowledge of sin, showing us our sin, closing our mouth, and with the whole

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 117. Kristus er ikke noe alternativ til FN.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 118. Når prekenen på denne måten taler om Guds livslover, må den aldri med så meget som en lyd antyde at det er *Guds rike* som kommer ad denne vei.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 119. Lovens krav kommer Gud til oss, og fordi hans krav til sist går ut på fullkommenhet, er loven alltid en anklager. Også etter sin >>første bruk<< er loven en åpenbarer av Guds vrede.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 113. For det andre skal den være en tuktemester til Kristus (*usus elenchticus*).

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 119. Den tilintetgjørende lov.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. Luther citation is from SA, Part III, II, 4.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid. Er skal det vise seg om man i det hele tatt har forstått hva Guds lov egentlig er.

world becoming guilty before God.<sup>288</sup> This is given further explication by citing in its entirety Luther's explanation in the *Smalcald Articles* Part III, II, 1-5.

In his most extensive treatment of this use of the Law, Wisløff deals with some common misinterpretations. With Luther as his mentor he quotes him as saying "if we have nothing else to tell a Christian than moral philosophy and human ordinances, whereby he believes that he can walk justly before God, the results will be death and corruption."<sup>289</sup> Aside from the fact that the Gospel must also be preached, Wisløff points us to the fact that the Law is different from moral philosophy, a point that is not always taken seriously in preaching.<sup>290</sup> Wisløff analyzes the situation in this way. The Law is presented as an *ethical norm* which has a divine source and is a rule and guide as to how human beings should live. In order that we shall be able to keep these moral precepts this must be supplemented with the Word about Christ and faith.<sup>291</sup> As a result of presenting the ethical norm "the honest listener will gradually understand that he has fallen short of the Law and will be ready to listen to the other part of the message, about Christ and faith in Him."<sup>292</sup>

This is the approach followed by Gustav Wingren and Benny Bengtson, and they have given expression to familiar truths such as that the Law prompts one to use his own powers and that God uses this so-called work-school to experience that our powers are insufficient.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 92.

<sup>289</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 119. This Luther citation Wisløff quotes from Bengtson p. 143ff. >>Når man ikke har annet å si et kristenmenneske enn moral- filosofi og menneskelige ordninger, så han tror at han kan vandre rett for Gud i disse, da er det død og fordervelse<<

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-120.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.* Da vil den ærlige tilhører etter hvert forstå at han kommer til kort overfor dette, og han vil være moden for å lytte til det andre som forkynnelsen har å si ham – ordet om Kristus og troen på ham.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

But there is something missing in their approach, namely, that the meeting with the Law is a meeting with something more than an ethical norm. For “to meet the Law is to meet God. More closely defined: God in His holiness and wrath. *Lex est Deus accusans et damnans* (The Law is God accusing and condemning). *In the Law is revealed not only certain divine directions for our lives, but God Himself*, the living God who is a consuming fire against all sin (Rom. 1:18; 4:15).”<sup>294</sup> If this very important aspect of the Law is missing, and it is only an ethical norm, then the hearer does not encounter the reality of God in His wrath. This is necessary “for it is only when man meets God’s wrath, that *God* becomes man’s great need and decisive problem. Divine commands and patterns we can somehow manage; a ‘Christian’ ideology, which will improve both ourselves and the world, such things are only stimulating for man’s religious sense and desire for activity.”<sup>295</sup> But we see this approach “about us on all sides. Only when man meets the wrath of God that would crush him because of sin, only then does God become a *problem*.”<sup>296</sup> With the approach of Wingren and others, then, even for the religious person, “God himself is never a *distress*.”<sup>297</sup>

However, Wisløff points out, it is quite different, for the people in the Bible learned to know God in His holiness, God who held their destinies in His hand. As they looked into the face of such a God, they asked: “Will God rebuke me in His wrath (Psalm 6:1; 38:1); will God

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid. Men å møte loven er å møte Gud. Nærmere bestemt: Gud i hans hellighet og vrede. *Lex est Deus accusans et damnans. I loven åpenbares - ikke bare visse guddommelige retningslinjer for vårt liv, - men Gud selv*, den levende Gud som er en fortærende ild mot all synd. Rom 1,18; 4,15.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 122. For det er først når mennesket møter Guds vrede at *Gud* blir menneskets store nød og avgjørende problem. Guddommelige bud og forskrifter kam vi greie så noenlunde, en >>kristelig<< ideologi som skal forbedre både oss selv og verden, - slikt er bare ansporende for mange menneskers religiøse sans og aktivitetstrang

<sup>296</sup> Ibid. Det ser vi omkring oss på alle kanter. Først når mennesket møter den vrede Gud som vil knuse ham for hans synders skyld, først da blir Gud *problem*.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid. Gud selv er aldri for den religiøse en nød.

hide His face from me (Psalm 30:7); will He forsake me (Psalm 38:21); or will He give me His ear (Psalm 80:1), counsel me with His eye (Psalm 32:5), and put away His anger toward me (Psalm 85:4)? Therefore, the pious person , 'waits' for the lord; he cries to Him out of the depths (Psalm 130:1), because he knows that if the Lord will not look upon him in grace and forgive him, he will perish (Psalm 130:4)."<sup>298</sup> It is only when the Law is allowed to reveal God's wrath that people come into such a situation. Otherwise they will "either become presumptuous hypocrites like the Pharisees or despair like Judas" as the *Formula of Concord* says.<sup>299</sup>

Wisløff in this connection turns next to the need for man's sinful depravity to be preached. "For the Law *is* not only an ethical norm, but the revelation of God's wrath, and our distress is not only that we are too 'weak' to keep the commandments," but it "is the sinful heart and the unbelief which directly opposes God," and this we can only learn "through *the Word of God telling us that it is so.*"<sup>300</sup> "Humanity's sinful depravity cannot be known by reason, but must be *believed* through revelation; that means it must be *proclaimed*. People need to be told how deep their need is."<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 122-123. Derfor står de og ser inn i Guds ansikt og har denne ene store, avgjørende nød: Om Gud vil straffe meg i sin vrede (Salme 6,1; 38,2), om han vil skjute sitt ansikt for meg (Salme 30,8), om han vil forlate meg (38,22) – eller om han vil vende sitt øre til meg (80,2), gi meg råd med sitt øye (32,8) og gjøre sin harme mot meg tll intet (85,5). Derfor >>bier<< den fromme på Herren, han roper til ham fra det dype (130,1), idet han vet at hvis ikke Herren vil se i nåde til ham og tilgi ham så går han til grunne (130,4).

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 123. FC Epitome, V, 8.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. For loven er ikke bare en etisk form, men åpenbaringen av Guds vrede, og vår nød er ikke bare den at vi er for >>svake<< til å holde budene. Vår nød er det syndige hjerte og vantroen, som står Gud direkte imot. Det er bare det at denne erfaring må skje *derved at ordet sier oss, at slik er det.*

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 124. At menneskets syndeforderv ikke kan erkjennes av fornuften, men må bli *trodd* på grunn av åpenbaringen, - det vil jo si at den må *forkynnes*. Det må bli sagt menneskene hvor dyp deres nød er. Wisløff is paraphrasing SA, Part III, I. Sin, 3.

Wisløff cautions against an inappropriate mechanical division between Law and Gospel that would attempt to postpone the Gospel until the Law has completed its task. He states: “we must take notice *that it is quite plainly impossible to preach the Law aright unless the Gospel is sounded at the same time, and conversely!*”<sup>302</sup> This mechanical division can occur through what Wisløff calls a *chronologically* ordered system. This happens when the Law and Gospel are put as two steps in a row “so that the Law must be proclaimed first, quite alone up to the point where the sinner breaks down, and then the Gospel is to assume the whole role. If one believes this, then he has not understood anything of the whole matter.”<sup>303</sup> The sin of unbelief, “that sinful attitude of the heart, that one disregards Jesus and his completed redemption, either because one does not have need of it, or because one will not believe that he has a right to receive it,” for it is “only when the *Gospel* is permitted to shed its light on the Law that sin and unbelief really become revealed.”<sup>304</sup> This subject is also treated in Theses 12 and 13.

It is the Holy Spirit’s work to produce “distress before the face of God, that condemnation in conscience, and resignation in the heart which eventually makes a person ready to listen to the Gospel in a new way.”<sup>305</sup> Even though Wisløff believes that “it has never happened that others than lost sinners have taken their refuge in Him,” he speaks against

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid. Men først og fremst må vi merke oss *at det ganske enkelt er umulig å forkynne loven rett uten at evangeliet lyder til samme tid – og omvendt!*

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 125. ...slik at loven først må forkynnes ganske alene inntil det punkt hvor synderen bryter sammen, og at så evangeliet skal overta hele rollen, tror man dette – så har man ikke forstått noe av det hele.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 124, 125. Hva er vantro ? Det er den syndige innstilling i hjertet, at man skyver Jesus og hans fullbrakte frelsesverk bort, enten fordi man ikke vil ha bruk for det, eller fordi man ikke vil tro at man har rett til å ta det til seg. ... Nei, det er først når *evangeliet* får låne loven noe av sitt lys, at synden og vantroen virkelig blir åpenbar.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 126. Men når dette skjer, da kan Guds Hellige Ånd få virke den nød for Guds ansikt, den dømtthet i samvittigheten og oppgitthet i hjertet, som omsider gjør et menneske modent for å lytte til evangeliet på en ny måte.

requiring “a certain degree of distress and contrition before Jesus will receive one,” for the differences may be very great, just as life has developed differently for individuals.”<sup>306</sup> What is crucial is that this distress is worked by the Holy Spirit.

Wisløff points out that the natural tendency when one hears the Law is to turn it into a ladder to heaven. In light of this the preacher must constantly keep before him the truth expressed in Galatians 2:19; Romans 7:9-11; and 1 Corinthians 15:56 which say that the Law works death. It must put an end to the “If only I” for they indicate that the person has not yet understood that it is *he himself* who is depraved.<sup>307</sup> It is not only his sins, but more significantly the fact that he is a sinner. It is “at this point the Law has a work to do. It is to show that our inner man is basically depraved and opposes God. The Law does not raise a ladder to heaven; it opens a gulf between us and God,”<sup>308</sup> as “the voice of the angry God who pursues the sinner and will crush him and cast him into hell, if he does not find his sole refuge *in the vicarious Savior.*”<sup>309</sup>

Finally, we take up Wisløff’s discussion of the Law as a guide for the believers in their new life and service to God (*tertius usus*).<sup>310</sup> He gives this section the title of the Law as a ‘reminder.’<sup>311</sup> Wisløff recognizes that certain Lutheran theologians such as Werner Elert have

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid. Det har da heller ikke hendt at andre enn fortapte syndere har tatt sin tilflukt til ham. Ikke som om det krevdes et bestemt mål av nød og sønderknuselse før Jesus ville ta imot en. Her kan forskjellen være meget stor, likesom livet har artet seg forskjellig for de enkelte.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 126-128.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 128. Og her har loven sin gjerning. Den skal vise at vårt indre menneske er grunnfordervet og står Gud imot. Loven reiser ingen himmelstige for oss, den åpner en kløft mellom oss og Gud.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 129. Den er den vrede Guds tiltale, den er røsten fra den vrede Gud, som er etter synderen og vil knuse ham og kaste ham I helvete, - om han ikke finner det eneste tilfluktssted *hos stedfortrederen.*

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 129. Loven som >>påminnelse<<.

great misgivings on this particular use of the Law.<sup>312</sup> These theologians hold that due to the fact that the believer is a sinner, who is also flesh, the Law always accuses so there will not be “any time in a Christian’s life when the Law has only ‘informational’ significance.”<sup>313</sup> On this point Wisløff agrees and acknowledges that it is very important not to forget that the believer is a sinner and, as we have seen, that the Law is not only information.

He then raises the question about the teaching of the third use in the *Formula of Concord*. He concludes that “those who maintain that the Law has nothing to say to the regenerated children of God, since these “of themselves, by the encouragement and impulse of the Holy Spirit, do what God requires of them,” are at variance with *The Formula of Concord* which rejects this mode of thinking.<sup>314</sup> Wisløff emphasizes that even though the Christian is a new man, he is still very much an old man, and the significance of this is spoken by Luther: “Thus, we never come to the point that our flesh and blood easily and gladly incline to the good works which the Spirit desires, and that faith impels us to. For even if the Spirit impels the flesh, it can never get rid of it.”<sup>315</sup> In the second place, Wisløff believes that the *Formula of Concord* teaches that “the Christian also needs to hear God’s commands in order to know

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. Også den troende er kjød, også han rammes av lovens dom. Det kan m. a. o. aldri tenkes noe tidspunkt i en kristens liv hvor loven bare har >>informativ<< betydning.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 130. Vi skal merke oss at K. F. vender seg mot dem som hevdet at loven ikke hadde noe å si de gjenfødte Guds barn, da disse >>av seg selv, ved den Hellige Andes tilskyndelse og drift, gjør det som Gud krever av dem<<. K. F. avviser denne tankegang. See also the FC, SD, Article VI.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. >> Således er det heller ikke kommet dertil med oss, at vårt kjød og blod lett og glad løper til de gode gjerninger, som Anden gjerne vil gjøre, og som troen driver oss til. For selv om Anden alltid driver på kjødet, så kan det neppe få det av sted<<, sier Luther.

what works God delights in” and avoid the ever present danger of self-chosen ‘holy’ works, for the old Adam has no objection to becoming ‘holy.’<sup>316</sup>

In his analysis of the *Formula Wisløff* also sees that “it builds, among other things, on one expressed premise which, for the authors of the *Formula of Concord*, is very important, but which some of the theologians who today reject the “third use,” do not seem to have much use for.”<sup>317</sup> This premise is “that there is a *regeneration* which leads that person ‘who is regenerated to live in accordance with God’s unchangeable will in the Law, in a voluntary, happy spirit.’”<sup>318</sup> This does not diminish the reality that the Christian is a sinner and remains one his entire life, thus always needing to be covered with Christ’s righteousness. Wisløff points out however, that this must not be allowed to displace Scripture’s clear teaching that the Christian is also a new creature, who is forgiven, declared to be God’s child, a possessor of God’s Spirit, and born of God.<sup>319</sup>

The significance of this for Wisløff’s thinking on the third use, is that because of who he is, “*a child of God hears the Word with other presuppositions than he who is a stranger to*

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 130-131. Også den troende trenger til å høre Guds bud for å vite hvilke gjerninger Gud har behag i.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 131. Den bygger bl. a. på en uttalt forutsetning som for K. F.s forfattere er meget viktig, men som noen av de teologer som i dag forkastet den >>tredje bruk<<, ikke synes å ville vite stort av.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid. For K. F. regner her med den forutsetning, som finnes i Skriften, at det gis en *gjenfødelse* som fører til at mennesket >>for så vidt det er gjenfødt, lever etter Guds uforanderlige vilje i loven - - av en frivillig, glad ånd -<<. It must be noted here that Wisløff understands regeneration to be the gift of faith. Ibid., 176. Dels har man sagt at gjenfødselen er dette at Gud gir troen, - gjenfødelse er <<donatio fidei<<. Denne siste betegnelse må absolutt sies å være den riktige, da dette er Skriftens egen uttrykksmåte. 1. Johs. 5,1. Johs. 1,12 –13: De som tror på Jesu Davn er født av Gud.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 131-132.

*the life in God.*<sup>320</sup> The first of these presuppositions when he hears the Word is the objective difference that the believer has been united with Christ.

That which is sacramentally expressed and offered in our baptism, is the very deepest mystery of the Christian life: United with Christ in a death like His and in a resurrection like His (Rom. 6:5). Crucified with Christ, raised with Him to a new life (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1–3). Therefore, there is no condemnation for him who is in Christ (Rom. 8:1), for Christ's righteousness has become his through faith (Phil. 3:9). Therefore, a Christian is always an object of God's delight, and in his strong and weak moments possesses the same grace. He is judged but not condemned.<sup>321</sup>

The second presupposition is on the subjective side in that as a Christian he

has learned to love God (1 John 4:19). And because he loves God, he loves also God's commandments and desires to keep them (John 14:15). To be sure the flesh is always opposed. Here is a condition that is not easy to keep clear in our thinking, for a Christian will know that the flesh is 'I,' and I am responsible and feel myself judged and accountable for the evil desires of the flesh. But nevertheless, this cannot change the truth: When I have learned to love Jesus my Savior, there has come into my heart and mind a new desire to keep God's commandments.<sup>322</sup>

This is why the New Testament can use the expression "*to remind of*" when admonishing God's children.<sup>323</sup> Wisløff explains that the verbs "to call to mind" and "to remind of" carry both the meaning of "to remember" and the deeper meaning that when *God* calls something to mind it is an active action. "When God calls something to mind, the

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 132. *Et Guds barn hører ordet med andre forutsetninger enn den, som er fremmed for livet i Gud.*

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. Det som sakramentalt er uttrykt og gitt i vår dåp, det er selve kristenlivets dypeste hemmelighet: Forenet med Kristus, både i likheten med hans død og i likheten med hans oppstandelse. Rom. 6,6. Korsfestet med Kristus, oppreist med ham til et nytt liv. Gal. 2,20. Koll. 3,1-3. Derfor blir loven ikke til fordømmelse for den som er i Kristus, (Rom. 8,1), for Kristi rettferdighet er blitt hans ved troen. Fil. 3,9. Derfor er en kristen alltid under Guds velbeag, og har i sine sterke og svake stunder samme nåde. Han dømmes, men fordømmes ikke.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid. En kristen har lært å elske Gud. 1. Johs. 4,19. Og fordi han elsker Gud, elsker han også Guds bud og har lyst til å holde dem. Johs. 14,15. Riktignok står kjødet alltid imot. Her er et forhold som ikke er lett å holde klart for tanken, for en kristen vil vite at kjødet er >>jeg<<, og jeg er ansvarlig og kjenner meg dømt og ansvarlig for kjødets onde begjær. Men det kan likefullt ikke rokke den sannhet: Når jeg har lært å elske Jesus, min frelser, så er der i mitt hjerte og sinn kommet en ny trang til å holde Guds bud.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 133. Wisløff points to 1 Cor. 4:17; 11:2; 2 Peter 1:12f.; 3:1-3; Jude 5, 17; Rom. 15:15.

situation changes (Genesis 8:1; 19:29; Exodus 32:13; Psalm 25:6-7). And when the Apostle ‘reminds’ of something, it comes alive in consciousness through the very word about it.”<sup>324</sup>

This means that the “word of the Law comes to a believer as something he knows and loves. In spite of the opposition from the flesh, an opposition which he feels himself responsible for, he nevertheless loves the Law. And he then hears the Law as wisdom from God, as guidance by his heavenly father.”<sup>325</sup>

Wisløff anticipates that many will object and say that this way of speaking about the Law belongs under the first use. He meets such a response by referring to the *Formula of Concord*, which understands the Law to always mean God’s unchangeable will according to which people are to direct themselves in their lives, and yet acknowledges at the same time that there is a distinction between works due to the difference which exists among people who allow themselves to be governed by God’s Law and will.<sup>326</sup> Thus Wisløff states: “Only *in the believers* will all God’s commands and admonitions meet with the presuppositions which are necessary in order that they may be actualized, in so far as they can, on the whole, be actualized in this world,” for “*It is only when a person has come to faith that he seriously asks what really is God’s will.*”<sup>327</sup> Everything changes when a person comes to faith. “The

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid. At Gud kommer noe i hu, er en aktiv handling. Når Gud kommer noe i hu, endrer situasjonen seg. 1. Mos. 8,1 ; 19,29. 2. Mos. 32,13, Salme 25,6-7. Og når apostelen >>minnet<< om noe, så blir det han minner om, ved selve ordet om det, levende i bevisstheten.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid. Derfor kommer lovens ord til en troende som noe han kjenner og har kjært. Tross motstanden fra kjødet – en motstand som han kjenner seg selv ansvarlig for – er det likevel slik at han har loven kjær. Og han hører da loven som visdom fra Gud, som veiledning av den himmelske Far.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 134. See Tappert, (1959), 566, FC, SD, Article VI, 15-16.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 135. Alle Guds bud og formaninger vil først hos de froende møte de forutsetninger som trenges for at de kan bli virkeliggjort, - så langt som de da I det hele kan bli virkeliggjort I denne verden. ... *Det er først når et menneske er kommet til troen, at han for alvor spør etter hva Guds vilje egentlig er.*

disorder which sin has caused in conscience is superseded, through faith, by peace with God in a good conscience, to be sure not in a restful possession; the believer possesses it only through the struggle of faith, which oftentimes may be bitter enough, but nevertheless it is present through faith. And now when the heart has tasted God's good grace and learned to know God as "our Father in Christ," for the first time, he asks seriously what it is that *God* wills. Now it is of greater concern for him to please God than to be holy. (*'Majus est deo soli placere quam sanctum esse.'*) And then the commandments lie before him as a plain, clear guide as to what God delights in."<sup>328</sup>

While admitting that Elert is right in that no one can ever come into the situation where the Law possesses only 'informational' significance, Wisløff emphasizes in addition that "through regeneration, a person comes into such a situation that the Law now can have actual informational significance for him, in a way that is impossible for an unregenerate person," and this is the meaning of the third use of the Law which the preaching must make clear.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 136. Den uorden som synden har stelt til i samvittigheten blir ved troen avløst av fred med Gud i en god samvittighet; riktignok ikke i en hvilende besittelse, den troende eier den bare i troens kamp, som ofte kan være bitter nok, - men den er dog til stede ved troen. Og nå, når hjertet har smakt Guds gode nåde og lært Gud å kjenne som >>vår i Kristus kjære Fader<<, - nå spør han først for alvor hva det er Gud vil. Nå gjelder det ikke for ham å bli hellig, men å behage Gud. >>Majus est deo soli placere quam sanctum esse<<(137). Og da ligger budet foran ham som en enkel, klar veiledning om hvilke gjerninger Gud har behag i. The quotation is from Luther's lectures on Romans, cit. Georg Merz: *Kirchliche Verkündigung und moderne Bildung* (1931) p. 53.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid. En i vår sammenheng er en annen sannhet ikke mindre viktig: Ved gjenfødelsen kommer et menneske i en slik stilling at loven nå kan få virkelig informatisk betydning for ham – og det på en måte som det for en ugjenfødt ikke er mulig.

15. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel remembers that the Law always accuses.<sup>330</sup>

Wisløff expresses here his agreement with Melancthon's statement that the Law always accuses.<sup>331</sup> He sets forth that "no Christian comes any time into the place that he is totally scot-free of the Law's accusation. As long as he lives, he will need to bow before the Law and confess that he has failed and come short. ... The Law's effects are also first and foremost the knowledge of sin."<sup>332</sup> We must note further and "establish this fact: There is not a spark of grace and mercy in the Law. For the Law is a word that demands *everything*, and which will always have something to object to in us. The Law always accuses."<sup>333</sup>

16. "The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is distorted if it is insisted that the Ten Commandments have transferred their authority to love as God's *only* demand."<sup>334</sup>

This thesis has particular application to the present day mind set of general existentialism which Wisløff understands to be "a revolt against external authority and every type of authoritarian moral value and code of conduct."<sup>335</sup> This "existentialism reflects the mood and the mental disposition of the Western world at the end of the twentieth century.

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<sup>330</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 93-94.

<sup>331</sup> Tappert, (1959), 112. *Apology* IV, 38.

<sup>332</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 93-94. Ingen kristen kommer noen gang i den stilling at han er helt skuddfri overfor lovens anklage. Så lenge han lever, vil han bli nødt til å bøye seg for loven og innrømme at han har sviktet og at han kommer til kort. ... Lovens virkning er altså først og fremst *syndserkjennelse*.

<sup>333</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 139. Og da må vi i denne sammenheng slå fast: Det finnes ikke en gnist av nåde og barmhjertighet i loven. For loven er et ord som forlanger *alt*, og som derfor alltid vil ha noe å innvende mot oss. <<Loven anklager alltid<<.

<sup>334</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 46-49.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

Man considers himself free and yet is a slave at the same time.”<sup>336</sup> Wisløff directs this thesis to the Christian existentialist, who “is not able to accept ten commandments for he has only one, namely, love,” and “he believes it is his duty to demonstrate love and act in love on every occasion.”<sup>337</sup> “Love is the only commandment. But what is love?”<sup>338</sup> Wisløff considers this issue critical, for “if the existentialist way of thinking is accepted, then the Christian church will lose its Christian character and it will be only a club for religious people.”<sup>339</sup>

He finds that this situation has something in common with the background for the article on the third use of the Law in the *Formula of Concord*.<sup>340</sup> Agricola taught that the Law should not be preached to Christians, since having been liberated by the Son of God, and possessing the Holy Spirit they know what is right for them to do, and they do it spontaneously. Wisløff says, “this is rather close to the thinking of today, only the antinomians of today are farther away from the Bible than Agricola and his friends were. They did not think of good works and right living in terms contrary to the Word of God.”<sup>341</sup>

Wisløff’s response to this situation is to follow the Reformation “fathers” and preach the Law of God for believers for primarily two reasons. First, even “though one has been born again, the flesh is still there with its evil lust and desire. The Law must be proclaimed in order that there may be conviction that one has sinned and that there is need to ask God’s forgiveness for Christ’s sake.”<sup>342</sup> Second, “the believer must hear the Law of God tell him

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 48. See Tappert, (1959), 563-568, FC, SD, Article VI.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

what kind of works are pleasing to God. Good works are only those works that are in accord with the Law of God.”<sup>343</sup>

Next, Wisløff turns to Luther’s *Small Catechism*’s meaning of the first commandment, which says “we should fear and love God.” And also “the catechism says we should fear God because God threatens to punish all who transgress His commandments. We should, therefore, fear His wrath and not disobey His commandments.”<sup>344</sup> The love side “says that we should love God so that we trust in Him above all things.”<sup>345</sup> The explication of this is given in the various meanings of the commandments.

In summary, Wisløff’s approach is that “when the great “lights” of today tell us that love is the only commandment, let us remind them of the Catechism. Love must have its direction from God’s Word. We do not know what love is from our own hearts or from some direct or immediate revelation from God.”<sup>346</sup>

17. “Law and Gospel are not rightly preached if one says that a person can live in admitted opposition to God’s commandments and still be a child of God.”<sup>347</sup>

In this thesis Wisløff addresses the relationship that a child of God should have to His commandments. Wisløff begins by noting that “the Gospel proclaims forgiveness for all sins and recovery from every fall. But the Gospel does not say that a Christian can willfully live in

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid. Wisløff is paraphrasing Tappert, (1959), 567, FC, SD, Article VI, 20.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 6. Lov og evangelium blir ikke rett forkynt dersom man sier at et menneske kan leve i erkjent motstrid mot Guds bud, og likevel være et Guds barn. There are some similarities in Wisløff’s commentary on this thesis to C. F. W. Walther’s Thesis X. Walther, 210-234.

his sins and at the same time be comforted in God's grace (Romans 6:7; 1 Corinthians 6)."<sup>348</sup>

It is possible for a Christian to fall into sin and those who unfortunately do "must seriously repent of their sins and seek grace from God and the power to live anew life."<sup>349</sup>

Wisløff believes that this thesis is of greater relevance today than perhaps at any time before because of the prevailing view of the Bible. The historical-critical method has cleared the way for false teaching in many areas, including morals.<sup>350</sup> As a result "the Bible's admonitions are not God's commands given by the prophets and apostles under the Spirit's leading, but are time-bound admonitions without obligating significance for us who live a long time after, it is said."<sup>351</sup> This is expressed in the daily life, where people are living together without a legal marriage and there are active sexual relations between two persons of the same sex, both of which are clearly in conflict with God's Word (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 1 Corinthians 6:9).<sup>352</sup>

What is needed says Wisløff, is that "a correct preaching of God's Law must under these circumstances put the things in place on the basis of God's Word" as sin and that "those who live in such relationships sin against God's Word and must repent and seek grace for Jesus' sake if they shall be saved."<sup>353</sup> It must also be maintained that "the Gospel is not a

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet forkynner tilgivelse for alle synder og gjenoprettelse fra ethvert fall Men evangeliet sier ikke at en kristen kan fortsette å leve i sine synder og samtidig trøste seg til Guds nåde.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid. Men så må han alvorlig angre sine synder og søke nåde hos Gud og kraft til et ny liv.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid. Bibelens formaninger er ikke Guds bud gitt ved profeter og apostler under Åndens ledelse, men tidsbetingede formaninger uten forpliktende betydning for oss som lever så lenge etter, blir det sagt.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid. En rett forkynnelse av Guds lov må under disse omstendigheter sette tingene på plass fra Guds ord. Disse forhold er synd. De som lever i slike forhold synder mot Guds ord, og må omvende seg og søke nåde for Jesu skyld om de skal bli frelst.

general assurance that God is gracious. The Gospel is the promise of the remission of sins for lost sinners who repent before His face. People who live in open conflict with God's commandments must not be called Christian."<sup>354</sup> For "the Christian faith and morals are not a smorgasbord where one freely chooses the forms that one 'likes.'"<sup>355</sup>

As an indication of the relevance of this issue Wisløff cites the Norwegian Church Council's presentation in "The Christian Faith Today," in which they say that one must respect and not judge those who live together without being married when the paperless relationship is entered with the promise to be faithful.<sup>356</sup> He points out that this is stated without any attempt to base these considerations in the Scriptures or the Lutheran Confessions. He adds "if one shall speak rightly about Law and Gospel," the 'Table of Duties' of the *Small Catechism*, which include "the Bible's admonitions about spouses, parents and children's relationships (Ephesians 5; Colossians 3)," must not be forgotten.<sup>357</sup>

Wisløff criticizes modern preaching for reducing the teaching of the New Testament to only *one* word, namely love. For example, "today it is said that the man shall love his wife, the wife shall love her husband, the parents shall love their children and the children shall love their parents."<sup>358</sup> In contrast, the "New Testament says that the wife shall submit to her

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet er ikke en generell forsikring om at Gud er nådig. Evangeliet er tilsigelse av syndenes forlatelse for fortapte syndere som gjør bot for hans ansikt. Mennesker som lever i en strid med Guds bud må ikke kalles Kristne.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid. Kristen tro og moral er ikke et smørgåsbord hvor man fritt velger de former som man liker.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 6-7. "Kristen tro i dag"

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 7. Lutherske kirkes bekjennelse viser til "hustavlen", dvs. Bibelens formaninger om ektefellers, foreldres og bams forhold. Efes. 5, Kol. 3. "Hustavlen" må ikke glemmes om det skal tales rett om lov og evangelium. He indicates that the "Table of Duties" was even omitted from an official edition of the *Small Catechism*. Men "hustavlen" er endog utelatt i en offisiell utgave av den lille katekismus. Wisløff is probably refering to *Katekismen til Studieplan*, Studieplan by Tore Kopperud (Oslo: Andaketsbok selskapet, 1980).

<sup>358</sup> Ibid. I dag blir det sagt at mannen skal elske sin hustru, hustruen skal elske sin mann, foreldrene skal elske sine barn og barna elske sine foreldre.

husband, the husband shall love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her; the parents shall train their children and the children shall obey their parents.”<sup>359</sup> Wisløff reports that in speaking against a paper-less living together relationship he was once accused by a catechist, who worked with youth, of making morals to be a basis of salvation.<sup>360</sup> He notes that one can only marvel at the lack of basic Christian knowledge.

Wisløff formulates his Law and Gospel response by reiterating that “grace and salvation are given only by grace, that is certain and true.”<sup>361</sup> Nevertheless, we must also say that “contrition and penitence and an honest intention about living according to God’s will are necessary. Not as a cause for salvation, but as a consequence of this that the sinner is now in God’s school.”<sup>362</sup> He gives Luther the last word on the matter, who says “for there is no such Christ that died for sinners who do not go away from sins and lead a new life after they have received the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>363</sup> The Gospel as presented here by Wisløff is that which sets the believer free from his sins with the kind of forgiveness whereby he does not continue to live in them.

18. “The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is distorted if church leaders usurp the authority of the temporal government.”<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid. Men NT sier at hustruen skal underordne seg under sin mann. Mannen skal elske sin hustru som Kristus elsket menigheten og a seg selv for den; foreldrene skal oppdra sine barn og barna lyde sine foreldre.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. Nåden og frelsen blir gitt av bare nåde, det visst og sant.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid. Likevel er anger og bot – og et redelig fortsett om å leve etter Guds vilje nødvendig. Ikke som en årsak til frelsen, man som en følge av at synderen nå er i Guds skole.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid. Det innes ikke noen Kristus som døde for snydere som ikke vil gå bort fra synden og leve et nytt liv etter at de har fått syndenes forlatelse” WA 50, 599; AE 41:114.

<sup>364</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...*(1990), 49.

Wisløff's starting point for his commentary on this thesis is the teaching found in Article 28 of the *Augsburg Confession*, which distinguishes between the spiritual and temporal powers. The spiritual power "is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments."<sup>365</sup> On the other hand, the "temporal authority is concerned with matters altogether different from the Gospel."<sup>366</sup> These two authorities are not to be mingled or confused. Therefore the spiritual power should not "invade the function of the other, such as setting up or deposing kings, annulling temporal laws, undermining obedience to government, or prescribing to the temporal power laws concerning worldly matters."<sup>367</sup>

In spite of these clear demarcations between the two realms Wisløff identifies actions by the Council of the Church of Norway, the World Council of Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation that are contrary to the words and the intentions of the confession.<sup>368</sup> According to Wisløff, how does this work against the proper distinction between Law and Gospel? He concludes that these political endeavors by the church are a misrepresentation of the Christian faith and are therefore detrimental to evangelistic efforts.<sup>369</sup> "The message of the Gospel is the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, by faith alone," and these modern political church men "create the impression that the kingdom of God is of this world, that involvement in church activity means involvement in political affairs."<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

A second confusion concerns the understanding of peace. Wisløff points out that the church must not “forget that the peace of God is not the same as political peace.”<sup>371</sup> “The church cannot say more than God’s Word says.”<sup>372</sup> She has not received from the mouth of God a political aim or course of action with solutions for every problem. The peace she is given to preach is the peace spoken of in the Bible. The peace that consists of the position of the believer whereby under God’s love he is at peace with God and God is at peace with him on account of what Christ has done and given.<sup>373</sup> The proper distinction of Law and Gospel in relation to the political realm calls the church to say what her Lord has given her to say.

19. “The Law should be preached with a view to one’s duties in daily life, that is, one’s responsibilities as a Christian, as a citizen, as a member of a family, as a employee or employer, etc. The Gospel should be preached with a view to one’s conscience and one’s faith in relationship to God.”<sup>374</sup>

What should be the respective focuses of the Law and the Gospel in regards to the believer? This is the question addressed here. Wisløff identifies this as one of the main themes in Luther’s commentary on Galatians, and he says that we could do no better than to listen to Luther’s words.

What does Wisløff give us from Luther? He employs the imagery where the Christian is the bride of Christ, the conscience is the bridal-chamber, and Christ is the bridegroom. The

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>374</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 51. See also *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelsen* (1975), 13-15. Loven skal forkynnes med tanke på mine daglige plikter og mitt ansvar som menneske og kristen, evangeliet skal forkynnes med tanke på min samvittighets forhold til Gud. See also “Fri til tjeneste” in *Å være fri* (1980), 37-39.

key question is who gets into the bridal-chamber? “The Christian in his conscience should know no other bridegroom than Christ.”<sup>375</sup> The door is to remain locked to the Law and all other accusers and want-to-be saviors, for “the one foundation for the hope to be saved and come to the Father’s home in Heaven is Christ and what He has done for us.”<sup>376</sup> Therefore Wisløff says that “as far as my relationship to the Son is concerned, there exists no Law that I ought to listen to. In this relationship, I should listen only to the Gospel which says salvation is a free gift, that it is God justifying the ungodly, for Christ’s sake alone.”<sup>377</sup>

Wisløff makes much use of Luther’s very vivid language such as his way of talking to the devil. “Mr. Devil, do not rage so. Just take it easy. For there is one who is called Christ. In Him, I believe. He has abrogated the Law, damned sin, abolished death, and destroyed hell. And He is your devil, you devil, because He has captured and conquered you, so that you cannot harm me any longer nor anyone else who believes in Him.”<sup>378</sup> He also points to the dialogue with the Law that Luther uses to make the truth clear.

When the Law comes and says, “You have sinned,” then I should reply: “Yes, I have sinned.” When the Law then pronounces God’s punishment and damnation, I can say: “I have nothing to do with the Law.” “Why is that,” the Law retorts. “Because I have another ‘law,’ one that strikes the Law dumb. I am referring to the Law of liberty.” “What liberty is that,” the Law queries. “It is that of Christ, for through Christ I am liberated from the Law.”<sup>379</sup>

What about my daily life? Here Wisløff says that the “believer should know no other

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid. Cf. AE 26: 391.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 51. AE 26:162.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 52. As quoted by Wisløff. Cf. AE 26:161.

rule than God's will as it is revealed in God's Word" for there is no "Gospel" that cancels out this revelation and "makes it permissible for a Christian to be idle or careless or unkind."<sup>380</sup>

Wisløff states: "The flesh or 'old man' should be tied and bound; it should have no 'Gospel,' no freedom. Only the Law should be taught to the flesh."<sup>381</sup> As a result "the Law holds to the earth and earthly tasks" and "speaks to us about our daily duties toward or neighbor."<sup>382</sup>

Because many Christians are unclear in their thinking and application of these truths, they are in spiritual misery. Wisløff describes several different forms of misery. For some "the Law is threatening the conscience with all its accusations. The result is a life lived with a guilty conscience because of sin. On the other hand the flesh enjoys a great deal of freedom and a Christian according to the flesh will permit himself to do many things that are not good for his spiritual life."<sup>383</sup> And so "in the conscience, which ought be free and happy and thankful to God because one has been made a child of God for Christ's sake alone, there is only guilt, temptation, doubt and very little joy."<sup>384</sup> On the other hand "the reality of one's daily life is carelessness and egocentricity. The Gospel of the flesh speaks like this: 'Take it easy, a Christian is free from the Law; accept yourself.'"<sup>385</sup> So Wisløff concludes "in the sixteenth century, people paid money for the forgiveness of sins. Today it is cheaper; you simply forgive yourself, that is all."<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>382</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 189. Oven skal holde seg til jorden og de jordiske kallsoppgaver, ... Loven, som skulle få tale til oss om våre daglige plikter overfor nesten,

<sup>383</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 52.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

This confusion is the result of these truths being turned upside down. “The Gospel is made to be full of conditions – “if’s,” – “you must” – and “try.”<sup>387</sup> Also the Gospel intended to give peace and joy in the heart because sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake is made to be a Gospel for the flesh (Galatians 5:13).<sup>388</sup> The Law on the other hand which is intended to be a “guide and teacher in a life of service to others, is made to be a tyrant in the hearts of Christians, a tyrant who interferes with one’s sonship with God.”<sup>389</sup>

Wisløff calls preachers and all those responsible for the care of souls to “take time to prayerfully consider the biblical meaning of Law and Gospel.”<sup>390</sup> This is at the core of theology and preaching.

From this survey of his teaching on Law and Gospel it is clear that Wisløff considers the doctrine to be very important. His teaching on the subject is drawn from Scripture and elucidated with extensive citations from Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, and his way of expressing it is shaped by Luther far beyond what is indicated with explicit references.. The various theses are given somewhat unequal treatment and there is some overlap, but consistent throughout is the same understanding of Law and Gospel.

### Summary

This chapter has set forth a general overview of Wisløff’s theology. This has been done by considering four different components. First, we looked at the source of theology

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

which he articulates in the way of the Reformation's formal principle of the Bible alone. This comes into place by way of Christ.

Second, we considered his understanding of the Bible's way of thinking. This gets fleshed out in the way of what he calls salvation history, the heart of which are the opposites of God's holy Law and His merciful Gospel of salvation.

Third, we briefly set forth his doctrine of salvation. Salvation is understood in the light of Law and Gospel. It is the opposite of being damned under God's wrath and is best expressed as the forgiveness of sins.

Last, we surveyed his doctrine of Law and Gospel, which he calls the masterpiece of theology. It is the bright light that opens up all of Scripture to us and in particular God's way of salvation. The preaching of Law and Gospel is the right preaching about God and fellowship with Him. Through these two words God does two different acts. By way of the demanding word of the Law He reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. By way of the giving word of the Gospel He delivers nothing but grace and forgiveness with all that they are because of who Christ is and what He has done. We saw how Wisløff, by way of theses, applied this doctrine to various situations in life. This study shows Wisløff to clearly be a disciple of Luther. There is also the influence of Rosenius, Walther, Pieper, and Valen-Sendstad as well. In the light of this theological context we turn now to consider Wisløff's understanding of faith.

## Chapter Five

### **Wisløff's Doctrine of Faith**

We have already noted earlier in the section on salvation that even though, through Jesus' substitutionary death for our sins and His victorious resurrection for our justification, God is reconciled and atonement has been made for the sins of all people, not all have come into a right relationship with Him.<sup>1</sup> For "that which Jesus has won for the whole world, must first become each individual's possession."<sup>2</sup> We have seen that to possess what Jesus has won is to possess the forgiveness of sins which then belongs to the one who believes. "The one who believes on the Son has eternal life, but the one who will not believe on the Son, shall not see life, but God's wrath remains over Him.' (John 3:36; 5:24)."<sup>3</sup> It is through faith that one enters into possession of the forgiveness of sins. In this chapter we will turn our attention to the various dimensions of Wisløff's understanding of faith.

#### The Nature of Faith

What does Wisløff understand by faith? How does he set this forth in his theology? Wisløff understands faith by way of the Gospel. He says, "The situation is this: If we are to understand what faith is, we must be clear on what the *Gospel* is. For the Gospel comes first and then comes faith. First God meets us with the Gospel, and then comes – if the sinner does

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<sup>1</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 87.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Det som Jesus har vunnet for hele verden, må først bli hvert enkelt menneskes eiendom.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 88. <<Den som tror på Sønnen, har evig liv, men den som ikke vil tro på Sønnen, skal ikke se livet, men Guds vrede blir over ham.>> Joh. 3, 36. 5, 24.

not harden himself – faith.”<sup>4</sup> In his book on preaching when he takes up the subject of faith he says, “here, too, we can only draw the conclusions of what has been said before (referring to the section VI, on Law and Gospel). Faith comes from the Gospel or the declaration of the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>5</sup>

In his published lecture *Sola fide* Wisløff takes the Gospel as his point of departure for defining faith. On the basis of Ephesians 2:8-9, Wisløff says that “faith is the opposite of works,” which means that faith is the opposite of the way of the Law.<sup>6</sup> And “faith is the only thing from our side which can answer to the fact that salvation *is* accomplished, that God in Christ is a reconciled God. If Jesus has done all, if the Gospel is only a message about this fact, then faith is no performance from our side. Faith is only *trust in God’s grace*.”<sup>7</sup> This corresponds to what Luther said, “where there is the Word of God making a promise, there is necessary the faith of man accepting it.”<sup>8</sup> Where the Gospel is not understood there will not be the right understanding of faith, for faith is only there in the way of the Gospel.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 127. Saken er den: Skal vi forstå hva troen er, må vi først få klarhet over hva *evangeliet* er. For evangeliet kommer først, og så kommer troen. Først møter Gud oss med evangeliet, og så kommer – hvis ikke synderen forherder seg - troen.

<sup>5</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 157. Også her kan vi bare trekke konsekvensen av det som er sagt tidligere (se VI, 1). >>Troen kommer av evangeliet eller avløsningen<<. Troen blir tent og skapt av Anden ved evangeliets ord.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Sola fide (ved troen alene). Et foredrag for gymnasiaster* (Kristiansand S., 1945), 10. Hereafter abbreviated as *Sola fide*. Tro er det motsatte av gjerninger. Efes. 2, 8, 9: Av tro – ikke av gjerninger.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Troen er det eneste som fra vår side kan svare til det faktum at frelsen er fullbrakt, at Gud i Kristus er en forsonet Gud. Har Jesus gjort alt, er evangeliet bare et budskap om dette faktum, så er troen ingen prestasjon fra vår side. Troen er bare *tillit til Guds nåde*.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe. En studie i Luthers teologi* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1957), 52. Wisløff cites this from Luther’s *Babylonian Captivity of 1520*. WA 6, 514, 13. Ubi enim est verbum promittentis dei, ibi necessaria est fides acceptantis hominis. (AE 36:39).

The most common and Wisløff's preferred way of speaking of faith is the phrase "trust in."<sup>9</sup> The Norwegian word *tillit* (trust/confidence) corresponds to the Latin *fiducia*.<sup>10</sup> He cites Melanchthon as saying "*faith is nothing other than trust in God's grace.*"<sup>11</sup> His use of this terminology indicates how he understands the nature of faith.<sup>12</sup> He says "if anyone makes faith anything other than trust, if one says for example that faith is obedience, then salvation is no longer by grace alone. For then there is nevertheless something that we shall do."<sup>13</sup> He also speaks of faith as "to believe."<sup>14</sup> It is to "receive."<sup>15</sup> And the expressions to "rely on"<sup>16</sup> and "to come to Jesus"<sup>17</sup> are also used. In speaking of Abraham's believing, Wisløff stated, "He believed it, for God had said it. – It cannot be said clearer that faith is neither obedience, or surrender, or anything else in that direction. Faith is only trust in God's promise. God has

<sup>9</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 10; idem., *Jeg vet...* (1987), 88, 94. It is significant to note here the similarity of Wisløff to Rosenius. Arden has observed that "faith, in the lexicon of Rosenius, is synonymous with trust, *förtröstan*, that is, a deep and steadfast confidence in Jesus Christ, and his constant desire and readiness to rescue sinners from the consequences of such evil." Arden, *Four Northern Lights*, 137. This may be seen in Wisløff's translation and edition of Rosenius's work *Troen og Livet* (Bergen: Lunde Forlag, 1947), 11-44.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to the following references in Jens Olav Mæland, editor, *Konkordieboken. Den evangelisk-lutherske kirkes bekjennesskrifter*, co- editors Tormod Engelsviken, Oddvar Johan Jensen, Arne Brunvoll, Gunnar Heiene, Carl Fr. Wisløff, Arthur Berg. (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1985), 119:337; 467:12; 38:26; 303:2. This was also at the heart of Luther's and the Reformation's way of speaking of faith.

<sup>11</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 94. *Troen er intet annet enn tillit til Guds nåde* (Melanchthon). Wisløff does not identify the source.

<sup>12</sup> This will also be seen in the section on the ways that faith is confused later in this chapter and when Wisløff deals with whether or not infants can believe.

<sup>13</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 12. Gjør en troen til noe annet enn tillit, sier en f. eks. At troen er lydighet, da blir frelsen ikke lenger av bare nåde. For da er det likevel noe som vi skal gjøre.

<sup>14</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 88, 101. Tro.

<sup>15</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 12. Tar imot.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 11. Lite på.

<sup>17</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1981), 263. Å tro er å komme til Jesus.

done all in Christ. We shall only believe it – rely on His Word regarding it.”<sup>18</sup> In addition he makes use of the expression used by Luther. “Faith is in itself nothing other than an empty hand, an empty vessel – faith is nothing in itself.”<sup>19</sup>

Wisløff states that as Lutherans we have learned in our church that “faith’s passive trust in Jesus’s finished work is enough for salvation.”<sup>20</sup> In another place he points out that some criticize the Lutherans for believing faith to be *pure passive*.<sup>21</sup> “They protest against that salvation comes into place only through faith’s trust in Jesus’ finished work. It is not enough that the sinner entirely passively relies on the fact that the promise is true and applies to him.”<sup>22</sup> Those who express this protest believe that “the Gospel consists not only of the promises that call for the trust, but also in commandment that calls for obedience; *therefore the saving faith consists not only in trust in God’s grace, but also in obedience to God.*”<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>18</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 10-11. Han trodde det, for Gud hadde sagt det, - Klarere kan det vel ikke sies at troen hverken er lydighet eller overgivelse eller noe som helst annet i den retning. Troen er bare tillit til Guds løfte. Gud har gjort alt i Kristus. Vi skal bare tro det – lite på hans ord om det.

<sup>19</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Troen Tror ikke på seg selv,” *Sambandet* No. 25 (1960). Troen er seg selv ikke noe annet enn en tom hånd, et tomt kar – troen er intet i seg selv.

<sup>20</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Vår Lutherske arv og hva vi eier i den. Foredrag holdt på Søndagsskolemøte på Drottningborg* (1945), 36. Troens passive tillit til Jesu fullbrakte verk er nok til frelse, det har vi lært. Wisløff does not identify where Lutherans teach this but most likely he is referring to the *Formula of Concord*. See FC Ep II, 18: FC SD II 73, 89. See also Luther WA 18:697; AE 33:157. Wisløff states, “The believer receives the justification passively, he contributes nothing, it is God who declares the sentence.” Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 81. Den troende mottar rettferdigjørelsen passivt, han yter ikke noe; det er Gud som kunnngjør dommen.

<sup>21</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 20. Even though Wisløff does not make any reference to the Lutheran Confessions the language *pure passive* is the same as that of the *Formula of Concord*. See FC Ep II, 18: FC SD II 73, 89. See also Luther WA 18:697; AE 33:157. For a helpful treatment of *pure passive* see Robert D. Preus “The significance of Luther’s Term *pure passive* as quoted in Article II of the Formula of Concord,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* Vol. XXIX (August 1958) No. 8, pp. 561-570.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Akkurat som den gang protesterer de mot at frelsen kommer i stand bare ved troens tillit ti Jesu fullbrakte verk. Det er ikke nok at synderen helt passivt liter på at løftet er sant og gjelder ham.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet består ikke bare av løfter som kaller på tilliten, men også i bud som kaller på lydigheten; *derfor består den frelsende tro ikke bare i tillit til Guds nåde, men også i lydighet mot Gud.*

teaching of *pure passive* expresses “the Lutheran Reformation teaching that salvation is ours without any cooperation from our side.”<sup>24</sup> All those who deny the *pure passive* nature of faith stand together with the pope, and thus Luther’s words; “the papist and the enthusiasts are one thing,” are confirmed.<sup>25</sup>

Wisløff speaks of faith as personal. Even though it is a great thing to know much about Christianity, it is still necessary for all to meet Jesus and come to a personal faith in Him.<sup>26</sup> The meeting with Jesus involves the twofold message of his speaking to us about our sin and about the grace in the Gospel of His death for our sins and His resurrection for our justification.<sup>27</sup> In this way, faith in Jesus becomes a personal matter.<sup>28</sup> This personal dimension is developed in his book on preaching. Both the Law and the Gospel are to be presented in such a manner that they address the conscience.<sup>29</sup>

Wisløff frequently speaks of faith alone. “When we say we are saved through faith *alone*, then it is works that are excluded from salvation.”<sup>30</sup> However, that is not to be understood such “that faith at any time appears alone, for it never does, for it can never be there without the Gospel that goes before. *Without the Gospel, no faith!* And as the Gospel

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 21. ... den lutherske-reformatoriske lære om at frelsen blir vår uten noen medvirkning fra vår side.

<sup>25</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 21.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Når Troen blir en personlig sak” *Aftenposten* 22 januar 1966. He develops this point from John 4:27-42.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Noe annet og mer er det å møte Jesus, så han får tale ut med oss både om synden i vårt liv og om nåden i evangeliet om hans død for våre synder og hans oppstandelse til vår rettferdighet.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 150f. and 160f.

<sup>30</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 12. Når vi sier vi blir frelst ved tro *alene*, så er det gjerningene som utelukkes fra frelsen.

goes before faith, then the good works necessarily come after.”<sup>31</sup> Even though faith never occurs alone, “it *saves* alone. And it does it because it apprehends Jesus, who is the only one who can save.”<sup>32</sup>

### The Origin of Faith

How does faith come to be? Wisløff makes it very clear that we cannot of ourselves believe and frequently quotes the catechism, “I believe that I cannot of my own reason or strength believe in Jesus or come to Him.”<sup>33</sup> This is because “our natural corruption is so great that we ourselves cannot do anything but distrust God. It is impossible for the natural person to force his heart to believe.”<sup>34</sup> In another place he says: “this trust no person can awaken in himself, neither while he sleeps and is indifferent to his sins, nor when he has become dismayed over them.”<sup>35</sup>

This trust comes into being as it is created and kindled by God’s Spirit through the Gospel for “faith comes by preaching and preaching by Christ’s word (Romans 10:17).”<sup>36</sup> He describes it this way: “When the sinner through the preaching of the Law has become lost in himself, and sees that he must only close his mouth and not have any excuse before God, then

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Vi mener ikke at troen noen gang opptrer alene, for det gjør den aldri: den kan aldri være der uten at evangeliet går foran. *Uten evangelium, ingen tro!* – Og som evangeliet går for troen, så kommer de gode gjerninger nødvendigvis etter.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Nei, troen opptrer aldri alene, men den *freiser* alene. Og det gjør den fordi den griper fatt i Jesus, som er den eneste som kan frelse.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 11. Vi kan av oss selv ikke tro. <<Jeg tror at jeg ikke av egen fornuft eller kraft kan tro på Jesua eller komme til ham>>, heter det i vår barnelærdom.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Vårt naturlige forderv er så stort at vi av oss selv ikke kan annet enn å mistro Gud. Det er umulig for det naturlige menneske å tvinge sitt hjerte til å tro.

<sup>35</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 94. Denne tillit kan intet menneske vekke opp hos seg selv, verken mens han sover og er likeglad med syndene sine, eller når han er blitt forferdet over dem.

<sup>36</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 11.

comes the Gospel of Jesus' finished work. And there where this Gospel is not refused in unbelief, there it creates faith in the sinner's heart."<sup>37</sup> It is "while he hears the Gospel, faith is kindled."<sup>38</sup> To say that faith is kindled is a very confessional way of speaking, particularly in *The Formula of Concord*, and a common expression for Wisløff.<sup>39</sup> "For our faith is not a spontaneous action (*spontan actio*), a self-determination on our part, it is a reaction (*reactio*) to God's saving message of grace in the Word about Jesus Christ."<sup>40</sup> An anthropocentric or faith-centered focus stands in the way of faith. "As long as the heart is occupied with its own condition, its own difficulties, its own intentions to believe and surrender to God, so long is the heart bound in itself and does not come to faith."<sup>41</sup> And "as long as the sermon is occupied with saying : Be converted, surrender to God – so long it is not yet the pure Gospel that is proclaimed."<sup>42</sup> In addition to Romans 10:17, Wisløff refers to the story of Cornelius in Acts 10-11 and of Lydia in Acts 16:14ff. as the Biblical truth that when we finally *listen*, quite simply hear the Gospel, faith is created by it.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Når synderen ved lovens forkynnelse er blitt fortapt i seg selv, og ser at han bare må lukke sin munn og ikke har noen unnskyldning for Gud, da Kommer evangeliet om Jesu fullbrakte verk. Og der hvor dette evangelium ikke blir avvist i vantro, der skaper det troen i synder-hjertet.

<sup>38</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 94. Og mens han hører evangeliet, tennes troen. Note the use of the passive.

<sup>39</sup> Kindled is used in connection with faith in the Lutheran Confessions in the following places: LC II, 42; FC, SD II, 14, 16, 24, 54, 71; FC, SD III, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 159. Vår tro er jo ikke en spontan actio, en selvbestemmelse fra vår side, - den er en reactio på Guds frelsende nådetilsagn i ordet om Jesus Kristus.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Så lenge hjertet er opptatt med sine egne forhold, sine egne vanskeligheter, sine egne forsetter om nå å ville tro og overgi seg til Gud, - så lenge er hjertet ennå bundet i seg selv og kommer ikke frem til troen.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Så lenge prekenen er opptatt med å si: Omvend deg, overgi deg til Gud – så lenge er det ennå ikke det rene evangelium som forkynnes.

<sup>43</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 94-95; Refer also to Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 159. Det var da vi omsider kom til å *høre* – ganske enkelt *høre* – evangeliet, at Guds And kunne bruke evangeliets ord til å skape troen.

Wisløff notes the importance for the preaching not to be “a sermon *about* faith, but a preaching *toward* faith.”<sup>44</sup> This is so, because it is the Gospel and only the Gospel that kindles faith. Talk about faith will never create faith. It is difficult for us to focus on the Gospel, for by nature the Law is the way that we are familiar with, while on the other hand the Gospel that God actually loves *sinner*s and that Jesus dies for such as they is a strange message.<sup>45</sup> In this same connection, Wisløff calls preachers to *proclaim the Gospel* and not simply speak *about* the Gospel.<sup>46</sup>

Since it is the Gospel that kindles and creates faith, Wisløff puts emphasis on the need to have a clear understanding of it. The Gospel is the glad message that God is reconciled and that Jesus has done all that is necessary for Him to take sinners into His fellowship.<sup>47</sup> “It is not a message about something we should do. It does not put any duties on you. It puts all our duties, together with our sins, on Jesus – and tells us that Jesus has made satisfaction for it all together.”<sup>48</sup> The Gospel “is the message of the saving acts which God *has performed* in Jesus Christ” and “not a word which calls for activity on our part, it tells of *God’s* action.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore “it will not first and foremost challenge me to a ‘decision,’ but it tells me about that decision that, in the fullness of time, *God* has made in Jesus Christ.”<sup>50</sup> For Wisløff the best

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<sup>44</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 157. Forkynnelsen må m. a. o. ikke bare være en preken om troen, men en forkynnelse til tro.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Det er så utrolig meget enklere å tale *om* evangeliet enn like frem å *forkynne* evangeliet!

<sup>47</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 10.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 158. Prekenen bør stadig på nytt gjøre det klart at evangeliet er budskapet om de frelseshandlinger som Gud *har fullført* i Jesus Kristus. Evangeliet er ikke et ord som kaller på en aktivitet fra vår side, - det forteller om *Guds* handling.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Det vil ikke først og fremst utfordre meg til en >>avgjørelse<<, det forteller meg om den avgjørelse som Gud i tidens fylde har tatt i Jesus Kristus.

and most concise explanation of the Gospel is Luther's Preface to the New Testament.<sup>51</sup> The Gospel sermon is this word "it is finished," together with everything that this includes."<sup>52</sup> "The incarnation of the Son of God, His sinlessness, His vicarious suffering and death, and victorious resurrection; all this must constitute the alpha and omega of preaching. For our salvation lies in His taking everything of ours on Himself in order that He might give us of His own."<sup>53</sup> It is only such a word that has the "ability and power, by God's Spirit to create and kindle faith."<sup>54</sup>

The Gospel is more than an "offer" and it is not even enough to say that it is a "promise," for it is a message about the divine promises that are *fulfilled*.<sup>55</sup> The Gospel is "a word that tells that God has fulfilled His promises to send lost sinners a Savior. The promises

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 158-159. <<Evangelium er et gresk ord som betyr godt budskap, godt rykte, god ny tidende, godt utsagn, noe man synger og taler om og gleder seg over. Da David hadde overvunnet den store Goliat, da kom et godt rykte og en gledelig tidende til det jødiske folk om at dets grusomme fiende var slått og at de hadde fått forløsning, glede og fred; derfor sang de og hoppet og var glade. – Således er Guds evangelium et godt budskap og en god tidende som apostlene har ropt ut i verden om en sann David, som har stridd med synden, døden og djevelen og overvunnet dem, og dermed forløst uten deres egen fortjeneste alle dem som er fanget i synden, plaget av døden og overveldet av djevelen, og gjort dem rettfærdige, levende og salige, og dermed gitt dem fred og brakt dem hjem igjen til Gud<< WA Deutsch Bibel VI pp. 3-4. AE 35:358. "For 'gospel' [*Euangelium*] is a Greek word and means in Greek a good message, good tidings, good news, a good report, which one sings and tells with gladness. For example, when David overcame the great Goliath, there came among the Jewish people the good report and encouraging news that their terrible enemy had been struck down and that they had been rescued and given joy and peace; and they sang and danced and were glad for it [I Sam. 18:6]. Thus this gospel of God or New Testament is a good story and report, sounded forth into all the world by the apostles, telling of a true David who strove with sin, death, and the devil, and overcame them, and thereby rescued all those who were captive in sin, acted with death, and overpowered by the devil. Without any merit of their own he made them righteous, gave them life, and saved them, so that they were given peace and brought back to God."

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 159. <<det er fullbragt<<, med alt hva det ligger i det.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Guds Sønnns menneskevorden, hans syndfrihet, hans stedfortredende strafflidelse og seierrike oppstandelse – alt dette må være forkynnensens alfa og omega. For i dette, at han tok alt vårt på seg for å kunne gi oss av sitt eget, i dette ligger vår frelse.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Det er ordet om denne fullbrakte frelse som har evne og makt ved Guds Ånd til å skape og tenne troen.

<sup>55</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Utvælgelsen i Kristus* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1978), 15.

are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God's Son – our brother. The sin is atoned! The debt is paid! God has reconciled the world to Himself so he does not charge their trespasses to them.”<sup>56</sup>

This Gospel is “an action that is altogether external to ourselves. Here God acts alone.”<sup>57</sup> Wisløff develops this point by comparing two covenants in the Old Testament. “The Covenant of Sinai was an agreement between God and the people. ... The terms of salvation in the Law are given in order that you may live (*do ut es*’); it amounts to an account of credit and debit; it promises reward as earned. He who *does* it, shall live; but the soul that sins shall die.”<sup>58</sup> On the contrary the covenant that God gave Abraham in Genesis 15:1-6 was not two-sided but was altogether one-sided, a pure assertion from God's side.<sup>59</sup> In the same way the Gospel “is a covenant that God made with Himself in His eternal counsel with the Son, and its actualization in the history of redemption was a divine work which He accomplished alone. None of us was with Him.”<sup>60</sup> Thus in the Gospel there are no terms to agree to but “only an assertion and a message to us about what God did through the Son, and this message will not even *demand* faith, as it will *give* faith.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Det er et ord som forteller at Gud har oppfylt sine løfter om å sende fortapte mennesker en Frelser. Løftene er oppfylt i Jesus Kristus, Guds sønn – vår bror. Synden er sonet! Gjelden betalt! Gud har i Kristus forlikt verden med seg selv så han ikke tilregner dem deres overtredelser.

<sup>57</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 159. Evangeliet er ordet om Guds handling i Kristus, en handling hvor vi er helt utenfor. Her handler Gud alene.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 159-160. Sinai-pakten var en avtale mellom Gud og folket. ... Lovens frelsesvilkår er >>do ut es<<, den går ut på regnskap over gitt og mottatt, den lover lønn som fortjent. Den som *gjør* det, skal leve – men den sjel som synder skal dø.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Den er en pakt som Gud har sluttet med seg selv i sitt evige råd med Sønnen, og dens gjennomføring i frelseshistorien var en gudsgjerning som han gjorde alene. Ingen av oss var med ham.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Nei, her lyder bare et tilsagn og et budskap til oss om det Gud gjorde i Sønnen, - og dette budskap vil ikke så meget *kreve* tro som det vil *gi* tro. This statement is a quote by Wisløff from Olav Valen-Sendstad, “Om loven og evangeliet,” *TTK* (1945), 31.

In the preaching intended to kindle faith “we are not to mix any provisos or reservations in the proclamation of the Gospel, when it is addressed to the terrified conscience.”<sup>62</sup> The Law has nothing to say when it comes to justification, but is to be kept completely outside.<sup>63</sup> Those who are terrified are to “hear about the grace and salvation which have been won by God in the saving work of Christ. ... that Jesus died for sinners – not for pious, penitent and contrite sinners, but for actual sinners with evil, cold hearts. He took upon Himself death for us as we were, and He receives us as we are.”<sup>64</sup> However, Wisløff believes that the Law is frequently drawn into the Gospel. It happens when the preacher speaks like this: “You cannot live a perfect life. But God does not require that either. God requires only one thing, namely, that you are to place yourself upon His altar as a whole offering. He expects only that you completely surrender to Him, etc.”<sup>65</sup> Wisløff concludes that “this is a completely confusing way of speaking, that is only apt to lead souls astray.”<sup>66</sup>

What has happened? The Law has been nullified and the Gospel has been done away with, for it has now become a minimum of the Law being leveled down to something we can manage with faith as surrender to God.<sup>67</sup> The Law also appears in a new form requiring full surrender “and so at last this ‘reduced’ Law (which in reality is nothing but the requirement of

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Derfor skel det ikke blandes noe forbehold og reservesjoner inn i forkynnelsen av evangeliet, når adressen er den forferdede samvittighet.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. De forferdede samvittigheter skal få høre om den nåde og frelse som er vunnet av Gud i Kristi frelsesverk. De skal få høre at Jesus døde for syndere – ikke for fromme, botferdige og angergivne syndere, men for virkelige syndere med onde, kolde hjerter. Han gikk i døden for oss slik som vi var, og tar imot oss slik som vi er.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 161. <<Du kan ikke leve et fullkomment liv. Men det krever ikke Gud av deg heller. Gud krever bare en ting, nemlig at du nå skal legge deg på hans alter som et helt offer – han venter bare at du skal overgi deg helt til ham, osv.>>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Dette er en fullstendig forvirrende tale, som bare er egnet til å føre sjelene vill.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

the Law) is made into a Gospel” so that “the Gospel says now: Surrender to God!”<sup>68</sup> In summary Wisløff says, “the Gospel cannot be misinterpreted in a much worse way,” which can basically only “create self-righteous hearts which imagine they have managed ‘the surrender’ as they should, or produce the deepest despair in those who, in the light of the Spirit, have come to see that they are entirely incapable of complete surrender to God.”<sup>69</sup>

The Gospel has no demands, no reservations such as “if you will be converted, if you surrender yourself completely to God, then God will be gracious and receive you.”<sup>70</sup> In such cases “if the Gospel is surrounded with so many reservations and conditions so that one can no longer see that it is God’s unconditional promise of grace for Jesus’ sake, then one makes the Gospel into a Law.”<sup>71</sup> Rather the Gospel has “only something new and great to tell: Jesus has borne all our sins. He has lived the life we owe God. He has taken our sins upon Himself, in order to give us of His righteousness.”<sup>72</sup> And so we should simply say, “believe in Jesus, God is gracious for His sake!”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Mens loven altså i første omgang ble gjort til intet, så dukker den nå opp igjen i en ny form; den er gjort til et krav om >>full overgivelse<<. Og så er endelig denne >>reduerte<< lov (som jo i virkeligheten bare er lovens krav i en sum!) gjort til et evangelium. Evangeliet heter nå: Overgi deg til Gud!

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 161-162. Dette >> evangelium<< kan neppe utrette annet enn enten å skape selvtrettferdige hjerter som innbilder seg at de har maktet >>overgivelsen<< slik som de skulle, - eller å vekke den dypeste fortvilelse hos dem som i Åndens lys har fått se at de aldeles ikke makter å gi seg helt over til Gud.

<sup>70</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 96. Man må altså ikke *gjøre evangeliet til en lov*. Det er det som skjer når det blir forkynt ensidig i denne toneart. *Dersom* du vil omvende deg, *dersom* du vil overgi deg helt til Gud, så vil Gud være nådig og ta imot deg.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Med andre ord: Hvis evangeliet blir omgitt med så mange forbehold og betingelser at ingen lenger kan se at det er Guds betingelsesløse tilsagn om nåde for Jesu skyld, da gjør man evangeliet til en lov.

<sup>72</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 162. Nei, evangeliet har bare noe nytt og stort å fortelle dem: Jesus har båret alle våre synder. Han har levet det liv vi skylder Gud å leve. Han har tatt vår synd på seg, for å kunne gi oss av sin rettferdighet.

<sup>73</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 96. En skulle heller si: Tro på Jesus, Gud er jo nådig for hans skyld!

Wisløff also expresses concern that these truths not be presented as steps in a psychological order of salvation as if they only belong to a certain period of the Christian life which is another way that the preaching of salvation can become a new Law.<sup>74</sup> Experiences vary and “we have no right to set up a norm that is to apply to all conversions.”<sup>75</sup> The truths of Law and Gospel apply to the newly converted and the experienced Christian alike. Also “just because the Gospel is such a declaration of grace, it never requires a definite *measure* of contriteness and terror.”<sup>76</sup> For Wisløff makes clear “that the terror in itself is no step on the way home; it is a purely negative presupposition for faith, no positive quality with worth of its own in the eyes of God.”<sup>77</sup> Since Jesus died for sinners, “no ‘ifs’ or ‘buts’ are to be mixed with the preaching of the Gospel that sounds out to the lost.”<sup>78</sup>

Since Jesus Christ died for real sinners as they are, “there are no human circumstances, however grave, difficult or full of sin they may be, where we cannot through the word of preaching bring Christ.”<sup>79</sup> Wisløff says that “we cannot commit any greater error in our sermon than to preach so that sinners flee, and the pious remain. He (Jesus) would rather have the reverse.”<sup>80</sup> In the way of the Gospel Wisløff states that “Christ should walk among sinful people with His life-giving Word. And so it is our task as preachers to pray for that heartfelt

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<sup>74</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 162.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Vi har ingen rett til å oppstille en norm som skal være gyldig for alles omvendelse.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 163. Men nettopp fordi evangeliet er et slikt nådetilsagn, krever det aldri et bestemt mål av sønderknuselse og forferdelse.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Vi har jo ovenfor prøvd å gjøre klart at forferdelsen i seg selv aldeles ikke er noe første skritt på veien hjemover; den er en rent negativ forutsetning for troen, ingen positiv egenskap med egenverdi i Guds øyne.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Ingen >>dersom<< og >>hvis<< skal blandes inn i forkynnelsen av det evangelium som lyder til fortapte.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Det finnes ingen menneskelige forhold, hvor tunge, vanskelige og fulle av synd de enn måtte være, hvor vi ikke ved forkynnelseens ord kan føre Kristus inn.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Vi kan ikke gjøre verre feil med vår preken enn om vi forkynner slik at synderne flykter, og de meget fromme blir. Han vil heller ha det omvendt.

love to all people which makes it possible for them to recognize, in our sermon, the voice of the good shepherd. Christ's love to sinners is limitless."<sup>81</sup> In a later chapter we will consider the role of the means of grace in creating and kindling faith.

### The Object and Content of Faith

Wisløff uses several different expressions when he speaks about that which faith trusts in. At the heart of all of them is Christ and His saving work, which constitutes the Gospel. "Faith that is nothing other than trust in that what God says about Jesus' work of salvation is *true* (Romans 10:17). Faith clings to Jesus."<sup>82</sup> Faith is that which "holds to the old Gospel."<sup>83</sup> "Faith is trust in God and His promises."<sup>84</sup> "Faith looks to Jesus" and to "Jesus and His promises."<sup>85</sup> "Faith is only *trust in God's grace*."<sup>86</sup> "Faith is only trust in God's promise."<sup>87</sup> "God has done everything in Christ. We shall only believe it – trust in His word regarding it."<sup>88</sup> "The Gospel is the announcement that *Jesus* has fulfilled all conditions. Faith is only trust in this fact."<sup>89</sup> "For when we say faith *alone*, then it is clear what we mean: We think

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 164. Blant syndige mennesker skal Kristus gå med sitt livgivende ord. Og så er det vår oppgave som predikanter å be om den innerlige kjærlighet til alle mennesker, som gjør det mulig for dem i vår preken å kjenne røsten fra den gode byrde. Kristi kjærlighet til syndere er uten ende.

<sup>82</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 88. ... en tro som ikke er noe annet enn tillit til at det Gud sier om Jesu frelsesverk er *sant*. Rom. 10, 17. Troen henger seg fast ved Jesus.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 83. ... den tro som holder seg til det gamle evangelium, ...

<sup>84</sup> Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (1983), 263. Tro er tillit til Gud og hans løfter.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 264. Troen ser på Jesus. ... Jesus og hans løfter!

<sup>86</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide...* (1945), 10. Troen er bare *tillit til Guds nåde*.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 11. Troen er bare tillit til Guds løfte.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Gud har gjort alt i Kristus. Vi skal bare tro det – lite på hans ord om det.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet er bekjentgjørelsen av at *Jesus* har oppfylt alle betingelser. Troen er bare tillit til dette faktum.

then on the faith that is nothing other than trust in the Gospel of God's undeserved grace for Jesus' sake."<sup>90</sup>

This is in contrast to faith trusting in anything else including itself. "Faith builds on Jesus and His salvation work for us, not on itself. A Christian does not believe in his own faith, but in Jesus."<sup>91</sup> Wisløff refers to Peter in Matthew 14 and points out that it was Peter's look at Jesus that was faith. "The secret in the life of faith is Jesus Christ Himself. To be a believer does not mean to believe in oneself, or one's own conversion."<sup>92</sup>

### The Function of Faith

What role does faith have? Wisløff states that faith does not save. When pointing out that the Bible says we are saved by grace through faith, he calls our attention to the prepositions used. "*It does not say through grace, by faith! i.e. It is in reality not faith that saves – it is grace that saves! Faith is only the empty hand that receives.* The Gospel proclaims that God is reconciled in Christ – faith stands on it. *By grace – through faith.*"<sup>93</sup> For Wisløff faith has an instrumental role as a receiving means. He teaches that "in justification, *faith* has the role of being a *means*. That is not to understand that faith is the basis for justification. Faith is only an empty hand, that receives the gift. We are not justified

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 16. For når vi sier troen alene, da er det klart hva vi mener: Vi tenker da på den tro som ikke er noe annet nn tillit til evangeliet om Guds uforskylte nåde for Jesu skyld.

<sup>91</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Troen tror ikke på seg selv," *Sambandet* no. 25 (1960). Troen bygger på Jesus og hans frelsesverk for oss, ikke på seg selv. En kristen tror ikke på sin egen tro, men Jesus.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Hemmeligheten i troens liv er Jesus Kristus selv. Å være en troende vil ikke si å tro på seg selv, eller sin egen omvendelse.

<sup>93</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide...*(1945), 11-12. Det står ikke ved nåde, av tro! Dvs.:*Der er grunnen ikke troen som frelser – det er nådensom frelser! Troen er bare den tomme hånd, som tar imot.* Evangeliet forkynner at Gud er forsonet i Kristus – troen stoler på det. *Av nåde – Ved tro.*

on the basis of our faith, but through our faith.”<sup>94</sup> In order to make clear the relationship between Christ and faith, i.e, that faith is not a cause for salvation but only a means, the empty hand that receives salvation’s gift, Wisløff notes that the reformers “formulated the expression ‘saved by grace through faith; for Christ’s sake – through faith; *propter* Christum – *per* fidem.”<sup>95</sup>

In light of faith not being the cause of our salvation, Wisløff says it is quite natural for the question of predestination to arise. He summarizes that “it was Luther’s conviction that God from eternity had predestined to salvation those He had chosen. Melanchthon also had the same view at the beginning. Both taught that the person had a bound will, and that it is God’s Word and God’s Spirit who works repentance and faith.”<sup>96</sup> However, it must be noted that “later Melanchthon changed his teaching on these things; he taught that in spite of the fall into sin the person had a certain ability to make himself ready to receive grace. The person’s own will played a role in conversion.”<sup>97</sup> As a result, conflicts arose within Lutheranism and “Article XI in the *Formula of Concord* was written to put an end to the conflict, but the expressions that are used here are explained in different ways.”<sup>98</sup> Wisløff thinks that it is clear

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<sup>94</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 104-105. *Troen* har under rettferdiggjørelsen den rolle å være et *middel*. Det er ikke slik å forstå at troen er grunnlaget for rettferdiggjørelsen. Troen er bare en tom hånd, som tar imot gaven. Vi blir ikke rettferdiggjort *på grunn av vår tro, men ved* vår tro.

<sup>95</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfunn*, 58. For å klargjøre dette forhold mellom Knstus og troen, formulerte reformatorene uttrykket <<frelse av nåde – ved tro; for Kristi skyld – ved troen; *propter* Christum – *per* fidem>>.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Det var Luthers overbevisning at Gud fra evighet hadde forutbestemt til frelse dem han hadde utvalt. Det samme syn hadde også Melanchthon i begynnelsen. Begge lærte at mennesket hadde en bunden vilje, og at det er Guds ord og Guds And som virker omvendelse og tro.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Senere forandret Melanchthon sin lære om disse ting; han lærte at mennesket tross syndefallet hadde en viss evne til å gjøre seg rede til å ta imot nåden. Menneskets egen vilje spilte også en rolle i omvendelsen.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Artikkelen 11 i Konkordieformelen er skrevet for å gjøre slutt på striden, men uttrykkene som er brukt her, er blitt tolket i forskjellige retninger.

that since that time “the teaching of predestination has been distinguished as a Reformed understanding; Lutheranism does not teach predestination. Nevertheless in the Lutheran Church there are still found various understandings on this point.”<sup>99</sup>

Wisløff himself uses God’s election of Abraham and the people of Israel as the most characteristic expression in the Old Testament that it is “God’s free, sovereign grace, that saves the person without any assistance from his side, - alone through faith.”<sup>100</sup> He also rejoices in the doctrine, not because he understands it, but because “it is so infinitely great for my heart and my life of faith to think that God has chosen *sinner*s to salvation with Himself.”<sup>101</sup> When a person realizes that they are lost and under God’s wrath, “then he understands that what is decisive for his salvation is not if *he* will, but if *God* will. ... *That* is the natural question and the correct starting point.”<sup>102</sup> Wisløff understands the election to be an election in *Christ*. “It is Christ who is chosen. God has chosen His Son, Jesus Christ, to save all who believe. ... He chose Jesus Christ as the way of salvation.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. Et er likevel klart nok at siden den tid har predestinasjonslæren vært ansett som en reformert oppfatning; lutherdommen lærer ikke predestinasjon. I den lutherske kirke finnes likevel fremdeles varierende oppfatninger på dette punkt. When Wisløff says that Lutheranism does not teach predestination, it would seem from the context that he means that predestination is not taught by Lutherans in the same way as by the Reformed nor does it have the same role in Lutheran theology as it does in Reformed theology.

<sup>100</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide...* (1945), 7. Den forkynner over alt Guds frie, suverene nåde, som frelser mennesket uten noen assistanse fra dets side, - alene ved troen. Det mest karakteristiske uttrykk for dette i det Gamle Testamente – for å nevne noen ganske få ord om det først – er *utvelgelsestanken*. Gud hadde utvalgt Abraham, og etter ham Israels folk, bare av sin frie nåde.

<sup>101</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Utvelgelsen i Kristus*, 11. Det er så uendelig stort for mitt hjerte og mitt trosliv å tenke på at Gud har utvalgt syndere til salighet hos seg.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 13. Da skjønner hån at det avgjørende for hans frelse ikke er om *han* vil, men om *Gud* vil. ... *Det* er det naturlige spørsmål og det rette utgangspunkt.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 17-18. Det er Kristus som er utvalgt. Gud har utvalgt sin Sønn, Jesus Kristus, til frelse for alle som tror. ... han valgte Jesus Kristus som vei til frelse.

That raises the question of how this is carried out or how can one know if one is chosen. On the basis of 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Wisløff points out that Paul speaks of the readers as chosen. “Why does Paul believe that they are chosen, what does he build this assurance on? The answer is that he sees that they have heard the Gospel, and received it.”<sup>104</sup> For Wisløff one can have assurance of his being chosen, because “he who believes the Gospel of Jesus, he believes at the same time his election. The Gospel’s call of grace is at the same time God’s call, the fulfillment of His eternal purpose of wanting to save him who believes in Jesus.”<sup>105</sup>

Wisløff does not speak of faith as a condition for salvation in the same way as “If you keep the commandments, you will be saved.” In response to those who want to put Romans 10:9 (“if you believe in your heart, then you will be saved”) in the category of the commandments, he replies that in the case of the commandments you are speaking about an actual condition; “if you keep the commandments exactly, you will be saved. But no person has yet fulfilled the condition.”<sup>106</sup> However, in the passage in Romans it is not a condition, but rather the meaning is “You are saved in this way; that you believe in Jesus.”<sup>107</sup> He illustrates the point by comparing two sentences. “‘If you work, you will receive wages,’ and

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 20. Hvorfor tror Paulus at de er utvalgt, hva bygger han denne visshet på? Svaret er: Han ser at de har hørt evangeliet og tatt imot det.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 20. Hvordan kan jeg tro så stor en sak som at Gud har utvalgt meg? Hvordan kan jeg få visshet i så opphøyet en sak? Vi har funnet svaret: Den som tror evangeliet om Jesus, han tror samtidig sin utvelgelse. Evangeliets nådekall er Guds kall, virkeliggjørelsen av hans evige forsett om å ville frelse den som tror på Jesus.

<sup>106</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 105. Når det står i Rom. 10, 9 at <<dersom du i ditt hjerte tror, så skal du bli frelst,>> så må vi ikke oppfatte dette ordet på samme måten som når det heter: <<Dersom du holder budene, skal du bli frelst.>> I siste tilfellet er det tale om en virkelig betingelse; hvis du holder budene til punkt og prikke, skal du bli frelst. Men den betingelsen har ennå intet menneske oppfylt.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. I førstnevnte tilfelle er det derimot ingen betingelse vi har for oss; meningen er bare: <<Frelst blir du på den måten at du tror på Jesus.>>

‘If you drink water, you will not thirst.’ In the first of these sentences there is the thought of a contribution, a condition. In the other sentence it is different, there nothing is said but: You will not be thirsty when you drink water.”<sup>108</sup> This would have the meaning that faith is not to be preached in any way as a condition that needs to be met. Faith is not the fulfillment of any conditions to be saved. There are those who “think that the Gospel is the announcement of God’s conditions in order to be gracious, and that faith is the fulfillment of these conditions. But that is as wrong as it can be!”<sup>109</sup>

What about speaking of faith as the subjective basis for salvation? In this regard, Wisløff sets forth the situation. “Is there found also some subjective basis, something in me, that God must see before He will forgive? We think immediately about faith. We must believe – perhaps faith then is the subjective condition for salvation – just as Christ’s atonement is the objective?”<sup>110</sup> In answering this question, Wisløff resources himself with material from Erik Pontoppidan’s *Troens Speil (The Mirror of Faith)*. “Faith is the sure distinguishing sign of a child of God. Not so that it is any active cause for our salvation. The cause is Christ alone and His merit. But it is the presupposition for being God’s child. It is the means, whereby Christ is grasped and embraced.”<sup>111</sup> Therefore Wisløff comments “faith

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. Det er en lignende forskjell som mellom disse to setninger: <<Dersom du arbeider, får du lønn,>> - og: <<Dersom du drikker vann, blir du utørst.>> I den første av disse setningene tenkes det på en ytelse, en betingelse. I den andre setningen er det annerledes, der sies bare: Utørst blir du på den måten at du drikker vann.

<sup>109</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide...*(1945), 11. De tenker seg at evangeliet er bekjentgjørelsen av Guds betingelser for å være nådig, og at troen så er oppfyllelsen av disse betingelser. Men det er så galt som det kan bli!

<sup>110</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *I Jesu navn* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1972), 34. Finnes det også noen subjektiv grunn, noe i meg som Gud må se før han vil tilgi? Vi tenker jo straks på troen. Vi må jo tro – kanskje troen da er den subjektive betingelse for frelsen – akkurat som Kristi forsoning er den objektive?

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Troen er det usvikelige rette kjennetegn på Guds barn. Ikke slik at den er noen virkende årsak til vår salighet. Årsaken er alene Kristus og hans fortjeneste. Men den er forutsetningen for å være Guds barn. Den er det middel, hvormed Kristus gripes og favnes.

is not the basis for my salvation, it is the empty hand that receives salvation. Faith He Himself worked in me through His Holy Spirit when I heard the Word, the Word that Jesus died for me – such that the heart trusts in Him and grasps Him as the only refuge.”<sup>112</sup> Even though no one is saved without faith, it is to be maintained that it is Jesus who saves. Faith is the empty hand that receives the gift.

In his *Martin Luthers teologi* Wisløff has noted that Luther believed that “through faith in Christ a person is born anew. ‘Faith in the Word of God is the new birth.’”<sup>113</sup> Luther also states, “he who believes in Christ, that he was born, died, and buried for us, but rose again from the dead, he is born anew.”<sup>114</sup> And in his introduction to the epistle to the Romans, Luther says, “Faith however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1[:12-13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly.”<sup>115</sup> For Wisløff faith brings the Holy Spirit with and so the Holy Spirit creates a heart full of desire to do good works, freedom from the Law’s demands, and in this way the good works spring forth from faith.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Troen er ikke grunnlaget for min frelse, den er den tomme hånd som tar imot frelsen. Troen virket han selv i meg ved sin And da jeg fikk høre Ordet, Ordet om at Jesus er død for meg slik at hjertet fattet tillit til ham og grep om ham som den eneste tilflukt.

<sup>113</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 100. Men ved troen på Kristus er et menneske født på ny . <<Troen på ordet er den nye fødsel.>> WA 29, 387.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. <<Den som tror på Kristus, at han er født, død og begravet for oss, men igjen oppstått fra de døde , han er født på nytt.>> WA 47, 14.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. This translation is from *Prefaces To The New Testament* (1545[1522]) AE 35:370.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 100-101.

## The Confusion of Faith

Wisløff discusses many different ways that faith is confused, which are ultimately confusions of Law and Gospel. Things slip into faith that put it into the way of the Law. Faith is not to be confused with repentance.<sup>117</sup> Wisløff points out that under the preaching of the Law “there is awakened contrition, the terror of conscience. Repentance and faith belong together in conversion, and yet each stands in its own context.”<sup>118</sup> This is the same as to distinguish between Law and Gospel. In the Law-repentance side of things there is the realization of separation from God, and the anguish of conscience in the unrepentant which is in reality a death before God without a germ of life.<sup>119</sup> The effects of the preaching of the Law, in the case of the unconverted, such as a troubled conscience, are not to be interpreted as being in a state of grace, a sign that all is well, but an indication that God is working.<sup>120</sup>

Wisløff strongly emphasizes that the preaching of the Law unto repentance must say, “You must repent! You have the responsibility for the salvation of your soul!”<sup>121</sup> Here “the *choice* of conversion must be emphasized; the soul must be confronted with the truth that God’s wrath rests upon him who will not believe the Son (John 3:36).”<sup>122</sup> At the same time together with this word of the Law, the Gospel is to be preached for all things are ready. Therefore, “we are to invite all people to come, and the invitation is based on the foundation

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<sup>117</sup> Repentance is being used here in the narrow sense of contrition.

<sup>118</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 151. Under denne erfaring av Guds nærhet i loven vekkes angeren, samvittighetens forferdelse. Anger og tro hører sammen i omvendelsen, men likevel står de i hver sin sammenheng.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 151-152.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 152. Du må omvende deg! Du har ansvaret for din sjels frelse!

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Omvendelsens *valg* må betones, sjelen må stilles overfor den sannhet at Guds vrede blir over den som ikke vil tro Sønnen. Johs. 3,36.

that is laid by the saving death and resurrection of Jesus. ... The souls are to be directed to Jesus' finished work and to nothing else."<sup>123</sup>

Wisløff underscores this emphasis "for it happens that the preacher becomes so filled with zeal for the 'purely passive' character of the orthodox doctrine that he dare not direct an earnest appeal to people that they must be converted."<sup>124</sup> However, at the same time he says, "It is true that the work is God's alone: 'I am converted since God converts me' (Jer. 17:14). But the point must be reached where man makes his decision. It is possible to become so afraid of 'psychologizing' that one forgets that the person has a psyche, and such exaggerated fear can be noted in the sermons of some preachers today. The absolute view of God's solo-work and our total impotence are sometimes emphasized so much that the struggling and striving person with his responsibility to God disappears."<sup>125</sup>

Wisløff recognizes that the required presence of an appeal in the sermon brings with it the danger "that some preachers give the impression of intending that the 'appeal' is *Gospel* in the proper meaning of the word," so that "You must repent, you must make up your mind, is regarded by some as *Gospel*."<sup>126</sup> This he regards as a fatal misunderstanding, for the appeal

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 152-153. Vi innbyr alle til å komme, og innbydelsen skjer på den grunn som er lagt ved Jesu frelsende død og oppstandelse. ... Sjelene skal vises til Jesu fullbrakte verk og ikke noe annet.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 153. Det er grunn til å understreke dette, for det hender nok at predikanten blir så fylt av nidkjærhet for den ortodokse læres >>pure passive<<, at han ikke tør rette en inntrengende appell til folk om at de må omvende seg.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Det er sant at verket er Guds alene: Jeg blir omvendt idet Gud omvender meg. Jer. 17,14. Men det må dog komme til det punkt. At et menneske tar sin bestemmelse. Man kan bli så redd for >>psykologisering<< at man glemmer at mennesket har en psyke, og det kan merkes en slik overdreven redsel i en del predikanter forkynnelse i dag. De absolutte synspunkter på Guds alene-virken og vår totale avmakt blir stundom gitt en slik betoning at det kjempende og stridende menneske med dets ansvar for Gud blir aldeles borte.

<sup>126</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Forkynnelsen og noen ord om de krav som må stilles til den* (Oslo: Norges Kristelige Studentlag, 1944), 11. Det betenkelige er imidlertid at somme predikanter gir inntrykk av å mene at <<appellen>> er *evangelium* i ordets egentlige forstand. Selve dette ord: Du må omvende deg – du må bestemme deg, det betraktes av somme som *evangelium*.

that demands repentance, surrender, a decision, etc., belongs to the Law.<sup>127</sup> “The Gospel demands nothing, the Gospel is only an invitation and a promise that does not demand but creates faith.”<sup>128</sup>

The preacher who considers such demands as Gospel has an optimistic view of human nature and openly assumes that he is speaking to people who are not in themselves dead to all good and in a position “to believe in Jesus or come to Him.”<sup>129</sup> He further assumes that they are sick and need medicine thus making sin a weakness, a sickness, and grace an impulse, a power, a medicine.<sup>130</sup> This stands in conflict with the reformers who agreed that “people are dead, and grace is no medicine, for such does not benefit dead people. Grace is nothing other than God’s favor for Jesus’ sake, God justifies the ungodly, he makes the dead living. *Gratia non medicina sed favor.*”<sup>131</sup> Wisløff is thus speaking against infused grace or an understanding of prevenient grace that runs the way of grace as a power enabling the person to fulfill the demands.<sup>132</sup> He never uses the expression prevenient grace. He did not see it as a

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet krever intet, evangeliet er bare en innbydelse og et løfte, som ikke krever men *skaper* tro.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. He points out that “the reformers were clear that reason is blind and that the will is bound in sin.” See page 10.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Den reformatorene slo fast: Menneskene er døde, og nåden er ingen medisin, slikt nytter ikke på døde folk, nåden er intet annet enn Guds yndest for Jesu skyld, Gud rettfærdiggjør den ugudelige, han gjør de døde levende. *Gratia non medicina sed favor.*

<sup>132</sup> Gisle Johnson taught that it was necessary in order for conversion to take place the heart’s natural opposition must be removed through preparing grace. The goal of this preparing grace is to liberate the sinner’s will from this opposition which puts him in a position to freely choose between opposition and non-opposition and this makes it possible for him to allow himself to be directed by converting grace. Gisle Johnson, *Grundrids af den systematiske theologie*, 99-100. Denne forberedende Naades Maal kan da nærmere bestemt, væsentlig kan være dets at frigjøre Synderens Vilje fra hin Modstandens Naturnødvendighed, at sætte ham i Stand til med Frihed at vælge mellem Modstand og Ikkemodstand og saaledes gjøre det subjektivt muligt for ham at lade sig bestemme af den omvendende Naade.

helpful way of speaking because it sounded too much like infused grace.<sup>133</sup>

In this connection he remarks that “the reformers discussed *facultas applicandi se ad gratiam*, the ability to prepare oneself or bring oneself to grace.”<sup>134</sup> They did not find any such ability in us as the preaching today seems to have found, and as did Erasmus. Our Church’s Confessions say no. “The person has a free will to do the Law’s outward works, but not to fear God and believe in Him.”<sup>135</sup> Those who preach assuming that one has such a *facultas* so that one must do *quod est in se*, what is in their power, produce hearers who are doing but have not yet reached it, or self-satisfied people who think they have arrived, both types without Christ.<sup>136</sup>

Wisløff believes that preaching and the appeal can also be adversely impacted by psychologizing. This happens when the person becomes central in the preaching and “we get a description of how the awakened person has it, what he feels in the hour of conversion, etc. During this the hearer sits and feels his pulse, this I know, but this I do not know.”<sup>137</sup> He concludes that perhaps in a somewhat over-generalized way “*the psychological preaching and the preaching which emphasizes the will have created a centering on the ego, that can remind*

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<sup>133</sup> From a personal conversation.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 12. Reformatorene drøftet <<*facultas applicandi se ad gratiam*>>, evnen til å berede seg eller nærme seg til nåden. See Pieper 1:542-543.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Men vår kirkes bekjennelse sier nei. Mennesket har fri vilje som kan gjøre lovens utvortes gjerninger, men ikke til å frykte Gud og tro på ham.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 13. A fristes forkynneren nesten over evne til å la mennesket være centrum i forkynnelsen. Vi får beskrivelsen av hvordan det vakte menneske har det, hva han føler i omvendelsens stund o.s.v. Under dette sitter så tilhørerne og føler seg selv på pulsen, ette kjenner jeg igjen, men dette kjenner jeg ikke gjen.

*one of pietism's repentance-struggle and self-examination in the weakest form but without its ethical seriousness.*"<sup>138</sup> In such preaching neither Law nor Gospel are delivered forth clearly.

What does Wisløff mean by choice and decision? In some cases he puts it in the form of a decision whereby one decides that "now I will be a believing Christian."<sup>139</sup> What he means does not seem to be clearly spelled out. It appears to involve the surrender of the will. Along with this, is perhaps the decision to capitulate and accept the judgement of God's Law against him, to stop debating, and close the mouth before God as a lost and damned sinner. It is clear that this all belongs in the way of the Law. Immediately after the emphasis on choice, he states, "we should not make the 'surrender' of the will into a saving act" or as "the central element in the whole conversion."<sup>140</sup> Wisløff explains it as follows:

The simple fact is that the fallen man's will cannot bring about its own transformation, bound in sin as it is. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Christ or come to Him." True enough, the awakened person makes his own resolution; yes, he makes many resolutions. This whole spiritual condition is marked by the fact that the person "would gladly be helped," as Luther says. We should rejoice over every good resolution, and the preaching must know these experiences and be able to describe them. But, we should not speak as if this decision of the will and this contrition are already faith itself. Contrition is "*passiva contritio*," it is an experience of God's wrath over sin. And it is not in the power of man himself to create faith. More important than to call for decision in conversion is to be able to proclaim the "other" word, which can create and kindle faith in the heart: The word of salvation in Jesus Christ, the word which our evangelical fathers praised as "many thousand times higher than the Law."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Men jeg tenker somme tider, at *den psykologiske og viljesbetonte forkynnelse har skapt en centrering om jeget, som kan minne om pietismens botskamp og selvransakelse i dens svakeste form, men uten å eie dens etiske alvor.*

<sup>139</sup> Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (1983), 174. En kunne nok ta en beslutning og si: Nå vil jeg være en troende kristen.

<sup>140</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 153. Nå skal vi på den annen side ikke gjøre viljens >>overgivelse til en frelsende gjelling. Det er grøfter på begge sider av veien, og om det er noen som glemmer å tale om menneskets ansvar, så er det på den annen side kanskje enda flere som preker som om min viljes avgjørelse er det sentrale i hele omvendelsen.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 153-154. Saken er jo ganske enkelt den, at det falne menneskes vilje ikke kan gjennomføre sin egen forvandling – bundet i synden som den er. >>Jeg tror at jeg ikke av egen fornuft eller kraft kan tro på Kristus eller komme til ham >>. Sant nok, den vakte tar sin beslutning – ja, han tar mange beslutninger. Hele denne åndelige tilstand er kjenne-

It seems clear that Wisløff considers the choice, decision, and the surrender, to belong to the work and effect of the Law, and that they need to be clearly distinguished from faith.<sup>142</sup> If this distinction is not made, faith will be confused and go in the way of the Law. He says in another place that “saving faith is not a decision of the will that I make, even though a decision of the will also belongs with it. No one is saved unless he makes a decision. But the decision of the will cannot save any person, such as we saw with Cornelius, but there must come something that must save him – the word through which he shall be saved. Faith is nothing but than trust, trust in God’s grace in Jesus Christ.”<sup>143</sup> There is no evidence to support the conclusion that Wisløff believes that through the hearing of the Gospel, or through the working of prevenient grace, man’s will is liberated enough to enable him, prior to conversion, to use grace to decide or choose to believe.

Wisløff calls this situation a paradox that appears to be a contradiction. For we are to call people to a decision and at the same time proclaim the Gospel that says that God saves sinners only.<sup>144</sup> We should not attempt to harmonize this into a system, which would be the

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tegnert ved at mennesket >>vil gjerne bli hjulpet<<, som Luther sier. Vi skal glede oss over enhver god beslutning, og forkynnelsen må kjenne disse erfaringer og kunne skildre dem. Men vi skal ikke tale som om denne viljesavgjørelse og denne anger allerede er selve troen. Angeren er >>passiva contritio<<, den er en erfaring av Guds vrede over synden. Og troen står det ikke i menneskets makt å vekke selv. Viktigere enda enn å kalle til omvendelsens valg er det derfor å kunne forkynne det <<andre << ordet, som kan skape og tenne troen i hjertet: Ordet om frelsen i Jesus Kristus, - det ordet som våre evangeliske fedre preste som >>mange tusen ganger høyere enn loven<< (Apol IV, 186ff cf. Schlink p.194ff.)

<sup>142</sup> See also Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 101.

<sup>143</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Dåpen* (1943), 21-22. Den frelsende tro er ikke en viljesbeslutning som jeg gjør, uaktet en viljesbeslutning også hører til. Ingen blir frelst uten at han tar en beslutning. Men en viljesbeslutning kan ikke frelse noe menneske slik som vi så det med Kornelius, men det må komme noen som må frelse ham. - Ord ved hvilket han skulde bli frelst. Troen er ikke noe annet enn tillit, tillit til Guds nåde i Jesus Kristus...

<sup>144</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 154.

worst thing, but rather follow the paradoxical ‘parallel’ relation between the Law and the Gospel which tells us something important about them both. “The Law speaks to us *as if* we had a really free will; it lays the very eternal responsibility for our souls upon ourselves – to show us that we in reality have no freedom, bound in sin as we are. But the Gospel speaks to us as the lost sinners we really are; it does not impose more works upon us, but lays everything on Jesus.”<sup>145</sup> So he concludes: “both parts are to be preached: Both our responsibility, the choice, and the surrender to God; and the word of grace which declares the forgiveness of sins to lost helpless sinners.”<sup>146</sup>

Faith is not to be confused with awakening. We have already briefly alluded to this, but Wisløff’s emphasis on awakening deserves a more extensive treatment. First we must consider what he means by awakening. In his book on preaching he has a chapter entitled “Preaching for Awakening and Conversion.” There he sets forth the chief elements for this preaching as being defined in the *Augsburg Confession* Article XII: “Properly speaking, repentance consists of these two parts: one is contrition, that is, *terror* smiting the conscience with a knowledge of sin, and the other is *faith*, which is born of the Gospel or of absolution,

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 155. Dette paradoksale >> parallelle<< forhold mellom loven og evangeliet sier oss nemlig noe avgjørende viktig om dem begge. Loven taler nemlig til oss *som om* vi hadde en virkelig fri vilje, den legger selve evighetens ansvar for vår sjel inn på oss – for å vise oss at vi i virkeligheten ingen frihet har, bundet av synden som vi er. Men evangeliet taler til oss som de fortapte syndere vi virkelig er, det legger ingen flere gjerninger inn på oss men legger alt på Jesus. Wisløff references this material to Olav Valen-Sendstad, *Drømmen om den frie vilje* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1939), 125ff. This shows, in part the influence of Valen-Sendstad on Wisløff. Also see Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Schartaus prekener. Forsøk på systematisk oversik, særlig med tanke på forkynnelsen av nådens ording,” *TTK* no. 2-3 (1942), 1-24.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. Så skal begge deler forkynnes: Både vårt ansvar, valget og overgivelsen til Gud – og nådeordet som tilsier fortapte, hjelpeløse mennesker syndenes forlatelse.

believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terror."<sup>147</sup>

Awakening is "when God's Law comes into the conscience and reveals seriously what I am."<sup>148</sup> He says, "I stand before God who knows all things and my eyes turn shamefully down, I see that my sin is great in thoughts, deeds, and word."<sup>149</sup> In awakening one stands before God as a lost sinner, guilty, - for the Law has killed.<sup>150</sup> This is the terror of conscience spoken of in the *Augsburg Confession*. It is God's holy Law that addresses the individual person's conscience. "Either it leads to reckoning and to faith because the Gospel is allowed to come into the conscience so that one is led to rest, to joy through faith in Jesus, or it leads to hardening and damnation."<sup>151</sup>

Wisløff believes that awakening is a good term and that it should be used. It indicates that something is asleep; and what is it that is asleep? The conscience. It needs to come to a realization of God and its condition before Him.<sup>152</sup> He believes that even though Luther did not have a three-fold division of unconverted, awakened or penitent, and believer or

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 147. This citation is from the Tappert edition; the translation of the Latin text, pages 34-35.

<sup>148</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Å være fri* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1980), 8. Og når da Guds lov kommer inn i samvittigheten, så viser det seg først for alvor hva jeg er for en.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 8-9. <<Jeg står for Gud som allting vet og slår mitt øye skamfullt ned, jeg ser min synd at den er stor i tanker, gjerninger og ord.>>

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>151</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Vi må leve i vekkelsen" (95, no. 32, 3 november 1985, *Utsyn*), 7. Enten fører det til oppgjør og til tro fordi evangeliet tar lov til å komme inn i samvittigheten slik at en blir ført til hvile. Til glede ved troen på Jesus, eller også fører det til forherdelse og fortapelse.

<sup>152</sup> Notes from a personal conversation with Wisløff 6/29/90. Wisløff differs from Walther on the meaning of awakening. For Wisløff it is the conscience awakened from sleep, whereas for Walther it is the person awakened from spiritual death. Therefore Walther rejects the usage of the term to describe a person who is not yet a Christian for if you are awakened from the dead you are alive and therefore a believer. See C. F. W. Walther *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928. Thesis XXII, pp. 361-379.

converted, he still reckons with the awakened state,<sup>153</sup> and that “we find *in the New Testament* a spiritual state, where a person has not yet come to faith, but where he has been awakened from the sleep of sin.”<sup>154</sup> So what we have in awakening is “a person who finds himself in that state who is not a believer. But neither is he a sleeping, indifferent sinner. He has been *awakened* to a concern for the salvation of his soul.”<sup>155</sup>

Wisløff agrees that those who are critical of the three-fold division have an element of truth in their criticism. He agrees “that a human being either stands in the state of grace and faith or lives outside of the fellowship with Christ, and it is claimed that here exists no middle state between faith and unbelief where a person can be gradually freed for ‘cooperation’ with the divine grace.”<sup>156</sup> He also concedes that there may be reason to agree with those who are skeptical of the preaching that focuses on this “middle-ground and which more or less counts on the fact that the awakened person in this period is actually set free in his will so that he gradually becomes able to do that which the natural person cannot do: to believe.”<sup>157</sup> Wisløff responds to those who think that we become free and are therefore able to believe by saying

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<sup>153</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 165. Hva det siste angår, så tør det nok være mulig at det ikke hos Luther finnes en tredelt applikasjon i den *form* som ovenfor nevnt. Men derfor er det mulig at han kjenner den samme tanken. Det skulle da heller ikke være vanskelig å se at også Luther regner med den >>vakte<< tilstand (158). He refers to Luther WA 40, I, 1. 528. AE 26:343-345.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 165-166. Og hva mere er: Vi finner i NT en åndelig tilstand, hvor et menneske ennå ikke er kommet til troen, men hvor det dog er vakt opp av syndens søvn. As examples Wisløff names the Philippian jailer and the people at Pentecost.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 166. Et menneske som befinner seg i denne tilstand er ikke en troende. Men han er heller ikke en sovende og likeglad synder. Han er *vakt opp* til bekymring for sin sjels frelse.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 165. Man peker på det faktum, som ingen vil bestride, at et menneske enten står i nådens og troens stand eller lever utenfor samfunnet med Kristus, og man fremhever at det ikke finnes noen mellomtilstand mellom tro og vantro hvor mennesket gradvis kan frigjøres til en >>samvirken<< med den guddommelige nåde.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 166. Det tør også være grunn til å gi de samme teologer rett i deres skepsis overfor en psykologiserende vekkes-forkynnelse, som med forkjærlighet oppholder seg nettopp på dette mellomstadium, og som mer eller mindre klart regner med at den vakte i denne tid faktisk frigjøres i sitt viljesliv så han etter hvert blir i stand til å gjøre det, som det naturlige menneske ikke kan: A tro.

that the actual situation is: “I cannot believe in Christ nor come to Him: it is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel to create faith.”<sup>158</sup>

In spite of these elements of truth in the criticism of the term awakening, Wisløff maintains that “we cannot deny that there exists such an ‘awakened’ condition” as he has defined it.<sup>159</sup> For the Scriptures recognize such a state, even if it lasted but a very short time, and “Christian experience continues to confirm the fact that we have to do with people who no longer sleep in their sins, who have turned to God’s Word and to the flock of believers, but who have not yet come to faith.”<sup>160</sup>

What does Wisløff teach about how we should approach those who are awakened? In the first place, we should not address them as sleeping sinners, for that they are no longer.<sup>161</sup> In the second place, we should not address them as believing Christians, for that they are not yet.<sup>162</sup> In the third place, we “should rather make an effort to show them what takes place when God’s Word awakens the conscience, terrifies with God’s wrath, and invites by His grace. While doing so, the preaching must be able to show *that not all pious intentions are the same as faith, and that not all spiritual activity is the same as the fruit of the Spirit.*”<sup>163</sup> This needs to be heard by all including those who are God’s children. At this point Wisløff is

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. Dette er en fortegnning av det virkelige forhold. Jeg kan ikke tro på Kristus eller komme til ham, det er den Hellige Ånds gjerning ved evangeliet å skape troen.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Men noe helt annet er det likevel å ville nekte at det finnes en slik >>vekt<< tilstand.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Skriften kjenner en slik tilstand, selv om den i de tilfelle som der er nevnt bare varte en meget kort stund, og den kristelige erfaring bekrefter jo til stadighet at vi har med mennesker å gjøre som ikke lenger sover i synden, som har vendt seg til Guds ord og de troendes flokk, men som ennå ikke er kommet frem til troen.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 166-167. En skal heller legge an på å vise hva det er som skjer når Guds ord vekker opp samvittigheten, forferder den med sin vrede og kaller med sin nåde. Forkynnelsen må under dette kunne vise *at ikke alle fromme forsetter er det samme som troen, og at ikke all åndelig aktivitet er det samme som Andens frukt.*

critical of “that preaching which with dogmatic correctness stares blindly at the bondage of the will under sin, and which is so fearful of ‘psychologizing’ that it forgets that man has a psyche” and is therefore “poorly fitted to help people in their spiritual distress.”<sup>164</sup>

### The Marks of True Faith

Wisløff believes that the sermon should be clear on the necessity of conversion in such a manner that the hearer knows that no one can see the kingdom of God without repentance and faith. The preacher must point out the division that exists between faith and unbelief, between saved and unsaved. That raises the question “as to what extent the preaching shall point out certain *characteristics* of the difference between a true and a false faith.”<sup>165</sup> He points out that this has been a matter of much debate among the pietists and evangelicals.<sup>166</sup> “The Pietists preached about faith’s marks. The evangelicals preached about faith’s basis. The former read mostly Francke and Johann Arndt. But the later read mostly Luther and Rosenius.”<sup>167</sup>

Wisløff establishes at the outset that “it should remain fixed that the anxious soul should not be directed to self-examination and struggle in prayer, but to the Word and

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 167. Den forkynnelse som i dogmatisk korrekthet stirrer seg blind på viljens bundethet under synden, og som er så redd for >>psykologisering<< at den glemmer at mennesket dog har en psyke, den er meget lite i stand til å hjelpe mennesker i deres åndelige nød.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. Når prekenen skal trekke opp skillet mellom tro og vantro, vil det straks bli spørsmål om hvorvidt forkynnelsen skal angi visse *kjennetegn* på forskjellen mellom en sann og en falsk tro.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. He compares the approaches of Fresenius’ *Beicht und Communionbuch* and Pontoppidan’s *Troen Speil* with Zinzendorff’s position. Wisløff is not using the term evangelicals in the modern sense, but rather to refer to the Rosenian tradition.

<sup>167</sup> Wisløff, *Forkynnelsen* (1944), 4. Pietistene forkynte om troens kjennetegn. De evang. om troens grunn. De gamle leste mest Francke og Johan Arndt. Men de evang. leste mest Luther og Rosenius.

sacrament; to the completed salvation. This must be the main rule in preaching and soul care.”<sup>168</sup> He concludes that a focus on a “detailed description of how the awakened and struggling soul feels, and must feel, will easily become a torture for the honest soul who cannot ‘get it to work that way,’ and a temptation to spiritual dishonesty for the one who works with himself until he gets everything to come out right.”<sup>169</sup> A second and even worse result is that “such an interest in one’s own soul life will easily turn the eyes away from the fountain of grace, where spiritual life has its source.”<sup>170</sup>

Regardless of these potential problems Wisløff argues that there are certain truths that cannot be disregarded. The New Testament itself, in particular 1 John, gives “decisive features which make perfectly plain by what the true faith can be recognized, thereby it is said that these marks are given to us as part of the Christian message.”<sup>171</sup> What Wisløff has in mind he does not spell out in greater detail. A second reason given for preaching the marks of

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<sup>168</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 168. Rent dogmatisk sett bør det stå fast at den bekymrede sjel ikke skal vises til selvprøvelse og bønnekamp, men til ord og sakrament – til den fullbragte frelse. Dette må også være en hovedregel i preken og sjelesorg.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. En altfor detaljert beskrivelse av hvordan den vakke og kjempende sjel føler det – og må føle det – vil lett bli en pine for den redelige som ikke >>får det til slik<<, og en fristelse til åndelig usannhet for den som arbeider med seg selv inntil han får alt til å klaffe. In a footnote to this point Wisløff gives an example of this from Fresenius’ *Beicht und Kommunionbuch* <<Man geht da in sein Kämmerlein, wie der Heiland den Rat erteilt Math. 6, 6, oder wo man sonst allein mit Gott reden kann, beugt vor ihm seine Knie und schreit aus allen Kräften um Gnade, - - Dieses Gebet tut man nicht ein- oder zweimal, sondern man fährt täglich mit Seufzen, Beten, Rufen und Schreien fort, bis man die Gnade erlangt, dass man aus eigener Erfahrung der wahrhaftigen Veränderung des Herzens versichert ist<<. This is an indication of how one “in kurzer Zeit” can experience a thorough conversion. As an example of the reaction of orthodoxy to this view, we may quote the following words by C. F. W. Walther: Gottes Wort wird nicht recht geteilt, wenn man die vom Gesetz getroffenen und erschreckten Sünder anstatt sie auf Wort und Sakrament zu weisen, anweist, durch Beten und kämpfen sich den Gegenstand zu erringen, nähmlich so lange zu beten und zu kämpfen>>. This is Walther’s Thesis IX. (Pieper, *Dogmatik* III, s. 257). See Pieper in English translation *Christian Dogmatics* 3:218.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. Og hva værre er: En slik interesse for ens eget sjeleliv vil lett vende blikket bort fra nadens kilde, hvor det åndelige liv har sitt utspring.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. Den første er det faktum at NT selv meget uttrykkelig angir kjenne- tegn på at man bar gatt over fra doden til livet; man må her ikke minst tenke på Johannes’ I. brev. Det finnes faktisk i NT avgjørende trekk som lar det bli ganske klart hva den sanne tro kjennes på, og dermed er det sagt at disse kjennetegn er gitt oss som en del av det kristne budskap.

true faith is that the seeking souls will feel cheated if help is not given to their question, “Where do I stand?”<sup>172</sup> The answer should stick close to the words of Scripture and avoid ‘model’ experiences or patterns which ultimately risk making the Gospel into a Law.<sup>173</sup> It must be remembered “that faith is never belief in the signs, but a heart’s trust in Jesus” and the person “should be directed to the finished work and invited to believe the word of grace as if it were only today that he came to Jesus and became a child of God.”<sup>174</sup> This question of how Wisløff deals with assurance will be taken up in a later chapter.

Wisløff does not speak of the marks of faith in terms of confessing with the mouth what is believed in the heart.

### Summary

In this chapter we have examined several dimensions of Wisløff’s somewhat meager understanding of faith. We have seen that the nature of faith corresponds to the Gospel. Faith is not to be equated with obedience, surrender, or decision. We have also seen that faith comes into being only by way of the Gospel. Faith is kindled by the Gospel. That which gives faith its content and which serves as its object is also the Gospel. Faith is an instrumental means which Wisløff often speaks of as the empty hand that receives the salvation gift delivered to it. Faith is not to be understood as the fulfillment of any conditions. We also considered the various ways that Wisløff sees faith to be threatened or confused and moved into the way of the Law. The term awakening is retained but it is redefined so that it is the conscience that is

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 169. Men under alt dette må han ikke glemme å minne om at troen aldri er en tro på kjennetegnene, men en hjertets tillit til Jesus. ...da skal han vises til det fullbragte verk og innbys til å tro nådens ord som om det var først i dag han kom til Jesus og ble et Guds barn.

awakened to the knowledge of sin and God's wrath as stated in AC XII. Lastly, we looked at Wisløff's thinking on the marks of true faith.

By way of evaluation, it appears that this material has some areas of tension. He emphasizes the need for choice and decision but places this under the category of the Law. The Biblical teaching is maintained by the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. He desires to distance himself from psychologizing and at the same time calls our attention to the fact that man has a psyche. The proper balance is found in the clear distinction of Law and Gospel. Faith is not a matter of the will and the Gospel is not an appeal. It is interesting to note, since Romans 10 is such an important chapter for Wisløff's understanding of faith, that he makes no mention of confessing with the mouth what is believed in the heart. We turn now to the doctrine of the means of grace.

## Chapter Six

### **Wisløff's Doctrine of the Means of Grace**

Wisløff states that "the Lutheran Church puts strong emphasis on the *means of grace*"<sup>1</sup> and he also notes "that it is characteristic that the Lutheran Church's Christian view can in reality be expressed in the words: means of grace."<sup>2</sup> We call "the Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper *means of grace*, for through them God gives His grace."<sup>3</sup> They have a central and important place in the Scriptures and this means that they are to have a central and important place in the consciousness of Christians.<sup>4</sup> However, Wisløff notes that this is not often the case.<sup>5</sup> For many baptism and the Lord's Supper "belong rather far out in the lesson; they have no significance for our salvation or for our Christian life."<sup>6</sup> Wisløff offers a partial explanation for this. This type of indifference towards the means of grace follows from the understanding of Christianity that was promoted by the so-called "alliance-movement."<sup>7</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfunn...*(1988), 61. Den lutherske kirke legger sterk vekt på *nådemidlene*.

<sup>2</sup> Wisløff, *Vår luthersk Arv...* (1945), 42. Det karakteristiske for den lutherske kirkes kristensyn: kan i grunnen uttrykkes i ett ord: Nådemidlene.

<sup>3</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987),124. Ordet, dåpen og nattverden kaller vi *nådemidler*, for ved dem gir Gud sin nåde.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. The 1946 edition has "The Means of Grace have a central position in the faith" as the heading for one of the subsections in the section "What the Bible proclaims about the Means of Grace and the Church." (page 154).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Nå må en si at dåp og nattverd ikke har noen sentral plass i mange kristne menneskers bevissthet. De synes at disse ting er noe som kommer langt ute i leksen, de har ingen stor betydning for vår frelse og vårt kristne liv.

<sup>7</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1946), 155. The Alliance-Movement emphasized what Christians had in common, our oneness in Christ. They believed that Christians should be free to practice either infant or adult baptism. All controversial issues should be avoided as long as one believed in Jesus.

indifference toward doctrinal questions leads to a cautious presentation of God's truth and gives the impression that the means of grace are not very important because one never hears about them. This so-called "central-emphasis" approach results in people getting "a warped impression of what is really *central* in our Christian faith. For the truth is that the means of grace belong, in the very highest degree, to the most significant part of our faith."<sup>8</sup> In this chapter we will consider Wisløff's understanding of the means of grace.

### The Meaning of Grace

Before considering the means of grace it is important to have clear what is meant by the word grace. Wisløff points out that grace is one of the most central words in Christianity. The person needs grace and God is gracious.<sup>9</sup> Most are in agreement on this but concerning the questions, what is the meaning of the word grace? how do we have a part in it? and what is the person's part and what is God's is another matter.<sup>10</sup>

Wisløff rejects the popular understanding that grace is God peaking through His fingers at our sins.<sup>11</sup> This is false, for God is holy and does not overlook the smallest sin.<sup>12</sup>

A second approach is to understand grace as a power from God. Since people are not able to do as they ought they need grace which is understood to work as a "kind of impulse, a power or medicine from God, that puts them in a position to 'be able to do' the Christian

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<sup>8</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1959), 112. Og så fører dernest denne såkalte <<sentrale Forkynnelse>> til at folk får et skjevt inntrykk av hva som overhodet er *sentralt* for vår kristne tro. For sannheten er den at nådemidlene i aller høyeste grad hører til de betydningsfulle ledd i troen. (1946:156)

<sup>9</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 117.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

life.”<sup>13</sup> Wisløff identifies this as a wrong way of thinking about grace. He argues that medicine does not help a person who is dead. The error of such thinking about grace lies in their not having seen deep enough into their lost condition. They think we are sick, and need a supply of power. But our weakness is greater than that.<sup>14</sup>

Wisløff also discusses this approach to grace in *Martin Luthers teologi*. In the context of medieval theology “grace is thought of as a power, an impulse that lifts the person up so they can do meritorious works (*gratia elevans* - grace that lifts up).”<sup>15</sup> As for Thomas Aquinas grace is not only God’s love; “nor is it identical with the forgiveness of sins; it is a supernatural gift or a *habitus infusus*, a new quality that God pours into the person.”<sup>16</sup> Thus “grace is a power that aims at a number of various effects in the person: the healing of the soul so it wills the good; so it comes into a condition to do good, and so it can remain standing in good purpose and finally attain to glory.”<sup>17</sup> Wisløff understands the Catholic Church to teach

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Derfor trenger de nåde; og denne nåden tenker de seg som en slags impuls, en kraft eller en medisin fra Gud, som skal sette dem i stand til a <<makte>> kristenlivet.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 85. Nåden er tenkt som en kraft, en impuls som løfter mennesket opp så det kan gjøre fortjenestfulle gjerninger (*gratia elevans* – nåden som løfter opp). Wisløff quotes Thomas as saying, “The grace is the perfection (fullkommengjørelse) that raises the soul up to a certain supernatural existence. Grace is sharing in the divine nature (*gratia elevans*), a power that is given through the sacraments. In this way grace becomes understood as a quality that God expects one to have. God demands grace’s jewelery of you. So writes Biel.” Thomas sier: Nåden er en fullkommengjørelse, som hever sjelen opp til en viss overnaturlig væren. Nåden er delaktiggjørelse i guddommelig natur (*Gratia elevans*), en kraft som blir gitt gjennom sakramentene. På denne måten blir nåden oppfattet som en kvalitet som Gud venter at en skal ha. Gud krever nådens smykke av deg -. Slik skriver Biel. Ibid., 20. Wisløff references this material to Ludwig Ott, *Grundriss der Katholischen Dogmatik* (1952), 255f.; Leif Grane, *Contr Gabrielem*, 214ff., 243-261; Regin Prenter, “Luthers reformatoriske oppdragelse” *TTK*, 174-191.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Nåden er – sier Thomas av Aquino – ikke bare Guds kjærlighet; den er heller ikke identisk med syndenes forlatelse; den er en overnaturlig gave eller en *habitus infusus*, en ny beskaffenhet som Gud gyder inn i mennesket.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Nåden er en kraft, som sikter på en rekke forskjellige virkninger i mennesket: den helbreder sjelen så den vil det gode, så den blir i stand til å gjøre godt, og så den kan bli stående i det gode forsett og omsider nå frem til herligheten. For Thomas Aquinas see

that grace is a medicine, a power received by using the seven sacraments whereby God cooperates with us on our salvation; we do our part, and God does the rest in grace.<sup>18</sup> In response to this he notes that the Reformation fathers said “grace is not a medicine, it is God’s favor toward sinners for Jesus’ sake.”<sup>19</sup> He notes Luther’s own no to the power way of grace. The Roman way of grace could not help Luther in his need and soul-struggle.<sup>20</sup> For Luther grace is something else. Wisløff states: “We do not cooperate with God in our salvation. The Bible teaches that we are dead in our sins; a blood transfusion, a power impulse will not help.

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*Summa Theologiae* 1-2 q. 110a, 1-2. Also refer to G. Bellinger, *Der Catechismus Romanus und die Reformation* (1970), 98f.

<sup>18</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 99. Det ordet var rettet mot den katolske kirkelære, som gar ut på at naden er en kraft som en får ved å bruke de sju sakramentene, ved å valfarte, gi almisser osv. Gud samarbeider med oss på vår frelse. Vi gjør det som står til oss, og så gjør Gud i sin nade resten. Wisløff says that “in our own century it is said in the same way, ‘grace means, an actual new and higher energy that our soul becomes enriched by, a life from heaven that premeates, strengthens and raises our natural energy of life and places us in position to lift us beyond ourselves to be received by God.’” Idem., *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 85. He is quoting A. J. Lutz, *Den Katolisk religion fremstillet for modern protestanter* (1933), 159ff.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. De reformatoriske fedre former dette ord: Nåden er Guds yndest over synderen for Jesu skyld.

<sup>20</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 20. Wisløff also says that “Luther rejects this way of thinking. In the writing against Latomus he says that one must learn to distinguish between *grace* (favor) and *gift* (donum). *Grace* is God’s forgiveness for Jesus’ sake. But the *gift* is the power to conquer over every sin. ‘Everything is forgiven by grace, but as yet not everything is healed through the gift’ (AE 32:229). The one who stands under God’s grace, stands holy and pure before God in Christ. But the same person’s actual righteousness is still deficient; yes, if he is judged according to the Law, there is found only sin and condemnation for him. ‘If you look at sin according to the Law’s standard, then there is found only wrath and death; but if you look at it according to the Gospel, then there is grace and life.’” I skriftet mot Latomus sier han at en må lære å skjelne mellom nåden (*favor*) og gaven (*donum*). *Nåden* er Guds tilgivelse for Jesu skyld. Men *gaven* er kraften til å seire over synden. <<Alt er tilgitt ved nåden, men ennå er ikke alt helbredet ved gaven.>> Den som står under Guds nåde, står hellig og ren for Gud i Kristus. Men det samme menneskes faktiske rettferdighet er ennå mangelfull; ja, dersom han dømmes etter loven, finnes det bare synd og fordømmelse hos ham. <<Hvis du ser på synden etter lovens målestokk, da finnes det bare vrede og død; men hvis du ser på den etter evangeliet, da er det nåde og liv.>> Ibid., 85. For Luther quotes see WA 8, 107f.

Nothing else helps except that God in His merciful kindness for this person who lies dead in his sins, declares to him the forgiveness of sins for Jesus' sake."<sup>21</sup>

What then is God's grace? Wisløff defines grace as "God's merciful *disposition* for Jesus' sake. Grace is God's kindheartedness; it is His merciful way of thinking towards us."<sup>22</sup> The Scripture pairs grace with compassion (1 Timothy 1:2) thus indicating that God is gracious, meaning that He is compassionate. "Grace is not to be understood as an impersonal power, but as a disposition in God."<sup>23</sup> At the heart of grace is the favor of God, which is most clearly expressed as the forgiveness of sins. "Grace is – that God for Jesus' sake forgives us our sins."<sup>24</sup>

This grace has its basis in what Jesus has done. Wisløff illustrates this from Mark 2:9. Jesus could heal a sick man by the power of His divine omnipotence. But forgive sins, that He could only do because He was the lamb of God who bore the sin of the world. "To heal the sick it cost Him only a word. To forgive our sins cost Him life and blood."<sup>25</sup> In Wisløff's theology grace exists and gets its content by way of Christ and His going to Calvary. This is what the means of grace deliver. Wisløff does not see grace as a power that enables one to believe but rather as the forgiveness of sins that is declared to the sinner. He says: "The Word

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<sup>21</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 99. Vi samarbeider ikke med Gud på vår frelse. Bibelen lærer oss at vi er døde i våre synder, her hjelper ingen blodoverføring, ingen kraftimpuls. Her hjelper intet annet enn at Gud i sin barmhjertighet ynkes over dette mennesket som ligger død i sine synder, og tilsier ham syndenes forlatelse for Jesu skyld. Wisløff is paraphrasing Luther here. He does not indicate the source.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 98. Guds nåde er hans miskunnelig *sinnelag* for Jesu skyld. Nåden er Guds hjertelag, den er hans miskunnelige tenkemåte overfor oss.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 99. Guds nåde blir i Bibelen flere steder satt ved siden av Guds *barm- hjertighet*. 1. Tim. 1, 2. At Gud er nådig, vil si at han er barmhjertig. Nåden er ikke en upersonlig kraft, men et sinnelag i Gud.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Nåde er – at Gud for Jesu skyld tilgir oss våre synder.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Å helbrede en syk kostet ham bare ett ord. Å tilgi våre synder kostet ham liv og blod.

and Sacrament are not ‘helping means’ – means by which God gives us an encouragement, a help, an impulse, so we can do it better. No, they are means of grace, *creating means*.<sup>26</sup> As a result “that will among other things mean that the Gospel does not *demand* faith. The Gospel *creates* and kindles and preserves faith.”<sup>27</sup> Wisløff saw the need to carefully define and understand grace as *favor Dei* filled with the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake in order to preserve the Biblical truth of salvation.

### The Means of Grace in General

Wisløff recognizes that the terms ‘means of grace’ and ‘sacraments’ do not occur in the Bible. He points out however, that what is important is that they are used in such a way that they teach the content of the Bible.<sup>28</sup> Wisløff sticks with defining a sacrament as “*a holy act, instituted by the mandate of Jesus, and that invisible grace is given by a visible means or sign*.”<sup>29</sup> This limits the number of sacraments to two: baptism and the Lord’s supper. Wisløff is aware of Melancthon’s broader definition in the *Apology*.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Wisløff, *Forkynnelsen og noen ord om de krav som må stilles ti dem* (1944), 16. Ord og sakrament er ikke <<hjelpemidler>> - midler ved hvilke Gud gir oss en tilskyndelse, en hjelp eller en , impuls, så vi kan klare det bedre. Nei, de er nådemidler, *skapemidler*.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Det vil bl. a. si at evangeliet *krever* ikke tro. Evangeliet *skaper* og *tenner* og oppholder troen.

<sup>28</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 124.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 129-130. *Hvis vi sier at et sakrament er en hellig handling, som er innstiftet ved en befaling av Jesus, og hvor en usynlig nåde blir gitt ved et synlig middel eller tegn, ....*

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 130. Wisløff appears to be following the order of Augustine when he starts with a definition of a sacrament. Hermann Sasse states that “we should follow the example of the *Augsburg Confession* in our theological thinking as in teaching and preaching and never start from one common doctrine and the means of grace or the sacraments but deal with each of the means of grace by itself in its own particularity: Preaching the Gospel, Baptism, confession and absolution, the Sacrament of the Altar.” Hermann Sasse, *We Confess The Sacraments*, Vol. 2. Translated by Norman Nagel. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 21.

One of Wisløff's points of departure for understanding the means of grace is the New Testament's teaching that "the true life in God consists of knowing Jesus and to be in intimate life-fellowship with Him" as He said in His high priestly prayer (John 17:3).<sup>31</sup> The Christian life is not a matter of reason (1 Cor. 2:1ff. ) nor of the feelings or the will (Rom. 9:16).<sup>32</sup> The Lord compared the life-fellowship to the relationship between the branches and the tree (John 15:5).<sup>33</sup> This life of fellowship was made possible by the flesh and blood way "when the Son of God became man and dwelt among us."<sup>34</sup> The apostles "heard Him and saw Him, they touched His hand, and they looked into His eyes; briefly stated, they experienced Him through their senses just as they might meet and experience any other person," even though they were meeting God's Son, the God-man from eternity.<sup>35</sup> Wisløff points out that here we see that "God uses external audible means when He deals with us."<sup>36</sup> "In this way the apostles experienced God; they met Christ; they saw him and heard him. Not in meditations and ecstasies of soul, but in a poor sinner's thankful listening to God's Word they experienced

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 124. Vårt nye testamente lærer oss klart at det sanne liv i Gud består i å kjenne Jesus og stå i inderlig livssamfunn med ham. Det er jo hans eget ord i den yppersteprestelige bønn: <<Dette er det evige liv at de kjenner deg, den eneste sanne Gud, og ham du utsendte, Jesus Kristus.>> Joh. 17, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 124-125.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>34</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1946), 158. Dette livssamfunn ble mulig da Guds Sønn ble menneske og tok bolig iblant oss.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. De fikk høre ham og se ham de fikk ta ham i hånden, de kunne se ham inn i øynene; - kort sagt, de opplevde ham med sine sanser som en møter og opplever et annet menneske. Men dette menneske var Guds Sønn av evighet. I og med at de møtte dette menneske møtte de Gud, for Gud var dette menneske.

<sup>36</sup> Wisløff, *Dåp barkedåp* (1975), 7. Gud bruker utvortes hørbare og sansbare midler når han handler med oss.

God and had fellowship with Him.”<sup>37</sup> There was no ascending up to God. He came all the way to them.

In spite of the fact that Jesus has taken His place at the right hand of God He is still present with us in a physical sense. By faith we have life-fellowship with Him, possessing the forgiveness of sins and life with God.<sup>38</sup> This raises the issue of how this is possible today. How is this flesh and blood Savior with us? Wisløff states that “it is in this connection that our New Testament points us to those means that we have referred to as the means of grace: the Word, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>39</sup> The means of grace run parallel to the incarnation. Wisløff says that so far as he understands the New Testament, the fact that God uses external means when He acts, corresponds with the fact that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. As in John 1:14, God’s Word became flesh and we saw His glory.<sup>40</sup> “He is among us in the means of grace, which we can see, hear and feel.”<sup>41</sup> Wisløff states: “It is not accidental that God has allowed this life-fellowship to be connected through the help of such external, sense-perceptible means as Word and sacrament. It fits very closely with the great fact of salvation that the Word became flesh.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, “He is present among us through His

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Slik opplevde apostlene Gud, de møtte Kristus, de så ham og hørte ham. Ikke i meditasjonens og ekstasens sjelesving, men i fattige synderes takknemlige lytting til Guds ord, slik opplevde de Gud, og slik hadde de samfunn med Gud.

<sup>38</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1946), 159.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Her er det vårt nye testamente viser oss til de midler som vi med ett ord har kalt nådemidlene: Ordet, dåpen og nattverden.

<sup>40</sup> Wisløff, *Dåpen* (1943), 16. Han bruker utvortes midler når han handler. Så langt jeg forstår det nye testamente henger det sammen med at ordet ble kjød og tok bolig iblant oss. Johs. 1, 14: Guds ord ble kjød og vi så hans herlighet. See also idem., *Jeg vet...* (1987), 126.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Han er iblant oss i nådemidlene, som vi kan se, høre og føle på.

<sup>42</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 125-126. Det er ikke tilfeldig at Gud lar dette livssamfunn knyttes ved hjelp av slike utvortes, sansbare midler, ord og sakrament. Det henger på det nøyeste sammen med den store frelseskjensgjeming at Ordet ble kjød.

means of grace.”<sup>43</sup> In the means of grace God comes all the the way to us with the same realism as in the incarnation. The means of grace bridge all the gaps, including space and time.

Wisløff points out that the apostles’ assertion that they had met God has been a source of offence from the beginning.<sup>44</sup> For many think and feel that this is an all-too-small way to think of God. Wisløff responds that “God does not only belong in the metaphysical realm, but also in the realm of sense-perception. It has pleased God to descend to us, into the sphere of our senses, into the world of things.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore he says “we should not pretend, then, in great spirituality, as if we can fly to Him into the metaphysical realm. He wants to meet us here, in the spoken and the written Word, in the water of baptism, and in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>46</sup> “The Word became flesh.”<sup>47</sup> Through the means of grace the way of life-fellowship with Jesus is a reality in the here and now.

Wisløff has a second point of departure for understanding the means of grace. “Through Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection salvation has been won for all people. But grace has not yet become the possession of all; it must be offered and extended to them for they themselves cannot take it as out of the air.”<sup>48</sup> Nor can we “bring it down from heaven by

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<sup>43</sup> Wisløff, *Dåpen* (1943), 16. Han er nærværende iblant oss ved sine nådemidler.

<sup>44</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 126.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Gud hører ikke bare til i det oversanselige, men nettopp i det sansbare. Det har behaget Gud å stige ned til oss, ned i det sansbare, til tingenes verden.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Så skal vi ikke late som om vi i stor åndelighet kan fly til ham, inn i det oversanselige. Han vil møte oss her, i det talte og skrevne ord, i dåpens vann, i nattverdens brød og vin. Ordet er blitt kjød.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Ordet er blitt kjød.

<sup>48</sup> Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfund* (1988), 61. Ved Jesu Kristi død og oppstandelse er frelsen og nåden vunnet for alle mennesker. Men nåden er ikke dermed blitt alle menneskers eiendom, den må bli tilbudt dem og rakt dem; de kan ikke selv ta den likesom ut av luften.

our religious efforts. It must be *extended* to us.”<sup>49</sup> Thus “in order to offer and give people His salvation, God uses external means, means of grace.”<sup>50</sup>

Wisløff shows that this is the theology that is found in *Augustana* 5 and 13. There it is confessed that “through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given.”<sup>51</sup> The strong sacramental realism comes through for “the sacraments were not merely to be marks of profession among men but especially to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us intended to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them.”<sup>52</sup> And in the *Smalcald Articles* Luther also confesses that this is the way God’s grace is delivered to us. “God uses the Word of the Gospel, He uses baptism, the Lord’s Supper, absolution (the individual giving of the forgiveness of sins), and He uses ‘brotherly mutual admonition and comfort.’ God has many ways to deal with us, for He is excessively rich in His grace.”<sup>53</sup> Wisløff puts this in concrete form by saying that “they are like God’s hands through which He extends His gifts to us.”<sup>54</sup> They deliver what Christ has won for us; the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Wisløff points out that many ask, “is it not *faith* that connects the sinner

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<sup>49</sup> Wisløff, *Dåp barnedåp* (1975), 7. Vi kan ikke hente den ned fra himmelen ved våre religiøse anstrengelser. De len må bli *rakt* oss.

<sup>50</sup> Wisløff, *Kristne kirkesamfund* (1988), 61. For å tilby og rekke menneskene sin frelse, bruker Gud visse ytre midler, nådemidlene.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Dette er uttrykt i CA 5: <<Ved Ordet og sakramentene blir den Hellige Ånd gitt, likesom ved midler.>>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 62. Bekjennelsen er preget av sterk sakramental *realisme*. Sakramentene er ikke bare gitt for å være bekjennelsestegn blant menneskene, men langt mer for å være tegn og vitnesbyrd om Guds vilje mot oss, gitt til å vekke og styrke troen hos dem som bruker dem>> (CA art. 13).

<sup>53</sup> Wisløff, *Dåp barnedåp* (1975), 7. Gud bruker evangeliets ord, Han bruker dåpen, nattverden, absolusjonen (den individuelle tilsigelse av syndenes forlatelse), og Han bruker “brødrenes innbyrdes formaning og trøst”. “Gud har mange måter å handle med oss på, for Gud er overvettets rik i sin nåde.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. De er likesom Guds hender, som Han rekker oss sine gaver med.

with Jesus? Is it not by faith we are saved and regenerated?”<sup>55</sup> Thus they think that “there is an absolute contradiction between the doctrine of salvation through faith and faith in the sacraments as the means of grace. The sacraments are signs and symbols, they say, but not means of grace.”<sup>56</sup> Wisløff’s response is that there is no contradiction but rather the closest possible connection between the two. For “if we are to understand what faith is, then we must first understand what *the Gospel* is, because the Gospel comes first, then comes faith.”<sup>57</sup> The Gospel has the ability to awaken and create the confidence of faith in the sinner-heart that is broken under the Law.<sup>58</sup> Since the sacraments are Gospel it can be said that they also have the ability to awaken and create the confidence of faith in the sinner-heart that is broken under the Law.

As already mentioned the term means of grace refers to the Word (the Gospel Word), baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism and the Lord’s supper are also called sacraments. Wisløff follows Augustine in seeing the sacraments as ‘visible words’.<sup>59</sup> That is “a word is usually something we hear or read. But the sacraments are words we can see.”<sup>60</sup> Through

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<sup>55</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 126. Og dette spørsmålet blir for mange til en protest: Er det ikke troen som knytter forbindelsen mellom synderen og Jesus? Er det ikke ved troen vi blir frelst og gjenfødt?

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Det er etter deres mening en absolutt motsetning mellom læren om frelse ved tro - og så troen på sakramentene som nådemidler. Sakramentene er tegn og symboler, sier de, - men nådemidler er de ikke.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 127. Saken er den: Skal vi forstå hva troen er, må vi først få klarhet over hva *evangeliet* er. For evangeliet kommer først, og så kommer troen.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium...* (1939), 28-29; idem., *Dåpen* (1943), 9; idem., *Jeg vet...* (1946), 162; idem., *Jeg vet...* (1987), 127. Wisløff uses Augustine’s way of speaking about the sacraments without ever giving an in-depth analysis. For an evaluation of the weaknesses of Augustine’s way of speaking about the sacraments see Sasse, *We Confess The Sacrament*, 11-35.

<sup>60</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 127. Et ord er ellers noe som vi kan høre – eller lese. Men sakramentene er ord som vi kan se.

them “God will tell us something.”<sup>61</sup> Do they run the way of Law or Gospel? is the key question. This leads to the question of how one should go about understanding the sacraments.

Wisløff believes that “the main thing in the doctrine of the sacraments is that the sacraments consist of two parts: a word of Jesus (the words of institution) and a visible sign (which has been called the element).”<sup>62</sup> The key to understanding the sacraments is found in giving attention to the *Word*, the words Jesus spoke when He instituted the act and which we repeat every time we use the sacraments.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore when one “focuses his attention on these words of the sacraments he will understand what the sacraments are: God’s gracious declaration of His pleasure for Jesus’ sake, a declaration that He has confirmed through this holy act.”<sup>64</sup> So “it is also the promise-word one should look at when one wants to understand what the sacrament is.”<sup>65</sup> In contrast the one who only looks at the element or the act, and begins to speculate on what they may mean, will never come to a correct understanding.<sup>66</sup>

Luther’s teaching of ‘seeing the sacrament *in the Word*’, which he sets forth in *The Babylonian Captivity* (1520) is foundational for Wisløff’s understanding of the sacraments.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Når dåp og nattverd forrettes, så vil Gud si oss noe.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. En hovedsak i læren om sakramentene er følgende: Et sakrament består av to stykker: et ord av Jesus (innstiftelsesordet) og et synlig tegn (som man har kalt elementer; for dåpens del er det vannet, for nattverdens del brødet og vinen).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 128. Den som vil forstå hva sakramentet er, må fremfor alt gi akt på *ordet*, det ordet som Jesus har sagt da han innstiftet denne handling, og som vi gjentar hver gang vi bruker sakramentet.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 129. Den som fester sin oppmerksomhet på disse ordene som møter oss i sakramentet, han forstår hva sakramentene er: De er Guds nådige tilsagn om hans velbehag for Jesu skyld, et tilsagn som han har stadfestet ved denne hellige handling.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Det er altså løfte-ordet en skal se på når en vil forstå hva sakramentet er.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. See also Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), chapter three (Eng. Translation *The Gift of Communion*).

He points out that the Roman Church failed in this understanding of the sacrament and so faith is minimized and “the priest’s powerful action receives the attention rather than the promise-word that Jesus has given us in the sacrament.”<sup>68</sup> The Reformed also fail in this regard, and their result is that “*God’s* action in the sacrament is minimized.”<sup>69</sup>

Wisløff works with the understanding that God’s Word is either Law or Gospel. This leads to the question, what kind of words are the means of grace – “words of Law, where God meets us with certain demands, or words of Gospel, where God declares to us grace and the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake?”<sup>70</sup> Wisløff points out that those who reject infant baptism see baptism as a word of law which we are to obey.<sup>71</sup> However, the result of seeing these ‘visible words’ ‘in the Word’ is that the sacraments belong to the realm of the Gospel and are true means of grace, words of the Gospel, which give the forgiveness of sins.<sup>72</sup> Giving attention to the words that Jesus spoke when they were instituted results in seeing them as Gospel.<sup>73</sup>

What is the relation between the various means of grace? Do they all give the same grace? In *Ordet fra Guds munn* Wisløff takes up the topic of the relation between baptism and the Word.<sup>74</sup> He states that “the grace of baptism is not a unique kind of grace; it consists

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 130. Prestens maktfylte handling får oppmerksomheten i stedet for det løfte-ord som Jesus har gitt oss i sakramentet.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. Hos *de reformerte* kommer *Guds* handling i sakramentene til kort.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 127. Vi har sett at Guds ord er lov eller evangelium. Hva for slags ord er nå sakramentene – er de lovens ord, hvor Gud møter oss med sine krav. Eller er de evangeliets ord. Hvor Gud tilsier oss nade og syndenes forlatelse for Jesu skyld?

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 129. See also chapter four in Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1951), (Eng. Translation *The Gift og Communion.*).

<sup>74</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 169-177.

of God's mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ, and it is possessed only by the person who lives in contrition and faith."<sup>75</sup> Wisløff responds to the teaching of some that baptism is the only means of regeneration. He points out that "in the New Testament 1 Peter 1:23 and James 1:18 stand as clear witnesses of the regenerating power of the *Word*."<sup>76</sup> He is in agreement with Pieper who states "as surely as baptism is a means of regeneration (Titus 3:5), so surely the Word of the Gospel works regeneration (I Pet. 1:23)."<sup>77</sup> Wisløff sides with those who see regeneration as *donatio fidei* (gift of faith) as the scriptural expression.<sup>78</sup> Thus regeneration is tied to the moment one comes to faith and this can happen also by the word of the Gospel.<sup>79</sup> The baptized person who has fallen away and no longer lives in faith must be born anew by the word of the Gospel.<sup>80</sup>

In the 1975 edition of *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* Wisløff addresses the question of what is the relationship of the various means of grace to each other.<sup>81</sup> Do they each have their special function as some suggest such as the Word offering grace, baptism giving grace, and

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 170. Dåpsnåden er ikke noen egen slags nåde, den består i Guds miskunn for Jesu Kristi skyld, og den eies bare av det menneske som lever i anger og tro.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 175. I NT står 1. Pet. 1,23 og Jak. 1,18 som tydelige vitner om *Ordets* gjenfødende evne. Wisløff, however, also states that "in our Norwegian Church this scripture passage (I Peter 1:23) is used at baptism." idem., *Lydig mot sannheten* (Lunde Forlag, Oslo, 1972), 14. Other passages that Wisløff uses to support the Word as a means of grace are Galatians 3:1; Ephesians 1:13, and Romans 10:17. See idem., *Do The Work of an Evangelist* (1990), 18.

<sup>77</sup> Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* Vol. 3 (1953), 110.

<sup>78</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 176. Wisløff refers to Pieper's *Dogmatik II*, p.601 (English Translation *Christian Dogmatics II*. P. 499) for support of his view in this understanding of the Word's power to regenerate and for regeneration as *donatio fidei*. Pieper says, "According to Scripture, regeneration (*regeneratio*), the implanting of the new, spiritual life, is brought about through the kindling of faith in Christ and is therefore identical with conversion." I John 5:1, John 1:12-13 and 3:14-15 are used as support.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1975), 131. This issue is not included in the 1946 edition.

the Lord's supper strengthening faith?<sup>82</sup> Wisløff responds that this is sheer theory, for "the Bible calls the Gospel a 'word that can save,' Acts 11:14. Faith comes by the preached word. Rom. 10:17. Luther rightly says that God gives His grace in many ways."<sup>83</sup> Thus "the Gospel – preached or read – can not only offer grace, it also gives it."<sup>84</sup> He cites Chemnitz as criticizing the Catholics because they only mention baptism, and not the Word when they speak about how God gives grace."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 131. The background for this lies in the work of Leiv Aalen who in 1945 wrote a book entitled *Dåpen og barnet. Barnedåp eller "troendes dåp"?* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1972). He distinguishes between the various means of grace in this way: "through the means of grace of the Word God *offers* the salvation to all. In baptism he *bestows* it upon those who will receive it, and in the Lord's supper he *strengthens* the faith of those who have received salvation." Gjennom ordets nådemiddel t i l b y r Gud frelsen til alle, i dåpen s k j e n k e r han den til dem som vil ta imot den, og i nattverden s t y r k e r han troen hos dem som har tatt imot frelsen (page 37). In a taped lecture Wisløff calls Aalen's approach high church Lutheran doctrine and considers it to be "rather similar to the Roman catholic thinking." Wisløff notes that the Roman Catholic theology intends to distribute God's saving work through different channels so that baptism has one function, the word one function, and so on. He admits that even though the high church Lutheran people do "not say the same thing, far from that, and yet there is the same desire to distinguish between the functions of the various means of grace. In Luther's opinion such a wish is all wrong." Taped Lecture October 11, 1978. Wisløff's assessment of Aalen tends to be in agreement with Olav Valen-Sendstad. Refer comments in chapter 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Bibelen kaller evangeliet for et << ord som kan frelse>>. Ap. Gjern. 11, 14. Troen kommer av det forkynte ord. Rom. 10, 17. Med rette sier Luther at Gud gir sin nåde på mange måter. The reference to Luther refers to *The Smalcald Articles* Part III, Article IV.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet – forkynt eller lest – kan ikke bare tilby nåden, det gir den også. Wisløff's position here corresponds with that of Francis Pieper: "According to Scripture, all means of grace have the same purpose and the same effect, namely, the conferring of the forgiveness of sins and the resultant engendering and strengthening of faith. We are not to imagine that each of the three means transmits one third of the forgiveness. We saw before that Scripture ascribes the forgiveness of sins without reservation to the Word of God, to Baptism, and to the Lord's Supper. Therefore all means of grace have also the *vis effectiva*, the power to work and to strengthen faith.(AC V, XIII)." *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 (1953), 108.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Med rette kritiserer den lutherske dogmatiker Chemnitz (d. 1586) katolikkene fordi de bare nevner dåpen, og ikke Ordet, når de taler om hvordan Gud gir sin nåde. Wisløff does not give the location of his citation but it appears to have come from the Examen. Chemnitz states: "But let the reader observe that when the Tridentine fathers dispute about the instrumental cause through which God prepares, offers, distributes, communicates, and applies the benefits of justification to believers, they name only the sacrament of baptism, while no mention is made of the Word or promise which is peculiar to the Gospel, although the Scripture joins the Word and the sacrament in this office." (p. 570) "Therefore the Romanists are not devoid of trickery when they make the sacrament of baptism alone the instrumental cause of justification and make no mention of the Word and of the promise."(p.571) Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of The Council Of Trent*, part I. Fred Kramer, Translator. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971). See also Martin

Wisløff finds support in Luther for seeing the Word as the most important means of grace. He cites the following:

The Word of God is the greatest, most necessary, and most important thing in Christianity. For the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's supper) can not be without the Word, but the Word can exist without the sacraments. In an emergency one can be saved without the sacraments, but not without the Word – as that which happens with those who desire to be baptized, but who die before they can get baptism.<sup>86</sup>

According to Wisløff, Luther avoids the way of sacramentalism, a posture of faith that over emphasizes the sacraments at the Word's expense, by maintaining the importance of the Word and faith.<sup>87</sup> Wisløff also concludes that Luther is not "interested in seeking a 'role division' between the Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper."<sup>88</sup>

Luther's concern and emphasis is spelled out in the *Smalcald Articles* III, IV, "The Gospel". There he "praises God's infinite grace, that takes regard to our weaknesses – therefore God offers us His grace in many different ways."<sup>89</sup> For "Luther never thought it was 'easy' to believe; faith has so many evil enemies, and therefore needs all the help it can get."<sup>90</sup>

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Chemnitz, *Examination of The Council Of Trent*, part II. Fred Kramer, Translator. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 61-68.

<sup>86</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 121. Luther quote from AE 38:189 (1533); CL 4,271. See also WA 21:277 (1537), DB 7, 10, 5 (1522/1546) (AE 35:370), referenced in Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 133. See also WA 47:14 (1538) (AE 22:286) quoted in Wisløff, *Do The Work of an Evangelist* (1990), 21.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 121-22. Heller ikke er han interessert i å forsøke en <<rolledeling>>, mellom Ordet, dåpen og nattverden. Slike forsøk har det vært mange av gjennom tidene. Wisløff gives as an example those who say that the Word *offers* grace, but only *baptism* can give grace, which is a direct reference to Aalen's way of thinking. Therefore, according to Wisløff, the approach taken by Aalen is not in the way of Luther.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 122. Han fremhever og priser Guds uendelige nåde, som tar hensyn til vår svakhet – derfor tilbyr Gud oss sin nåde på mange forskjellige måter. See also Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of The Council Of Trent*, part II. Fred Kramer, Translator. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978. Pp. 61-68.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. Luther syntes aldri det var <<lett>> å tro; troen har så mange onde fiender, og trenger derfor all den hjelp den kan få.

Wisløff summarizes Luther's view as teaching that "all the various means of grace are Christ's powerful works, and through them He always gives the same gift and carries out the same great work: The forgiveness of sins, life and salvation."<sup>91</sup>

At the same time Wisløff does distinguish the sacraments from the Word. He states that "the sacrament is to be understood from the Word of the Gospel with its promise, and is calculated to make the promise more specific so that it points to me as an individual."<sup>92</sup> He elicits the support of the orthodox Lutheran theologian David Hollaz (1648-1713), who said, "even if the very same thing is in the preaching as in the sacrament, yet there is the advantage that the sacrament points to a certain person."<sup>93</sup> Given this feature of the sacrament, which Wisløff acknowledges and supports, it would suggest that the sacraments will have an important emphasis in the life of faith. An additional distinction is made when he states that

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Etter Luthers syn er alle de forskjellige nådemidler Kristi mektige gjerninger, og gjennom dem gir han alltid samme gave og utfører samme store verk: Syndenes forlatelse, liv og salighet.

<sup>92</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 27.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Cited by Wisløff. Wisløff does not indicate where this is found in Hollaz. Hollaz does say concerning the Lord's Supper that "Christ's design in offering His body and to be eaten by us ... is, that evangelical grace, or the divine grace promised and offered to us in the Gospel, may be applied and sealed to us individually. Moreover, he who receives the body and blood of the Lord may be most firmly assured that the promise of the Gospel belongs to him individually." (Hollaz, 1138) Quoted in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* translated by Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 580. A similar point is made by Martin Chemnitz in *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion* Edited, translated, and briefly annotated by Luther Poellot. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981). "For what reasons did Christ add the sacraments to the Word? So that our weak faith be sustained and preserved in this way. For our mind cannot so easily assent to the sole and bare Word and firmly rely on it. For though, when the general promise of the Gospel is heard, one indeed in general does not mistrust it, yet in the matter of a conscience troubled, and disturbed by temptations, one usually falls into doubt as to whether that general promise belongs and pertains also particularly to him and whether he can and should also apply it personally to himself. Therefore Christ, who is rich in mercy, instituted outward and visible sacraments to help our infirmity on this point; through them, as testimonies that are open and strike the eyes, He Himself wants to deal with us and thereby, as by a very sure seal and pledge testify that He truly applies, confirms, and seals the promise of the Gospel individually to those who use these sacraments in true faith. (page 109). Francis Pieper says, "the Gospel Word gives the full remission of sins gained by Christ, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper give the same grace, only in another and in a particularly consoling way (*verbum visibile – applicatio individualis*)." *Christian Dogmatics* 1, 86.

“baptism stands in a class by itself in so far as God through it enters into His covenant with the baptized, a covenant that God does not forget.”<sup>94</sup>

Supported by Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions<sup>95</sup>, Luther and Chemnitz, Wisløff speaks against the view advanced by Leiv Aalen and others who make a distinction between the various means of grace and their effects and the gifts they give.<sup>96</sup>

Wisløff sees the doctrine of the means of grace to be key in the battle against the two fronts of the papacy and the enthusiasts.<sup>97</sup> Luther saw these two as having the same problem. Wisløff quotes Luther who says “These wolves are joined at the tail, even though they have different heads. They pretend to be fierce enemies publically; but inwardly they actually believe, teach, and defend the same doctrine, opposition to Christ, the only Savior, who is our righteousness.”<sup>98</sup> In presenting Luther’s teaching on the means of grace, which in effect is also a statement of Wisløff’s own view, he draws from a number of Luther’s writings.

Drawing from Luther’s sermon on Exodus 15:17 (1525), Wisløff states that if we are not bound and held by a physical, external sign, everyone of us would seek God wherever he pleases. So, as God has always done, He built “a temple for us where He would dwell,

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<sup>94</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 122. Likevel kan en si at dåpen står i en særstilling for så vidt som Gud i den slutter sin pakt med den døde, en pakt som Gud ikke glemmer.

<sup>95</sup> In addition to what has already been noted see Wisløff, *Do The Work of an Evangelist* (1990), 20-21 where Wisløff cites from the Apology IV, 43-45, 62, 247, 386, and the FC, SD III, 18-21 to show that the Confessions of the Lutheran church do not support the idea that baptism is the only means of regeneration.

<sup>96</sup> It must be noted that in the background of these whom Wisløff has quoted there is the work of Francis Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics* as we have already noted.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-122. This chapter is entitled “The Means of Grace” and in it Wisløff gives a basic summary of Luther’s teaching on the topic. At the same time it is also a presentation of Wisløff’s position.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 118. This translation is from AE 27:149 (WA 40.1,36). 1535.

namely, the spoken Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, which are all perceptible things."<sup>99</sup>

The approach of the "Heavenly Prophets" is to reverse God's order and tear down the bridge, or the ladder that God uses when He comes to us.<sup>100</sup> As Luther says, "Instead of the outward order of God in the material sign of baptism and the oral proclamation of the Word of God the devil wants to teach you, not how the Spirit comes to you but how you come to the Spirit. He would teach you to travel on the clouds and ride on the wind."<sup>101</sup>

Wisløff points out that Luther teaches that God deals with us in two ways. First, outwardly through the Gospel's preached word and through the material signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper and second, inwardly through the Holy Spirit and faith.<sup>102</sup> The enthusiasts reverse God's order. As Luther says, "that which God has made to be a matter for the inner faith and Spirit, they turn into a human work. But that which God has established as an external word and sign and work, that they turn about and make it into an inner spirit."<sup>103</sup> In this way we are saved through faith and *not* through baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>104</sup> Faith is referenced to the means of grace and not to itself.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. Dersom vi ikke har et synlig, utvortes tegn å holde oss til, vil hver mann søke Gud der han selv ønsker. Det er grunnen til at profetene krev om tabernaklet, det sted hvor det behaget Gud å være til stede. Slik har Gud alltid handlet. På samme måten har han bygget et tempel for oss hvor vi kan bo – nemlig det forkynte ord, dåpen og Herrens nattverd; alt dette er sansbare tegn. Translated by Wisløff from the German (WA 16, 209) to Norwegian.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. <<I stedet for Guds ytre ordning i dåpen og det forkynte ord vi djevelen lære deg, ikke hvordan Anden kommer til deg, men hvordan du kan komme til Anden! Han vil lære deg å reise på skyene og ride på vinden.>>

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. Det som Gud har gjort til en sak for den indre tro og Ånd, det snur de om til en menneskelig gjerning. Men det som Gud har fastsatt om ytre ord og tegn og gjerning, det snur de om og gjør det til en indre ånd.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Men det er *troen* det kommer an på, innvendte svermerne – akkurat som de gjør den dag i dag. Vi blir frelst ved tro – *ikke* ved dåp og nattverd!

Turning to Luther's *Large Catechism*, Wisløff highlights that

these leaders of the blind are unwilling to see that faith must have something to believe - something to which it may cling and upon which it may stand. Thus faith clings to the water and believes it to be Baptism in which there is sheer salvation and life, not through the water, as we have sufficiently stated, but, through its incorporation with God's Word and ordinance and the joining of his name to it. When I believe this, what else is it but believing in God as the one who has implanted his Word in this external ordinance and offered it to us so that we may grasp the treasure it contains?<sup>105</sup>

Wisløff considers these citations from Luther to give a basic summary of Luther's teaching on the means of grace. He notes that here we see that God has instituted a certain order for us to be saved. He states: "We can not of our own power lift ourselves up to God but He must come to us. We cannot grasp the grace out of the air, it must be *extended* to us – God will extend it to us through the Word and the sacrament."<sup>106</sup> Therefore "we should not force spiritual exercises with ourselves or with others in order to produce a spiritual 'experience' of the Spirit of God's presence."<sup>107</sup> Rather, "we should turn our attention to the means that God in His grace has given us – namely, God's word in the Bible and in the audible preaching, where this happens in Biblical truth – and to baptism and the Lord's Supper."<sup>108</sup>

Wisløff also is quick to emphasize that neither the Word nor the sacraments benefit anyone without faith.<sup>109</sup> Referring to Luther who said:

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid. LC IV, 28-29. Tappert edition.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 120. Vi kan ikke i egen kraft heve oss opp til Gud. Men det skal vi også få slippe, for Gud vil komme til oss. Vi kan ikke gripe nåden ut av luften, den må bli *rakt* oss – Gud vil rekke oss den ved Ord og sakrament.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Vi skal derfor ikke drive åndelig eksersis med oss selv og med andre, for å produsere en åndelig <<opplevelse>> av Guds Ands nærvær.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. I stedet skal vi vende vår oppmerksomhet mot de midler Gud i sin nåde har gitt oss – nemlig Guds ord i Bibelen og i den hørbare forkynnelse, hvor denne skjer i bibelsk sannhet – og til dåp og nattverd.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

Just by allowing the water to be poured over you, you do not receive Baptism in such a manner that it does you any good: But it becomes beneficial to you if you accept it as God's command and ordinance, that, baptized in the name of God, you may receive in the water the promised salvation. This the hand cannot do, nor the body. But the heart must believe it.

The point in the teaching of the means of grace is that then faith must have something to hold to and the word of grace always comes first for the word of the Gospel both awakens and nourishes faith.<sup>110</sup>

Wisløff considers it a great grace of God that He points us to the means of grace – to the Word and sacrament for then we know what we have to hold ourselves to.<sup>111</sup> Without these solid grounds we would be at risk in assault. Quoting Luther: “Indeed, if I had the matter under my control, I would not want God to speak to me from heaven or to appear to me; but this I would want – and my daily prayers are directed to this end – that I might have the proper respect and true appreciation for the gift of Baptism.”<sup>112</sup> There is much that is missed in this gift. As Luther put it, “thus we see God baptizing, absolving, comforting, and administering the Lord's Supper. But who hears this or wonders at it?”<sup>113</sup>

Wisløff cites Luther on what happens when the means of grace are missing or despised. “Contrariwise, where these signs of grace are not present, or where they are despised by men, there is not only no grace, but execrable errors follow, and men set up for themselves other forms of worship and other signs.”<sup>114</sup> Wisløff notes that “he who holds

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Luther quote translation is from AE 3:165.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. Luther quote translation is from the AE 5:23.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 121. Luther quote translation is from the AE 1:249 (WA 42, 185). 1535.

himself there where God has said that He will meet us, he is assured.”<sup>115</sup> Faith can only be as sure as the promise.

Wisløff wraps up this section by quoting the *Smalcald Articles* as evidence of the Lutheran Church following in the teaching of Luther on the means of grace.

In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts - that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure. Münzer did this, and many still do it in our day who wish to distinguish sharply between the letter and the spirit without knowing what they say or teach. The papacy, too, is nothing but enthusiasm, for the pope boasts that “all laws are in the shrine of his heart,” and he claims that whatever he decides and commands in his churches is spirit and law, even when it is above and contrary to the Scriptures or spoken Word. All this is the old devil and the old serpent who made enthusiasts of Adam and Eve.<sup>116</sup>

Wisløff sets forth that Luther constantly emphasizes that if the Scriptures are not the sole authority for teaching, then other authorities will come into their place and lead. If our consciences are not bound to the words of Scripture, then other authorities have the power over us.<sup>117</sup> Wisløff uses the approach given above in his writings that are directed to present day enthusiasts.<sup>118</sup> This understanding of the means of grace is considered by Wisløff to be very important and crucial. We will now look at each of the means of grace.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Den som holder seg der hvor Gud har sagt at han vil møte oss, han er trygg.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. *Smalcald Articles* III, VIII, 3-5. Tappert edition p. 312.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Er ikke Skriften læremester alene, så vil andre autoriteter innta plassen som vår leder og fører. Er vi ikke samvittighetsbundet til Skriftens ord, så vil andre instanser overta makten over oss. Det er dette Luther vil ha innprentet. Gang på gang kommer han tilbake til dette.

<sup>118</sup> See Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Svermeriet og dets kjennetegn” *Fast Grunn* 44:2 (1991):69-74; and Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Luther har noe å si oss om ‘svermeri’” *Fast Grunn* 31:3 (1978):131-135.

## The Word of The Gospel as a Means of Grace

Wisløff observes that the Lutheran Church especially “has viewed the Word, both the spoken and the written Word of God, as a *means of grace*.”<sup>119</sup> That the Word is a means of grace should not be confused with the nature and character of communication and the human soul.<sup>120</sup> Or that it is a means of grace because “the sermon is a will that seeks to take possession of the will.”<sup>121</sup> Other aspects associated with preaching such as the intensity of the preacher, stirring music, lights, etc., must not be confused with the power of the Word as a means of grace.<sup>122</sup>

On what basis can it be said that the Word is a means of grace? The Word, both written and spoken, as a means of grace has its basis in part in God’s inspiring the Biblical witnesses giving them authority to speak to us on behalf of God.<sup>123</sup> Wisløff follows his mentor Luther in understanding the Gospel as a voice, a living word, a good news that is being cried out.<sup>124</sup> So “when the Spirit makes the Word alive, the soul is confronted by the living utterance of God.”<sup>125</sup> In this way every listener can meet the living God.<sup>126</sup> Wisløff notes that the Gospel was first a living voice and whenever “the apostles sounded forth the good message of God’s works in Christ, there the Spirit was active in bringing people to faith

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<sup>119</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 140. Og særlig den lutherske kirke har sett ordet, både det forkynte og leste Guds ord, som et *nådemiddel*.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. As in the case of Schleiermacher.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. This approach is found in Jansen, *Forkyndelsen*, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 41. WA 12, 259; AE 30:1

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Når Anden slik gjør Ordet levende, blir sjelen stillet overfor den levende Guds tiltale.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

(Acts 8:27-37; 10:44; 16:14).<sup>127</sup> This message which was later written down in Holy Scripture “has the characteristic that it ‘would be voice’ again.”<sup>128</sup> Both the written and spoken word become living for the reader and the hearer when the Spirit touches it.<sup>129</sup> This is not to be understood as a mystical, emotional experience. “The Spirit would ‘tell’ us exactly what the *word* of Scripture itself says.”<sup>130</sup> This happens when the words of Scripture are comprehended in connection with Jesus Christ for “the center of the Scriptures, the message running through them all is the incarnate, crucified, and risen Son of God, Jesus Christ.”<sup>131</sup> The Spirit’s work which makes God living, for those who read and hear the Word makes the Son living for he glorifies Jesus.<sup>132</sup> Wisløff believes that this happens when “Jesus Christ is portrayed before the eyes as crucified, (Gal. 3:1).”<sup>133</sup> The inner connection with the testimony of the Spirit about the Son makes the read and preached Word of God a means of grace.

Wisløff writes that “the Word has power in itself, because the Word is the tool by which God acts. ... The Word is God’s *action*; according to Scripture the Word is God’s *creative word*.”<sup>134</sup> God’s Word does what it says. He notes that the *Augsburg Confession*

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Hvor apostlene lot dette gode budskap om Guds gjerninger i Kristus lyde, der var Anden virksom for å føre mennesker til troen. Ap. Gjern. 8,27-37; 10,44; 16,14.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 42. En dette skrevne ord har den eiendommelighet at det >>vil bli røst<< igjen.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 43. Ånden vil >>si<< oss nettop det som Skriftens *ord* selv sier.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Midt-punktet i skriftene, budskapet gjennom dem alle sammen, er den kjødvordne, korsfestede og oppstandne Guds Sønn, Jesus Kristus.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 44. Ordet blir levende når >>Kristus blir malt for øynene som korsfestet<<. Gal.3,1.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 141. Her skal bare understrekes, at etter Skrift og Bekjennelse har ordet en makt i seg selv, fordi ordet er det middel som Gud handler ved. ... Ordet er Guds *handling*, ordet er i følge Skriften Guds *skapende* ord.

states “that God gives faith where and when He wills through the Word as means [instrument].”<sup>135</sup> This creative action of God’s Word needs a closer look.

The creative action which God performs through the Word is the new birth, the new life of faith through which one becomes a Christian.<sup>136</sup> The sermon is not necessary for aesthetic-psychological reasons nor is it praised “because it is experientially such an excellent means for influencing man’s feeling and will.”<sup>137</sup> For “one does not become a Christian by an emotional reaction or by a decision of the will, and one can not help a person become a Christian by calling forth such reactions.”<sup>138</sup> “The new life of faith does not leap as a spark of life from one person to another.”<sup>139</sup> Rather, God acts through His Word to give the new birth, which Wisløff understands to be the gift of faith. “It stands firm that the Bible speaks of being *reborn through the Word*.”<sup>140</sup>

Wisløff also observes that the creative power of God’s Word needs further clarification because it is expounded by some today without distinguishing between Law and Gospel so that God’s creative action applies to all of God’s Word. He cites as an example of this the work of R. Asting.<sup>141</sup> He maintains that there is “no contradiction between Paul’s

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid. I Bekjennelsen er dette uttrykt slik at Gud gir troen hvor og når han vil, ved ordet som middel (*instrumentum*).

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. Vi priser ikke prekenen bare fordi den erfaringsmessig er slikt et utmerket middel til å påvirke menneskers følelse og vilje.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Man blir ikke en kristen ved en følelsesreaksjon eller en viljesbeslutning, og man kan ikke hjelpe et menneske til å bli en kristen ved å fremkalle slike reaksjoner.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. Det nye troens liv springer ikke som en livsgnist over fra menneske til menneske.

<sup>140</sup> Wisløff, Carl Fr. *Jesu dåp og vår dåp*. (Oslo: Norsk søndagsskole forbunds forlag, 1941), 16. Det står fast at Bibelen taler om å bli *gjennfødt ved ordet*. Wisløff bases this statement on I Peter 1:23 and James 1:18. He notes that this interpretation is found in Pontoppidan, Erik. *Sannhet til gudfryktighet* questions #192 and #693. We have already noted in the previous section of this chapter Wisløff’s position on the Word as a means of regeneration.

<sup>141</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 142. R. Asting, “Hvilken mening har Paulus’ formaninger?” TTK 1934. In 1963 Erling Utne published an article which expressed a

admonitions and his proclamation of salvation in Christ. On the contrary, the admonition is an integral part of the proclamation of salvation. The admonition creates what it names.”<sup>142</sup>

This approach has the effect of making the Law word into a means of grace.

Quoting the *Apology*, Wisløff makes clear that Astring’s approach is radically different from Luther and the Reformation. Wisløff states the difference: “The Reformation view conceives of the Law in a quite radically different way, as an expression of a revelation of the holy God. And it takes a less optimistic view of the heart.”<sup>143</sup> Wisløff points out that “according to the *Apology*, God’s demands and admonitions, basically, point to only one thing: That the heart should love God.”<sup>144</sup> However, God finds that hearts do not love Him, and are incapable of loving Him, regardless of the admonitions. Therefore the Law works wrath. The Law, even in the form of admonitions, does not create what it demands, that is, love to God, instead it terrifies and causes despair.<sup>145</sup>

Wisløff rejects the interpretation which seeks to avoid this conclusion concerning admonitions by differentiating between Law and admonition. He admits to a grain of truth in this reasoning in that he who is born anew has learned to love God, and he also loves His

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similar way of thinking. Erling Utne, “Den evangeliske egenart ved den Paulinske parene” *TTK* 34 (1963), 65-79. Wisløff warns against this approach and considers it to be a confusion of Law and Gospel. See Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse* (1984), 5.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. Et er derfor, sier Astring, ikke noen motsetning mellom Paulus’ formaninger og hans forkynnelse av frelsen i Kristus. Tvertimot, *formaning er en integrerende del av frelsesforkynnelsen. Formaning skaper hva den nevner.*

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 143. Det reformatoriske syn oppfatter loven ganske annerledes radikalt som uttrykk for en åpenbaring av den hellige Gud. Og det har et mindre optimistisk syn på menneskehjertet.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Etter Apologien sikter Guds krav og formaninger dypest sett på en eneste ting: At hjertet skal elske Gud.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

will.<sup>146</sup> But he adds, “*that difference between Law and admonition is not an objective difference in the Word, but a subjective one in men.*”<sup>147</sup> The *Formula of Concord* states the reservation that the regenerated are freed from the Law, “and do everything, in so far as they are regenerate, in a spontaneous happy spirit.”<sup>148</sup> Because the believer is also flesh the Law will always have something to censure him for. Since the Law always accuses, “even the best of a Christian’s works must be covered over by the white robe of Christ’s righteousness.”<sup>149</sup> So even though “the admonitions point the way, and we need them, they are not a word that ‘creates what it says.’”<sup>150</sup>

The Gospel is the only Word that can bring one to love God. It is truly the means of grace Word which does create what it says. As a witness to this Wisløff quotes the *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration* Article II, 54: “God is active, breaks our hearts, and draws man, so that through the preaching of the Law man learns to know his sins and the wrath of God and experiences genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow in his heart.”<sup>151</sup> It is clear that the Law as an instrument of God does not give grace. But “through the preaching of and meditation upon the holy Gospel of the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ there is kindled in him a spark of faith which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel.”<sup>152</sup> The Gospel word, not the Law word, is a means of

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. *Men den forskjellen mellom lov og formaning er ikke en objektiv forskjell i ordet, men subjektiv i menneskene.*

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. ...og gjør alt, for så vidt det er gjenfødt, av en frivillig glad ånd.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. Selv en kristens beste gjerninger må dekkes av Kristi rettferdighets hvite drakt.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 144-145. Formaningene viser veien, og vi trenger dem. Men et ord som >>skapet hva det nevnet<<, det er de ikke.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 145. Citation from the Tappert edition, 531.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Citation from the Tappert edition, 531.

grace. So when the Word is called a means of grace, it is the Gospel Word that is meant, for the Gospel Word can create life.<sup>153</sup> The Gospel is a Word that can save, for through this Word comes the forgiveness of sins with all that that brings.<sup>154</sup> We shall now consider the Gospel Word of baptism.

### Baptism as a Means of Grace

We turn now to Wisløff's teaching on baptism as a means of grace.<sup>155</sup> We will not give a comprehensive presentation on baptism but rather focus on baptism as a means of grace as relevant for our topic. It is critical for Wisløff that baptism be presented within its organical connection to the whole of the Christian faith.<sup>156</sup> A failure to do this often results in a misunderstanding of baptism. He does this by establishing that the main truth of the New Testament is that life with God consists in the life of fellowship with Jesus. And that God has bound this life of fellowship to certain external means.<sup>157</sup> Baptism is one of these external means that puts us in connection with Jesus. This is clearly seen in Romans 6. It does not speak about the apostle's subjective experiences at the time he was baptized, or his personal

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<sup>153</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 125. Når vi kaller ordet for et *nådemiddel*, skal vi merke oss at vi dermed mener *evangeliet*, ikke *loven*. For loven er <<tjener for fordømmelsen>> (2. Kor. 3, 9); loven virker vrede og syndserkjennelse, men den kan ikke vekke til liv, og er derfor intet nådemiddel. Evangeliet derimot, det er <<tjener for rettferdigheten>> (2. Kor. 3, 9); evangeliet kan skape tro i hjertet, det kan gi liv og er derfor et nådemiddel.

<sup>154</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1946), 121.

<sup>155</sup> Wisløff has treated the topic of baptism in number of writings including *Lov og evangelium i forkynnelse for barn* (1939); *Jesu dåp og vår dåp* (1941); *Barnedåpens betydning for den voksne* (1942); *Dåpen* (1943); "Et sjult dåpliv" (1945); "Udøpte barns skjebne" (1968); *Dåp- barnedåp* (1975).

<sup>156</sup> Wisløff, *Barnedåpens betydning for den voksne* (1942), part I.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

feelings, how he knew and had it.<sup>158</sup> Rather it speaks of “something God did with him. God took him and united him with Jesus. Here something happened not only on earth, as Paul ‘knew it’ so. No, here something happened in heaven: God dealt with him, God grasped him and united him with His Son.”<sup>159</sup> What happened to Paul was greater and more important than his feelings and experiences, for “he became one with Jesus, Jesus’ life and grace became his, the branch was grafted into the vine.”<sup>160</sup>

Baptism is seen as a means of grace by looking at what it is and what it gives. It has its basis in Jesus command as found in Matthew 28:20.<sup>161</sup> In Acts 2:38 Peter clearly states what we receive in baptism. Wisløff says that “Peter did not allow his hearers to be in doubt about what they received in baptism – it gave them the forgiveness of sins”<sup>162</sup> ... “that is the first, greatest and real gift that God has to give poor sinners.”<sup>163</sup> It is possible for baptism to give this gift because baptized in Jesus Christ’s name, “we are baptized on the basis of that which Jesus is and has! His name, his person, his work is the basis on which baptism happens. In it baptism gets its power and effect.”<sup>164</sup> Baptism also gives the Holy Spirit.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Nei, her tales rett og slett om noe som Gud gjorde med ham. Gud tok ham og *forenet ham med Jesus*. Her skjedde ikke bare noe på jorden, idet Paulus <<kjente det>> slik. Nei, her skjedde noe – *i himmelen*: Gud handlet med ham, Gud grep ham og forente ham med sin sønn.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Han ble ett med Jesus, Jesu liv og nåde ble hans, grenen ble innpodet i vintreet.

<sup>161</sup> Wisløff, *Jesu dåp og vår dåp* (1941), 5.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Peter lot ikke sine tilhørere være i tvil om hva de fikk i dåpen – den ga dem syndenes forlatelse.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Syndenes forlatelse – det er den første, slørste og egentlige gave som Gud har å gi til fatlige syndere.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. På hans navn døpes vi. Det vil si: Vi døpes på grunnlag av det som Jesus er og har! Hans navn, hans person, hans verk er det grunnlag som dåpen skjer på. i det henter dåpen sin kraft og virkning.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 6.

The forgiveness of sins makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to dwell in the person.<sup>166</sup>

Wisløff draws from Titus 3:5, which says that baptism is ‘a washing of regeneration’ to show that “*baptism works regeneration, that is, the person receives a living faith, the heart a new light and a new desire, in it the Holy Spirit takes abode there.*”<sup>167</sup> Regeneration, given in baptism, “is the fruit of the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>168</sup> “All this is given in baptism, says the word.”<sup>169</sup>

Wisløff states that “baptism is grace,” for it “is something that God does with us. It is not we who do something in baptism; it is God who acts.”<sup>170</sup> Closely related to this is the relationship of baptism to the Gospel. For Wisløff “baptism is Gospel.”<sup>171</sup> Baptism is a “Word of Gospel that speaks about how God is. So gracious is God, so loving is He, so full of mercy towards us is He. A visible word that invites you and reminds you about what He has done for you. He the good shepherd. He never forgets any of His.”<sup>172</sup> Baptism as Gospel is therefore a means of grace through which God “gives us by grace the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit for regeneration. Salvation becomes ours in baptism.”<sup>173</sup> On the basis of I Peter 3:21, Wisløff argues that the meaning of *eperotema* is “prayer” or “claim” and therefore

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. *Dåpen virker gjensfødelse, dvs. mennesket får en levende tro, hjertet et nytt lys og ny lyst, I del den Hellige Ånd tar bolig der.*

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. Gjensfødelse er frukten av syndenes forlatelse.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. Alt dette gis i dåpen, sier ordet.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. Dåp er bare nåde. ... Dåp er noe som Gud gjør med oss. Det er ikke vi som gjør noe i dåpen, det er Gud som handler.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 8. Dåp er evangelium.

<sup>172</sup> Wisløff, *Dåpen* (1943), 9. Den er evangeliets ord som taler om hvordan Gud er. Så nådig er Gud, så kjærlig er Han, så full av miskunnhet overfor oss er han. Et synlig ord, som innbyr deg og minner deg om hva Han har gjort for deg. Han den gode byrde. Han glemmer aldri noen av sine.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 13. Dåpen er et nådemiddel. Han gir oss. Av nåde syndernes forlatelse, den hellige ånd til gjensfødelse. Frelsen blir vår i dåpen.

he concludes “that the one who is baptized has claim to possess a good conscience. He has through baptism (if only he believes) received the right to possess all of salvation’s goods – especially also a good conscience, which he can only possess in the truth that he is cleansed from sin’s guilt.”<sup>174</sup>

Wisløff relates the Gospel of baptism to covenant. He cites Luther who stated that “God has made a covenant with all heathen through the Gospel and ordained baptism to be a sign thereof.”<sup>175</sup> He notes that “in the same manner God made a covenant with Abraham and all his descendants to be their God and He made circumcision a sign of that covenant.”<sup>176</sup> God acts at His initiative and totally “out of free grace He commits Himself to save us, sending His Son to be our Savior and to pay the penalty for our sins.”<sup>177</sup> So in the same way, Wisløff points out that God “by free grace takes the initiative in my baptism. He committed Himself to me and gave me the sign of the covenant in baptism, a sign and covenant to which I can appeal.”<sup>178</sup>

The Gospel and the means of grace nature of baptism is significant in determining who baptism is for. Wisløff is clear about the need of infants to have the forgiveness of sins. On

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<sup>174</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Rett til å eie en god samvittighet” (*For Fattig og Rik*, 5 desember, 1943). Det ordet som her er brukt, betyr <<bønn>> eller <<krav>>. Og meningen er, at den som er dopt har krav på å eie en god samvittighet. Han har ved dåpen (så sant han tror) fått rett til å eie alle frelsens goder – således også en god samvittighet, som jo bare den kan eie i sannhet som er rensset fra syndens skyld.

<sup>175</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 26. See AE 40:257.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. Wisløff’s view of the nature of the baptismal covenant is somewhat in contrast with Pontoppidan who said that baptism was called a covenant because it is a mutual agreement where God promises man something and man promises God something ( Pontoppidan, Sporsmal 667). God promises deliverance from sin, death and the devil, and participation in eternal life (Sporsmal 668). Man promises to forsake the devil, all his works, his ways which are sin and its dominion, and to believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Sporsmal 669). It is possible by grace for the believer to keep this covenant through daily watchfulness, prayer and fighting against the devil and his ways (Sporsmal 670).

the basis of John 3:6; Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:3; Mark 7:21; and Job 14:4, he argues that it is clear that the child does not come into the world as a child of God, rather it can become one only by being born anew.<sup>179</sup> Wisløff responds that those who oppose infant baptism because the infant can not believe have forsaken the biblical view of faith.<sup>180</sup> The Bible does not speak of faith as a decision of the will that a person makes after it is clear that he would desire to become a Christian, or that a person has a free will so that he can believe if he wants to and let it pass if he wants, or that he can readily convert when and where he will.<sup>181</sup>

On the contrary, “the Bible nails down emphatically, that there is something that comes *before* faith. And it is the *Word*. Romans 10:17, Faith comes by preaching and preaching by God’s Word.”<sup>182</sup> For “the *Gospel’s* grace-Word kindles faith – through the Spirit – in the heart.”<sup>183</sup> Thus “my faith is not first and then comes grace. No, the grace-Word is the first, and then comes my faith.”<sup>184</sup> So it is God who “takes the initiative, not we. Faith does not come before God’s means of grace, but through God’s means of grace. Faith is not a natural inclination, a natural ability that only comes when we become big enough. Faith is created by God’s Word and Spirit.”<sup>185</sup> “Therefore” says Wisløff, “it is Biblically correct to say it this way: *God creates faith in the infant in baptism, in and through the Word that*

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<sup>179</sup> Wisløff, *Jesu dåp og vår dåp* (1941), 10-11.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* Bibelen slår ettertrykkelig fast, at det er noe som kommer *før* troen. Og det er – *ordet*. Rom. 10, 17: Troen kommer av forkynnelsen – og forkynnelsen av Guds ord.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* ... ved *evangeliets* nåde-ord tender troen – ved ånden – i hjertet.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. Det er ikke min tro som er det første – og så kommer nåden. Nei. nådeordet er det første og så kommer min tro.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* Gud tar initiativet, ikke vi. Troen kommer ikke før Guds nådemidler, men ved Guds nådemidler. Troen er ikke et naturanlegg i oss, en naturlig evne som kommer bare vi blir store nok. Troen er skapt av Guds ord og ånd.

*sounds, through his Holy Spirit.*”<sup>186</sup> For Wisløff “all who deny infant baptism and preach about baptism as an ‘act of obedience,’ whereby the adult rejects his infant baptism and ‘follows Jesus the whole way,’ changes the whole character of baptism as Gospel and makes it a Law. For they speak as if baptism was something God demands of us, which is really a legalistic way of speaking.”<sup>187</sup> Baptism is a pure Gospel Word without conditions that is faith creating, therefore it is for the infant.

Having recognized that the means of grace precedes faith and thus for the child in “the washing of regeneration God receives the helpless child and makes it His. This is the miracle of regeneration.”<sup>188</sup> In this way “baptism is the foundation for the child’s Christian life when it awakens to conscious faith.”<sup>189</sup> Wisløff asserts that it is “God’s purpose that the child shall always remain in unbroken fellowship with Jesus. But even if it turns away from Jesus, and then later is converted to Him, the promises of baptism are constantly the basis for the standing in grace.”<sup>190</sup> In the case of infant baptism “God was present as early as possible with

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid. Derfor er det bibelsk rett å si det således *Gud skaper troen hos barnet i dåpen, i og ved det ord som lyder, ved sin Hellige Ånd.*

<sup>187</sup> Wisløff, *Lov og evangelium...*(1939), 29. Alle som nekter barnedåpen og preker om dåpen som en <<lydighetshandling>>, hvorved den voksne forkaster sin barnedåp og <<følger Jesus hele veien>> - disse forvrenger hele dåpens krakter av *evangelium* og gjør den til en lov. For de taler som om dåpen var noe Gud forlanger av oss, og det er en riktig lovisk tale.

<sup>188</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 138. Når det gjelder barnedåpen vil det si at nådemidlet kommer først; i dåpens bad tar Gud imot det hjelpeløse barn og gjør det til sitt. Det er gjenfødelsens under. This is strengthened from the 1959 edition which reads that baptism serves “as effective call to the child that its whole life shall be dedicated to Jesus Christ.” Når det gjelder barnedåpen vil det si at nådemidlet, <<det synlige ord>>, kommer først, som et virksomt kall til barnet om at hele dets liv skal være innviet til Jesus Kristus. (p. 125)

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. Dermed er dåpen grunnlaget for barnets kristenliv når det våkner til bevisst tro.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. Guds tanke er at barnet skal være hos Jesus bestandig. Men selv om det vender seg bort fra Jesus, og så senere omvender seg til ham, er stadig dåpens løfteord grunnlaget for nådestanden.

His calling grace, because He wants the whole life to be dedicated to Him.”<sup>191</sup> Wisløff says that “with every justification, therefore, baptism has been called ‘the door to grace.’ God gives the child all of His grace in the washing of baptism.”<sup>192</sup>

Wisløff does not understand baptism as a means of grace in such a manner that it has a continuing residual effect or presence within the person who no longer believes. In developing this point, he makes a distinction between the effect of baptism and the validity of baptism.<sup>193</sup> He does this in response to several within Lutheranism who maintain that there are residual effects of baptism that remain in those who no longer believe.<sup>194</sup> Wisløff identifies Grundtvig, who “speaks of this effect in terms of the fertile mud of the Nile River, in which you sow and reap after its flood waters have receded.”<sup>195</sup> The hidden baptismal life “is also like a spark which is never completely extinguished.”<sup>196</sup> In the same way, “Ole Hallesby speaks of the lasting effects of baptism by comparing it to the electric installation in a house. The installation is still there even if the electricity has been shut off through failure to pay the electric bill.”<sup>197</sup>

Wisløff, however, argues that such thinking is not Biblical and “if one is no longer a child of God, then baptism has lost its effect but its validity is not impaired,” because

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid. Barsedåpen vil si at Gud var der med sin kallende nåde så tidlig som mulig i barnets liv, fordi han vil at hele livet skal være innviet til ham.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. Med all rett har derfor dåpen vært kalt <<nådens port>>. I dåpens bad gir Gud barnet all sin nåde.

<sup>193</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 24.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. Also discussed on pages 2-3.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. However it is important to say that Hallesby considers the baptized person who no longer lives in repentance and faith to be spiritually dead, without salvation, and in need of awakening and conversion.

“baptism is a covenant in which God Himself has promised to be our God.”<sup>198</sup> He finds that Luther in the *Large Catechism* makes the difference between the effect and the validity of baptism. Luther states: “Even though a Jew should today come deceitfully and with an evil purpose, and we baptized him in all good faith, we should have to admit that his baptism was valid.”<sup>199</sup> Referring to the sixteenth century debate between Samuel Huber (c. 1547-1624) and Aegidius Hunnius (1550-1603), Wisløff points out that in response to Huber’s claim that “everyone who is baptized is regenerated at that very moment,” Hunnius said: “No, this is not true. Baptismal validity is one thing; the effect is something different. Everyone who is baptized will have a valid baptism, but the effect of baptism is only received by faith.”<sup>200</sup> This distinction means that even though one has a valid baptism it may no longer be effective due to the loss of faith, thus the need for the baptized to be evangelized and converted.

Very important for Wisløff’s understanding of the sacraments, and in particular baptism, is Luther’s point that it “consists of two things, the Word and the sign,” and “the Word is always the most important.”<sup>201</sup> “Therefore,” says Wisløff, “in baptism and in communion, as in the Christian life in general, two things come into consideration: God’s promise and man’s faith.”<sup>202</sup> He concludes that “sacramentalism tends to obscure this fact in

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> LC IV, 54. Tappert p. 443. The German text reads: Denn wenngleich diesen Tag ein Jude mit Schalfheit und bösem Vorsatz herzukäme, und wir ihn mit ganzem Ernst taufen, sollen wir nichtsdeftoweniger sagen, dass die Taufe recht wäre. Latin text: Nam quamquam hodierno die Judaeus quispiam fraudulentam quapiam simulatione et malitioso proposito veniret, se baptizandum offerens, nosque eundem omni studio baptizarem, nihilosecus nobis dicendum esset baptismum verum et rectum esse.

<sup>200</sup> Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 25. Wisløff is referring to Aegidius Hunnius: *Explicatio controversiae inter D. Samuelem Huberum et collegas eius* (1594). III. De Regeneratione. Hunnius is speaking the way of Augustine here.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. Wisløff draws this material from Luther’s *The Babylonian Captivity* (1520), AE 36: 11-126.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 27.

that it makes the sacrament something which produces its own effect.”<sup>203</sup> An example of this obscuration is when people are asked to return to their baptism. Instead they are to return to the promise given in baptism. Quoting Luther: “The first thing to be considered about baptism is the divine promise: ‘He who believes and is baptized will be saved.’”<sup>204</sup> And according to Luther, “if any one is able somehow by grace to return to the ship, it is not on any such plank, but in the solid ship itself that he is borne to life.”<sup>205</sup> This means that “such a person is the one who returns through faith to the abiding and enduring promise of God.”<sup>206</sup> Wisløff’s point is further supported by Luther’s comment, “what is the good, then, of writing so much about baptism and yet not teaching this faith in the promise?”<sup>207</sup>

The issue is not just if one has been baptized but does one believe what is promised in baptism. As Luther said: “Thus it is not baptism that justifies or benefits anyone, but it is faith in that word of promise to baptism is added.”<sup>208</sup> It must be remembered that “to seek the efficacy of the sacrament apart from the promise and apart from the faith is to labor in vain and to find condemnation.”<sup>209</sup> So Wisløff emphasizes that “if it is forgotten that the great main matter is the Gospel’s promise and faith trust in Jesus, then, something will be missed no matter how ‘Lutheran’ the stressing of baptism, for then one lands in sacramentalism.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 28. AE 36:58.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. AE 36:61.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. AE 36:61.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. AE 36:61.

<sup>208</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 126. AE 36:66.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. AE 36:67.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 135. Blir det glemt at den store hovedsak er evangeliets løfte og troens tillit til Jesus, da vil en aldri så <<luthersk>> fremhevelse av dåpen være forfeilet, for da havner man i sakramentalisme.

The Lord does His delivering of salvation through means. The child needs this salvation. Thus the necessity of baptism raises the issue of the fate of the unbaptized child. Wisløff rejects the reasoning which on the basis of *Augustana* Articles II and IX concludes that the Lutherans teach that an unbaptized child goes lost.<sup>211</sup> Rather, he says, “the pastor should remind them that ‘it is the contempt for the sacrament that condemns, not the lack of it,’ and they should point the mothers to the Word of Jesus: ‘Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish’ (Matthew 18:14).”<sup>212</sup> We must not go beyond God’s Word; so “what God has not revealed to us we leave with him.”<sup>213</sup>

We have heard how Wisløff sets forth baptism as pure Gospel given by God as a means to deliver his salvation gifts. We turn to the Supper given us by the Lord.

### The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace

The Lord who is rich in grace has another means by which He delivers the forgiveness of sins, the Lord’s Supper. Wisløff states that just “as ancient Israel had its covenant-meal, the pascal lamb, so also the Israel of the new covenant has the Lord’s Supper,” which is “something more than its prototype.”<sup>214</sup> To get at what the Lord’s Supper is and gives, Wisløff takes as his point of departure the words of institution, which are to be taken “exactly

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., *Jeg vet...* (1987), 142. Wisløff did not discuss this issue in the 1946 edition but did add a section in the 1959 edition. He wrote a popular article in 1967 “Hva Sier Reformatorene Om Udøpte Barns Skjebne?” (*Fast Grunn* 20 nr. 6, 1967):358-361, and a more scholarly one “Udøpte barns skjebne” (*TTK* 39 nr. 1, 1968):10-35.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. Prestene skulle minne dem om at <<det er forakt for sakramentet som fordømmer, ikke savnet av det,>> og de skal vise mødrene til Jesu ord: <<Det er ikke deres himmelske Fars vilje at en eneste av disse små skal fortapes.>> Mt. 18, 14.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. Men vi trekker ikke derfor noen konsekvenser ut over det Guds ord sier. Det Gud ikke har åpenbart for oss, overlater vi til ham.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 143. Som det gamle Israel hadde sitt paktsmåltid, påskelammet, så har den nye pakts Israel også sitt: Nattverden. ... Men nattverden er samtidig noe mer enn sitt forbilde.

as they stand.”<sup>215</sup> So “we must see what *the words* say, those words Jesus used when he instituted the Lord’s Supper, *that* is the key.”<sup>216</sup> He asserts that “the sacraments have in the church’s history been subjected to being explained more by human notions than from God’s own word.”<sup>217</sup> The Lutheran view, however, is the result of giving attention to the words.

Wisløff contrasts this with the Roman Catholic view and its corresponding theory of transubstantiation.<sup>218</sup> This ignores the clear word of 1 Corinthians 10:16, where “Paul calls the consecrated bread *bread*.”<sup>219</sup> Wisløff argues, in addition, that “the Scripture says quite certainly that the bread ‘is’ Christ’s body, but it does not say ‘is transformed into it.’”<sup>220</sup>

Wisløff points to John 1:14 and argues that “ ‘the Word became flesh’ does *not* mean ‘became transformed into flesh.’ God’s eternal Son was not transformed into man. In the same

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 145. Vi må ta ordene akkurat slik som de står.

<sup>216</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Nattverden – fellesskap på syndsforlatelsens grunn” *Credo* Nr. 6, (1979), 8. Vi må se hva *ordene* sier, de Jesus brukte da han innstiftet nattverden, *det* er nøkkelen. Wisløff is indebted to Luther for this understanding. See “The Words of Institution Interpret the Sacrament,” a chapter in *The Gift of Communion: Luther’s Controversy with Rome on Eucharistic Sacrifice*, 22-31. Wisløff points out that when Luther says that the word is of greater importance than the sign he does not mean this in a way that minimizes the real presence. It does not have to do with the relationship between the sacrament and the word (i.e. preached word). Rather it has to do with the relationship between two components that together constitute the sacrament of the altar, namely, the *Word* (words of institution) that comes to the elements (bread and wine). What Luther means is that when it involves comprehending what Jesus’ body’s and blood’s sacrament means, then the Word (words of institution) is of greater importance than the Sign (bread and wine). Idem., “Luthersk nattverdsyn” LK 98 Nr.11 (1963), 250.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. Sakramentene har i kirkens historie vært utsatt for å bli tolket mer ut fra menneskeforestillinger enn fra Guds eget ord.

<sup>218</sup> Wisløff states that “in his teaching concerning the real presence Luther stands much closer to the Catholic teaching than it has often been assumed. That he rejects the doctrine of transubstantiation means that the real presence is freed from a philosophical *a priori*, but in no wise does it mean that the sacramental realism is weakened.” Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 141.

<sup>219</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 144. Paulus kaller det innvigde brød for *brød*. 1. Kor. 10, 16.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. Skriften sier ganske visst at brødet << er>> Kristi legeme, men det står ikke <<er forvandlet til.>>

manner we must understand the word ‘is’ in the account of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>221</sup> Thus he summarizes: “Bread and wine are still bread and wine, but in and with that we receive this bread and wine, we receive Jesus’ body and blood.”<sup>222</sup> We noted in a previous chapter that Wisløff says that it is Luther’s view that the *Verba* are not only addressed to the people but are also words of consecration by which they are “action words” through which the miracle of consecration takes place. This also seems to be Wisløff’s own position. He gives no evidence to the contrary.

An additional contrast concerns the the Roman understanding of the sacrament as a “work” and as an “offering.” Wisløff has dealt extensively with Luther’s understanding of this issue in his doctoral dissertation *The Gift of Communion*. We will not go into detail here but will rather summarize some of Wisløff’s conclusions. The mass (the Lord’s Supper) as work is rejected on the basis of the words of institution which clearly teach that the Lord’s Supper is promise and what corresponds to promise is faith not works. He states: “The relation to the sacrament is the relation to God, and man cannot have dealing with God except through faith.”<sup>223</sup> So “the sacrifice of the mass has been confronted with the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith without works.”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid. Til sammenligning er det med rette blitt henvist til Joh. 1, 14. Når det her står at <<Ordet ble kjød,>> så betyr det nettopp *ikke* <<ble forvandlet til <<kjød>>. Guds evige Sønn ble ikke forvandlet til et menneske; han ble et menneske, men slik at han siden både er sann Gud og sant menneske. – På samme måte må vi forstå ordet <<er>> i nattverdberetningen.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. Brød og vln er fremdeles brød og vin, men i og med at vi mottar dette brød og denne vin, mottar vi Jesu legeme og blod.

<sup>223</sup> Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 44. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 54. Forholdet til sakramentet er forholdet til Gud, og man kan ikke ha med Gud å gjøre uten ved troen.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 65. Linjen er ikke vanskelig å få øye på: messeofferet har her vært konfrontert med evangeliet om frelse av nåde ved tro, uten gjerninger.

Concerning the mass as “offering” or sacrifice Wisløff gives consideration to Melanchthon’s treatment in the *Apology*, Article XXIV. He observes that Melanchthon wants to make clear that the evangelicals have not abolished the mass and that the mass in a certain sense can still be called *sacrificium*.<sup>225</sup> Melanchthon regards *sacramentum* as “the *cermonia* or *opus* whereby God gives what the sacrament’s *promissio* offers, while *sacrificium* is the *ceremonia* or *opus* which we render to God to his glory.”<sup>226</sup> In addition he “distinguishes between two kinds of *sacrificium*: a sacrifice which works atonement and a sacrifice of thanksgiving. The one is a work rendering satisfaction for guilt and punishment; and the other is the giving of thanks by those who have been reconciled to God for the grace received.”<sup>227</sup>

Wisløff argues that Luther who takes his point of departure from the *Verba* shows “that the mass cannot be a ‘work,’ and it cannot be a ‘sacrifice.’”<sup>228</sup> Since “the mass is *promissio*, therefore it cannot be our doing,” and since “the mass is the sacrament’s gift to us from God, therefore it cannot be our sacrifice to him.”<sup>229</sup> Luther says in the *Small Catechism*: “given to us Christians to eat and to drink.”<sup>230</sup> Wisløff notes that the “Lord’s Supper aims at *the communion*, for the words of institution say: Take and eat it, drink all of it. We hold to the

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 57. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 66-67.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 67. *Sacramentum* er den *ceremonia* eller det *opus* hvorved Gud gir oss det som sakramentets *promissio* utlover, mens *sacrificium* er den *ceremonia* eller *opus* som vi yter Gud, til hans ære.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 67. Videre skjelner han mellom to slags *sacrificium*: Sonoffer og takkeoffer. Det ene er *opus satisfactorium pro culpa et poena*, det andre er takksigelsen for den mottatte nåde fra dem som er blitt forsonet med Gud.

<sup>228</sup> Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 78. Vi summerer opp: *Verba* viser at messen ikke kan være <<werck>>, og den kan ikke være <<opffer>>.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. Messen er *promissio*, derfor kan den ikke være vår gjerning – det har vi tidligere sett. Og: messen er sakramentets gave til oss fra Gud, derfor kan den ikke være vårt offer til ham.

<sup>230</sup> Wisløff, “Luthersk nattverdsyn” (1960), 252. I katekismen derimot heter det: - gitt oss kristne for at vi skulle ete og drikke det.

words of institution. The sacrament shall be used as the Lord himself has said. We ‘perceive the sacrament in the Word’ and the word speaks of the communion, not of any offering.”<sup>231</sup>

The Lord’s Supper was given to us to eat and drink, and that gives us the forgiveness of sins through faith. Wisløff does point out that Luther does grant that “*not the sacrament itself* but *its reception and use* to be called a sacrifice.”<sup>232</sup> Thus Luther explains: “That it be called not a symbolical sacrifice or a work sacrifice but a thank offering, that is, that whoever receives the sacrament may be said to have done so as a sign of his thankfulness, by which he signifies that he himself is grateful in his heart to Christ for his suffering and grace.”<sup>233</sup> This is not to be confused with the Catholic understanding of the mass as an offering. Wisløff says that we should take note of the total absence of offering terminology in Luther’s liturgical writings. Wisløff states: “In the moment of the Lord’s Supper, Luther will not give any grounds for the thought of an offering from our side; here nothing shall be spoken of any thing other than a gift that is received by the heart and by the mouth.”<sup>234</sup>

Wisløff concludes that even though both Melanchthon and Luther speak about a sacrifice of thanksgiving, but not about an atoning sacrifice, there is one very significant

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid. Nattverden sikter på *kommunionen*, for inn-stiftelsesordene sier: Ta dette og et det drikk alle derav. Det er innstiftelsesordene vi har å holde oss til. Sakramentet skal brukes slik som Herren selv har sagt, ikke annerledes; vi skal jo <<anskue sakramentet i Ordet>> og ordet taler om kommunionen, ikke om noe offer.

<sup>232</sup> Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 97. WA.30, 2, 613. 6. *Ikke sakramentet selv* (Kristi legeme og blod under brød og vin), men *bruken og mottakelsen* av sakramentet kan kalles et takkeoffer. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 83.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 96. WA. 30, 2, 613. 6. Dette ekspliseres slik : <<das es nicht ein deut oppfer odder werck oppfer, sondern ein danck oppfer heisse, also, das wer das Sacrament empfehet, sol das, zum zeichen seiner dancksagung gethan haben, damit er anzeigt, das er Christo fur sein leiden und gnade jnn seinem hertzen danckbar sey, fur sich selbs. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 83.

<sup>234</sup> Wisløff, “Luthersk nattverdsyn” (1960), 254. I nattverdens stund vil ikke L. gi noe holdepunkt for tanken på et offer fra vår side; her skal ikke tales om noe som helst annet enn en gave som tas imot med hjertet og med munnen. Wisløff sees this as an important point in light of the ecumenical movement, in which many Lutherans want to find support in Luther for making offering talk part of the nature of the Lord’s Supper. See Ibid., 253-254.

difference. He states: “Melanchthon says that the ‘*ceremonia*’ of the mass can be used as a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Luther in his way says the same, but he includes one modification that is missing in Melanchthon: *Not the sacrament itself* (Christ’s body and blood under bread and wine), but *the use and reception* of the sacrament can be called a sacrifice of thanksgiving.”<sup>235</sup> In sum, for Luther, says Wisløff, “the sacrifice is not Christ’s body and blood, but our believing use of it can be called a sacrifice of thanksgiving.”<sup>236</sup>

Wisløff also engages the Reformed doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>237</sup> Zwingli’s symbolic interpretation of “This is my body,” to mean a picture of my body, or Calvin’s approach whereby it is the Spirit who effects the communion, both say less than the Scripture.<sup>238</sup> Here again paying attention to the words of institution is the key to the Biblical understanding of the real presence in the sacrament.<sup>239</sup>

A point needs to be added concerning the notion of remembrance. Wisløff brings out that for Luther “the remembrance takes place through the preaching of the Gospel.”<sup>240</sup> This is in contrast to both the enthusiast and the Roman interpretation, which “amount to ‘inner

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<sup>235</sup> Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe* (1957), 97. Men det er en betydningsfull forskjell: Melanchthon sier at messens <<ceremonia>> kan brukes som et takkeoffer. Luther sier på sitt vis det samme, men han inkluderer en bestemmelse som mangler hos Melanchthon: *Ikke sakramentet selv* (Kristi legeme og blod under brød og vin), men *bruken og mottakelsen* av sakramentet kan kalles et takkeoffer. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 83.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. Offeret er ikke Kristi legeme og blod, men vår troende bruk av dette kan kalles et takkeoffer. Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 83.

<sup>237</sup> See Wisløff, “Nattverden – fellesskap på syndsforlatelsens grunn,” (1979), 10; idem., *Martins Luthers teologi* (1984), 138-141.

<sup>238</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 145.

<sup>239</sup> Wisløff asserts that for Luther “faith in the real presence of Christ’s body and blood under the bread and wine is for him a shibboleth for loyalty toward revelation’s objective reality in general.” Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 140.

<sup>240</sup> Wisløff, *Gift of Communion* (1964), 89. See WA 1, 334. 8, where Luther says “this memorial requires a sermon.”

thoughts of the heart.’ The ‘place’ of the remembrance in both instances is ‘the heart.’”<sup>241</sup>

Accordingly, Luther “places his tradition-minded foes and the enthusiasts on the same level.”<sup>242</sup> For Luther, on the other hand, “the remembrance was an external act coinciding with the proclamation of the Lord’s death – in the audible word of the sermon and through the obedient and believing performance of the ceremony of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>243</sup> Thus remembrance is *extra nos* and runs the way of gifts being given.

The real presence in the Lord’s Supper raises the issue of Christ’s ubiquity. Wisløff says that it is unclear whether or not Luther considers the teaching of ubiquity to be a teaching of Scripture or if he only suggests it as a way of thinking about these things.<sup>244</sup> Wisløff acknowledges that it has confessional status in the *Formula of Concord*. He also notes that the Norwegian Lutheran State Church is not bound to the *Formula*, but she can be content in seeing this teaching as a theological model or explanation.<sup>245</sup> He seems to be expressing here some reservation about the ubiquity of Christ as a way of explaining the real presence.

It is the focus on the word that results in the Lutheran view of the real presence in the Lord’s Supper with all that this means.<sup>246</sup> The word is “not a magic word, but *the Gospel in total*. Luther calls the Lord’s Supper-word *promissio, evangelium, testamentum*.”<sup>247</sup> The real presence means “that he comes to *me*. The Lord’s Supper’s holy action, that Jesus has

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 140.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Wisløff, “Luthersk nattverdsyn” LK 98 Nr.11 (1963), 250.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. Ordet er ikke et trylleord, men *evangeliet i en sum*. Luther kaller nattverdordet *promissio, evangelium, testamentum*.

instituted, when he said: 'Do this to remember me,' is the most concrete reminder of the basic matter in Christianity that *he* comes to *me*."<sup>248</sup> Wisløff identifies the One who comes as "the Word, God's eternal Word who was with God and *was* God, he through whom all things are created, says John in chapter 1, - 'this eternal word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory.' He comes to *me*."<sup>249</sup> This is the One who comes in the Lord's Supper.

On the basis of the real presence He comes in a visible manner. Wisløff says, "I see it, and I quite simply receive it with my mouth."<sup>250</sup> He has observed that "according to Luther's conviction the person who denies that Christ's body and blood are received with the mouth cannot believe in Christ's divine-human person."<sup>251</sup> Luther said: "O my dear man, if one will not believe the article of the Lord's Supper, how will he ever believe the article of the humanity and divinity of Christ in one person?"<sup>252</sup> Wisløff likens the visible manner of the real presence to what is written in 1 John 1:1-3. This is the way God revealed himself to John and came to him and so it happens to us in the Lord's Supper as He comes to us in this visible means. We see with our eyes, receive with our hands and mouth this One who is our God and our brother.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., "Nattverden ..." *Credo* Nr. 6 (1979), 10. Det vil for det første si at han kommer til meg. Nattverdets hellige handling, som Jesus har innstiftet, da han sa: <<Gjør dette til minne om meg>>, er den mest konkrete påminnelse om den grunnsak i kristendommen at han l kommer til meg.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid. Ordet, det evige Guds ord som var hos Gud og var Gud, han ved hvem alle ting er skapt, sier Johannes i kap. 1, - dette evige Guds ord ble til kjød og tok bolig iblant oss, og vi så hans herlighet.>> Han kommer til *meg*.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 11. Jeg ser det, og jeg tar ganske enkelt imot det med min munn.

<sup>251</sup> Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 141.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. WA 54, 157. 25. (1544) <<0 lieber Mensch, wer nicht wil gleuben den Artickel im Abendmal, wie wil er doch jmer mehr gleuben den Artickel von der Menschheit und Gottheit Christi in einer Person ?>>

<sup>253</sup> Wisløff, "Nattverden ..." *Credo* Nr. 6 (1979), 11.

Wisløff shows that “if one regards the Lord’s Supper in the light of the Word, that is the Gospel’s grace-message in total, then the light falls over a line of important things.”<sup>254</sup> He concludes that “if the Lord’s Supper’s nature is expressed in the Word, which is Gospel, then the Lord’s Supper aims at *faith*, the Lord’s Supper’s guest’s faith.”<sup>255</sup> This is evident in the way that the service is conducted. “In the Roman Mass the priest stands and whispers the holy words of consecration; in the Lutheran divine service he sings or reads the same word with a loud voice so that it shall be heard and believed.”<sup>256</sup> In addition, “if the Lord’s Supper’s nature is expressed in the Gospel’s Word, then its gift is the forgiveness of sins, and nothing else.”<sup>257</sup>

It is Wisløff’s observation that Luther did not always stick by his own principle of interpreting the sacrament according to the words of institution, whereby the Lord’s Supper’s nature is expressed in the Word of the Gospel and its gift is the forgiveness of sins and nothing else.<sup>258</sup> Wisløff points to *That These Words of Christ...* (1527) and a few other places where Luther follows Irenaeus in the Lord’s Supper also being a “food for the

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<sup>254</sup> Wisløff, “Luthersk nattverdsyn” LK 98 Nr. 11(1963), 251. Betrakter man nattverden i lyset av Ordet, som er evangeliets nådebudskap i en sum, da faller det lys over en rekke viktige ting.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. Er nattverdens vesen uttrykt i Ordet, som er evangelium, da sikter nattverden på *troen*, nattverd gjestenes tro.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. I romermessen står presten og hvisker de hellige konsekrasjonsord uhørlig; i den lutherske gudstjeneste synger eller leser han de samme ord med høy røst - for at de skal bli hørt og trodd.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. Videre: Er nattverdens vesen uttrykt i evangeliets ord, da er dens gave syndenes forlatelse, og intet annet.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

immortality of the body.”<sup>259</sup> Wisløff does not see this as being included in the gifts that the Lord’s Supper delivers.<sup>260</sup>

Wisløff sees that the pastor’s act at the altar is thus “a service that God will have carried out by men who are called to serve the Gospel, as it says in *Augustana V.*”<sup>261</sup> He quotes affirmingly Luther’s *The Private Mass And The Consecration Of Priests* to more fully express the action of the pastor.

There our pastor, bishop, or minister in the pastoral office, rightly and honorably and publicly called, having been previously consecrated, anointed, and born in baptism as a priest of Christ, without regard to the private chrism, goes before the altar. Publicly and plainly he sings what Christ has ordained and instituted in the Lord’s Supper. He takes the bread and wine, gives thanks, distributes and gives them to the rest of us who are there and want to receive them, on the strength of the words of Christ: “This is my body, this is my blood. Do this,” etc. Particularly we who want to receive the sacrament kneel beside, behind, and around him, man, woman, young, old, master, servant, wife, maid, parents, and children, even as God brings us together there, all of us true, holy priests, sanctified by Christ’s blood, anointed by the Holy Spirit and consecrated in baptism. On the basis of this our inborn, hereditary priestly honor and attire we are present, have, as Revelation 4 [:4] pictures it, our golden crowns on our heads, harps and golden censers in our hands; and we let our pastor say what Christ has ordained, not for himself as though it were for his person, but he is the mouth for all of us and we all speak the words with him from the heart and in faith, directed to the Lamb of God who is present for us and among us, and who according to his ordinance nourishes us with his body and blood. This is our mass, and it is the true mass which is not lacking among us.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid. ... hadde funnet hos Ireneus, nemlig at nattverden er en næring til udødelighet for legemet. Luther said, “Irenaeus that our bodies even now are no longer corruptible when they receive the sacrament, but have thereby the hope of the resurrection. For we see that the ancient doctors spoke of the sacrament in such a way that it even bestowed upon the body an immortal nature [*ein unsterblich wesen*], though hidden in faith and hope until the last day.” AE 37:118. WA 23, 233.

<sup>260</sup> See Norman E. Nagel, “Medicine of Immortality and Antidote against Death,” *Logia* Vol. IV, Number 4 (October 1995), 31-36, for evidence that the view presented by Irenaeus and quoted by Luther is rooted in the New Testament and a gift given in the Lord’s Supper.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 254. Prestens gjerning ved alteret er en tjeneste som Gud vil ha utført ved menn som kalles til tjenere for evangeliet. Det er bl. a. dette som er sagt i *Augustana* art. 5.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 254-255. Translation from AE 38: 208-209.

Thus Wisløff sees the pastor standing as the Lord's servant as the Lord Jesus himself has instituted in the congregation on earth, with God's word and sacraments in the mouth and the hands giving out the gifts he has received from the Lord to give out.<sup>263</sup>

Given us in and with Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper is the forgiveness of sins. Wisløff points out that it is important to see that "it is also Christ's body and blood that is the gift. Said another way: The forgiveness of sins is given us here in and through Jesus' body and blood under the bread and the wine."<sup>264</sup> Wisløff unpacks the meaning of the expression 'the forgiveness of sins' for "where the forgiveness of sins is, there is life and salvation."<sup>265</sup> And this means "short and good, that the eternal God, who has created heaven and earth and who keeps an eye on us all together and who one day shall decide our eternal fate – he has forgiven me. In other words: He will have me. Yes, still more: He loves me."<sup>266</sup> "The word of the forgiveness of sins says also that he forgives. He forgives because he will have me, for he loves me."<sup>267</sup>

In addition to the forgiveness of sins Wisløff speaks of the fellowship we have with each other. The fellowship that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 10:17 has its basis in the gift by the one bread. He states: "We see anew what the Lord's Supper *is*. The sacrament of the Altar *is* our Lord Jesus Christ's body and blood under the bread and the wine, instituted by

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 252. Også dette er viktig. Det er altså Kristi legeme og blod som er gaven. Annerledes sagt: Syndenes forlatelse gis oss her i og ved Jesu legeme og blod under brødet og vinen.

<sup>265</sup> Wisløff, "Nattverd ..." Nr.6 (1979), 12. For hvor syndenes forlatelse er, der er liv og salighet.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. Kort og godt at den evige Gud, som har skapt Himmel og Jord, og som holder øye med oss alle sammen og som en dag skal avgjøre vår evige skjebne – han har tilgitt meg. Med andre ord: Han vil ha meg. Ja, enda mer: Han elsker meg.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. Ordet om syndenes forlatelse sier også at han tilgir. Han tilgir fordi han vil ha meg, for han elsker meg.

Christ himself for us Christians so that we shall eat and drink it.”<sup>268</sup> It is “*because* there is one bread – and we all receive of it – that we are all one.”<sup>269</sup> This is a “unity on the basis of the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>270</sup> From this Wisløff concludes that “our unity itself is a gift, just as the Lord’s Supper is a gift.”<sup>271</sup> This is a unity that is “objective and so is not limited to the feeling of unity, the experience of unity, the joy of unity. Yes, it continues in spite of the many unhappy, unseen, but just the same sorrowful effective electrical tensions of a personal kind.”<sup>272</sup>

Wisløff brings out that the Lord’s Supper “is a reminder of, and a future look to, the fulfilment of God’s Kingdom.”<sup>273</sup> He describes it so: “When we have eaten of the Lord’s Supper’s bread and wine and receive Jesus’ body and blood, it is as if we have had already in advance the feeling of, yes, that we actually had fellowship with those who have gone on before.”<sup>274</sup> The Lord’s Supper connects us with the words of Jesus when he said “that many will come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid. Vi får se på nytt at nattverden *er*. Alteret sakrament *er* vår Herre Jesu Kristi legeme og blod under brødet og vinen, av Kristus selv innskriftet for oss kristne forar vi skal ete og drikke det.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. Men det som står her, det lar oss begynne med begynnelsen som sier at fordi der er ett brød – og vi alle får av det – så er vi alle ett.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid. <<Enhet på syndsforlatelsens grunn.>>

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. Da er selve vår enhet en gave, akkurat som nattverden er en gave

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. Det er en enhet som altså består rent objektivt og ikke er begrenset til følelsene av enkel, opplevelsen av enket, gleden ved enhet. Ja, den består endog *på tross* av de mange ulykkelige, usynlige, men likevel så sørgelig effektive elektriske spenninger av personlig art.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. Videre er sakramentet en påminnels om, og et fremblikk imot, fullendelsen i Guds rike.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 13. Når vi har ett av nattverdens brød og vin og får Jesu legeme og blod, er det som vi allerede på forskudd hadde følelsen av, ja, at vi virkelig hadde samfunn med dem som er gått foran.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. Tanken gar til Jesu ord: “Der skal komme mange fra øst og vest og sitte til bords med Abraham og Isak og Jakob i himlenes rike.>>

We have seen how Wisløff on the basis of our Lord's words confesses the nature of the Lord's Supper and its gift of the forgiveness of sins which is in reality the full sum of what God has to give for "he who possesses the forgiveness of sins alone, has in reality, everything."<sup>276</sup> God has yet another means, and so next we shall consider Wisløff's teaching on absolution.

### Absolution as a Means of Grace

Wisløff's most complete presentation of confession and absolution occurs in an article written in 1979, entitled "Confession."<sup>277</sup> He notes that "few things have been more discussed in the church's history than confession."<sup>278</sup> The doctrine of confession involves many important matters such as sin and grace, atonement and justification, and the pastoral office in relation to the layman's position.<sup>279</sup>

Wisløff makes use of Luther's answer as found in the Small Catechism to explain the meaning. "Confession consists of two parts. One is that one confesses the sin (to a soul-carer, *sjelesørger*), the other is that one receives absolution of the forgiveness of sins from him. We confess to, and not doubt this, but completely and firmly believe that the sins thereby are forgiven by God in heaven."<sup>280</sup> Thus that "which presses the conscience one shall name to

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<sup>276</sup> Wisløff, *The Gift of Communion* (1964), 38.

<sup>277</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, "Skriftemålet" *Fast Grunn* 32 no. 6 (1979), 323-326. Three short paragraphs are devoted to it in *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* (1987), 132. He also presents Luther's teaching on it in *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 88-89. See also "Luther om privat-absolusjones nødvendighet" in LK 92 nr. 6 (1957), 81-83. In this piece Wisløff discusses the tendency among the Laestadians.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 323. Få ting har vært mer diskutert i kirkens historie enn skriftemålet.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 132. Luther forklarer dette slik: «Skriftemålet omfatter to stykker: Det ene er at en bekjenner synden (for en sjelesørger), det andre er at en tar imot avløsningen (absolusjonen) eller syndsforlatelsen av ham vi skrifter (bekjenner syndene) for, og ikke tviler på dette, men fullt og fast tror at syndene dermed er tilgitt av Gud i

a believing person. Thereafter the pastor (or another soul-carer) says: On the basis of our Lord Jesus Christ's commandment to proclaim to you that all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."<sup>281</sup> He states "that the Gospel Word can actually give grace and the forgiveness of sins, we also understand clearly when we think of confession, which Luther mentions among the 'ways' the Gospel gives grace."<sup>282</sup>

Wisløff establishes the Biblical basis for confession from Matthew 16:15ff. and John 20:23.<sup>283</sup> Jesus has sent His disciples to preach the repentance and the forgiveness of sins, and those who believe the Gospel have that which the Gospel message brings.<sup>284</sup> He notes that "when Jesus' disciples preach the Gospel, whether it is to one or to many, it is not an empty word. It is God's truth, for God himself guarantees that it is true. The Gospel is not only a 'wish' that sinners may be forgiven. It is an effectual message that brings with itself that which it speaks of."<sup>285</sup> Wisløff refers to Luther's commentary on Genesis 27:28, which he

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himmelen.>> In the 1979 article cited above Wisløff uses the following definition: "Luther explains that confession consists of two parts: The one is that one *confesses* the sin to another Christian (a confessor – we say rather a soul-carer), and the other is that one *receives* the forgiveness of sins from the soul-carer 'as from God himself.'" Luther forklarer at skriftemålet består av to stykker: Det ene er at en *bekjenner* synden for en annen kristen (en skriftefar – vi sier heller en sjelesørger), og det andre er at en *tar imot* syndsforlatelsen frå sjelesørgeren << som fra Gud selv>>. Also refer to Tappert edition, SC V, 16, pages 349-350.

<sup>281</sup> Wisløff, "Skriftemålet" (1979), 323. Det som trykker samvittigheten skal en få nevne for et troende menneske. Deretter sier presten (eller en annen sjelesørger): Tror du at min tilgivelse er Guds tilgivelse? Det svares ja, og presten (sjelesørgeren) sier: Etter vår Herre Jesu Kriști befaling tilsier jeg deg alle dine synders forlatelse i Faderens og Sønnens og den Hellige And's navn. -

<sup>282</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 132. At evangeliets ord virkelig kan gi nåde og syndenes forlatelse, forstår vi også klart når vi tenker på *skriftemålet*, som Luther nevner blant de <<måter>> evangeliet gir nåden på (se igjen sitatet ovenfor).

<sup>283</sup> Wisløff, "Skriftemålet" (1979), 323.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. Den som tror evangeliet om Jesus, har det som evangeliet bærer bud om. Når disiplene forkynner dette for menneskene – til en eller til mange – så er det ikke tomme ord. Det er Guds egen sannhet, for Gud innesthr selv for at det er sant. Evangeliet er ikke bare et

considers to be excellent on this truth. The blessings that the Scripture speaks of are real and not just wishes. As Luther says, “this blessing is more than empty sound of words or some other verbal wish in which one person tells and wishes another person good things. ... For it is one thing when I say: ‘I wish you to have a strong and healthy body.’ ... It is another thing when Christ says to the paralytic, ‘Take up your bed and go home.’”<sup>286</sup> “It is a word that works what it says.”<sup>287</sup>

He notes that Luther has set forth that that is the way it is with confession. He paraphrases Luther. “If I say that I desire that your sins were forgiven you; then it is only a pious wish. But if I say: ‘All your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,’ then it is more than a good desire – it is an effectual Gospel from God Himself. And then you *have* what the words say – if only you believe it.”<sup>288</sup> Again Wisløff draws from Luther. “To pronounce absolution, i.e., that word that your sins are forgiven, and to administer the sacraments, and to proclaim the forgiveness of sins in the Gospel, that is something far greater than if Isaac blesses Jacob. For here it is a question of heaven’s kingdom and eternal life. We do not do this in our own strength, but according to the mission of God and on his authority.”<sup>289</sup>

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<<ønske>> om at syndene må bli tilgitt. Det er et virkekraftig budskap som fører med seg det det taler om.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. Citation is from *Lectures on Genesis* (1542) AE 5:140.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid. Det er et ord som virker det det nevner.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 323-324. Om jeg sier at jeg skulle ønske at alle dine synder er tilgitt, så er det bare et fromt ønske. Men om jeg sier: Alle dine synder er tilgitt i Faderens og Sønnens og den Hellige Andes navn, så er det mer enn et godt ønske – det er et virkekraftig evangelium fra Gud selv. Og så *har* du det som ordene sier – så sant du tror det.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 324. For, sier Luther: Å uttale absolusjonen – dvs. Ordet om at dine synder er deg tilgitt – og å forrette dåpens og nattverdens sakrament, og å forkynne syndenes forlatelse i evangeliet, det er noe langt større enn at Isak velsignet Jakob. For her dreier det seg om

Wisløff says that it is God who forgives.<sup>290</sup> He explains it in this way. “That the persons forgives and remits sin, only means that they apply to the individual that which God’s Word says about Jesus and the forgiveness in His name.”<sup>291</sup> And in the case of the opposite “it is God who ‘retains’ sins; that the persons retain them, only means that they apply to the individual that which God’s Word says about the one who does not believe: so long as you live in your sins and will not repent and believe, you are ‘retained’ in your sins.”<sup>292</sup>

Wisløff takes special care to make clear that the Gospel is the forgiveness of sins which is based on the completed salvation of Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is a salvation of grace through faith, therefore “no works, no holy resolutions, or nothing else we make can give us salvation.”<sup>293</sup> “The salvation was won in that Jesus took our punishment on Himself and won an eternal redemption.”<sup>294</sup> This Gospel is “a message with divine power in itself; power to give the forgiveness of sins and eternal life to those who believe. But the hypocrite or the rebellious, who do not believe, are condemned already.”<sup>295</sup>

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himlenes rike og evig liv . Dette gjør vi ikke i vår egen kraft, men etter oppdrag fra, Gud og på hans autoritet.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. At mennesker tilgir eller forlater synden, vil bare si at de anvender på den enkelte det som Guds ord sier om Jesus og tilgivelsen i hans navn.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid. Og motsatt: Det er Gud som <<fastholder>> syndene~ at mennesker fastholder dem, vil bare si at de anvender på den enkelte det som Guds ord sier om den som ikke tror: Så lenge du lever i dine synder og ikke vil omvende deg og tro, er du <<fastholdt>> i din synd (se Odlands kommentar til Joh. 20, 23).

<sup>293</sup> Ibid. Ingen godegjerninger, ingen hellige beslutninger eller noe annet vi steller til, kan gi oss frelsen.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid. Nei, frelsen ble vunnet ved at Jesus tok vår straff på seg og vant en evig forløsning.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet er et budskap med guddommelig kraft i seg – kraft til å gi syndenes forlatelse og evig liv til den som tror. – Men hyklere eller den gjenstridige, som ikke vil tro, er allerede dømt.

Faith is not an easy matter, because the heart is full of self-deception and also goes the way of works, Satan's deception is always present, and the world with its enticement and false teachers all seeks to draw us away.<sup>296</sup> There God has the Gospel sounded forth. "He will give people faith."<sup>297</sup> Thus the "Gospel is like God's loving *hand* that will extend to the sinner His grace."<sup>298</sup> Since "we cannot take salvation as out of the air, it must be extended to us."<sup>299</sup> "Because He is so rich in His love He does it in so many forms and ways."<sup>300</sup>

In confession-absolution the "Gospel is applied to an individual in a specific situation."<sup>301</sup> So in this manner "the word of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus is said *to you*, you who acknowledge and confess your sin."<sup>302</sup> This direct address of the Gospel is especially applicable for the Christian who is grieved and tried (*anfeket*) to the point that he does not dare believe God's grace.<sup>303</sup>

Wisløff points out that some have limited the right to give absolution to those in the pastoral office.<sup>304</sup> This was the view of W. A. Wexels of Norway.<sup>305</sup> However, Wisløff asserts that such was not the view of Luther. According to Wisløff, Luther "says again and again that a layman can grant the tried soul (*anfektete sjel*) the forgiveness of sins just like the

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid. ... han vil gi mennesker troen.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet er likesom Guds kjærlige hånd som vil rekke synderen sin nåde.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. Vi kan ikke ta frelsen likesom ut av luften; den må bli rakt oss.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. Og fordi Gud er så rik i sin kjærlighet, har han gjort, det slik at evangeliet kommer til oss i mange former og på mange måter.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid. Skriftemålet er evangeliet anvendt på ett enkelt menneske i en bestemt situasjon.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. Ordet om syndenes forlatelse i Jesu blir sagt *til deg*, du som erkjenner og bekjenner din synd.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

pastor. Yes, in the confession the pastor is actually considered as *a brother*.<sup>306</sup> He gives it in Luther's words, "yes, that I say again and warn about, that no one must confess in private before the pastor as pastor (priest), but as a common Christian brother."<sup>307</sup> In addition Wisløff argues that we do not find in the Bible a single group (*stand*) with all the rights reserved to carry on soul-care and hear confession, neither do we find any regulation for how one shall carry out these things.<sup>308</sup>

On the matter of what shall be confessed he follows our Evangelical fathers who said it was not necessary to confess all sins.<sup>309</sup> "One can confess that which particularly presses the conscience."<sup>310</sup> The confessor must remember that "that which is entrusted in confession, the soul-carer must not betray."<sup>311</sup> He emphasizes that "one shall remember that the forgiveness was given because of Jesus' death's and resurrection's sake and on no other basis. One does not buy the forgiveness of sins by confessing sins."<sup>312</sup> Wisløff observes that Luther "underscores that the most important in confession is not the confession, but the absolution, i.e., the forgiveness of sins. I go to a soul-carer in order to relieve the conscience by confessing to another person. That is meaningful, to be sure. But from the Christian

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid. Han sier om og om igjen at en lekmann kan tilsi den anfedtede sjel syndenes forlatelse like vel som presten. Ja, i skriftemålet kommer presten faktisk i betraktning *som bror*. In regards to the emphasis on brother, Wisløff perhaps has in mind the use of brother in the *Large Catechism* Part V, "A Brief Exhortation To Confession", 13.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. Her er Luthers ord: <<Ja, det sier jeg igjen og varskor om, at ingen må skrifte i enerom for presten som prest, men som en allminnelig kristen bror.>> Wisløff does not give the source in Luther of this citation.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. I Bibelen finner vi ingen enkelt stand med enerett til å drive sjelesorg og høre skriftemål, heller ikke finner vi noen forskrift for hvordan en skal utføre disse tingene.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid. En kan bekjenne det som særlig trykker samvittigheten.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 326. Det som er betrodd i skriftemål, må sjelesørgeren ikke røpe for noen.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 325. En skal huske at syndenes forlatelse blir gitt for Jesu døds og oppstandelses skyld, og av ingen annen grunn. En kjøper seg ikke synasforlatelse vea å bekjenne synaer.

perspective it is not what is decisive. It is *God* you shall confess to, and it is His forgiveness you shall seek.”<sup>313</sup> Put in another way, “the peace you can gain in your inside is a precious thing, but that which happens in heaven in that God *forgives* and accepts you as His own child, is the most important of all.”<sup>314</sup>

Wisløff teaches that the theological understanding and practice of confession must be clearly distinguished from the psychological approach in the care of souls (*sjelesorg*).<sup>315</sup> He refers to the *Augsburg Confession*, Article XXV, 13 to establish the biblical and theological understanding of confession. It states: “... that confession is to be retained for the sake of absolution (which is its chief and most important part), for the consolation of terrified consciences.”<sup>316</sup> He makes further reference to the *Apology* XII, 99: “We also keep confession, especially because of absolution, which is the Word of God.”<sup>317</sup> The expression “*propter absolutionem*” is the reason for the emphasis on confession because it tells us that in confession, as in all soul-care, all revolves around the forgiveness of sins. This puts the matter out of the category of the psychological. Justification and the forgiveness of sins happens in heaven, not in me.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 326. Luther understreker at det viktigste i skriftemålet ikke er bekjennelsen, men absolusjonen, dvs. syndenes forlatelse. Jeg går til en sjelesørger for å lette samvittigheten ved å bekjenne for et annet menneske. Det er betydningsfullt nok. Men det er kristelig sett ikke det avgjørende. Det er *Gud* du skal bekjenne for, og det er hans *tilgivelse* du skal søke.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. Den fred du kan oppoå i ditt indre er en dyrebar sak. Men det som skjer i himmelen ved at Gud tilgir og antar deg som sitt barn, er det viktigste av alt.

<sup>315</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff “Selvransakelse som problem i sjelesorgen” LK 83, Nr. 22 (1948), 526-39.

<sup>316</sup> Tappert, 63.

<sup>317</sup> Tappert, 197.

<sup>318</sup> Wisløff, “Selvransakelse ....” (1948), 536.

To illustrate the point that Wisløff is making he compares the approaches of Leslie Weatherhead in his book *Psychology and Life* and Schartau in his “Brev i andlige ämnen”.<sup>319</sup> They are two completely distinct categories. In Schartau it is “not only about a patient but about the forgiveness of sins, not only about psychological technique but about God’s Word: not about beginning life anew again but about going over from death to life.”<sup>320</sup> In ministering to people Wisløff comforts the one who has difficulty gaining peace inside by declaring that “through faith in Jesus he can have peace with God just the same, and possess the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake.”<sup>321</sup>

It would appear that Wisløff understands confession and absolution to take place privately and primarily in the context of soul-care. The soul-carer’s first and last concern is the forgiveness of sins and this Gospel is offered in preaching and in confession-absolution, which is in the end the same thing.<sup>322</sup> “The Gospel can always give what it speaks of, to those

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 537-38. Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Psychology and Life* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1937).

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 538. Her dreier det seg ikke bare om en pasient, men om syndenes forlatelse; ikke om psykologisk teknikk men om Guds ord; ikke om å begynne livet på nytt igjen men om å gå over fra døden til livet.

<sup>321</sup> Wisløff, “Skriftemålet” (1979), 326. Den som har dårlige nerver får kanskje aldri nyte særlig mye fred i sitt indre. Men ved troen på Jesus kan han ha fred med Gud likevel, og eie syndenes forlatelse for Jesu skyld.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

who believe. Yes, it kindles faith in the heart in those who will seriously listen. Nothing is greater than this.”<sup>323</sup>

In this chapter we have considered Wisløff’s understanding of the means of grace in general. We have examined his teachings on baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and absolution. We will consider in the next chapter the relationship between faith and the means of grace.

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid. Evangeliet kan alltid gi det det taler om, til den som tror. Ja, det tenner troen i hjertet hos den som for alvor vil høre. Intet er større enn dette.

## Chapter Seven

### **Wisløff's Doctrine of the Relationship of Faith and the Means of Grace**

Given what we have learned about Wisløff's understanding of faith in chapter five and the means of grace in chapter six, we will now take a closer look at what role the means of grace has in Wisløff's theology for particular aspects of the faith life. While some of these have been touched on before, they will be given a more focused treatment here.

#### The Beginning of Faith and the Means of Grace

In an earlier chapter we noted that Wisløff speaks of faith's beginning as a result of the Gospel working it, creating it, kindling it, and giving it. The condition of the human person is such that faith cannot come into existence from the human person.<sup>1</sup> Wisløff has strongly emphasized the Gospel as that which brings faith into being. He has made it clear that faith does not just appear on its own but that it is always preceded by the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> The means of grace goes before faith.<sup>3</sup> We will consider how the various forms of the Gospel relate to the beginning of faith.

Wisløff makes it clear as we have seen in a previous section on baptism that it is a means of grace, a Gospel. He states, "God therefore gives the child, who does not make any

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<sup>1</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 11. See above section "The Origin of Faith". "Our natural corruption is so great that we of ourselves cannot do other than distrust God. It is not possible for the natural person to force his heart to believe."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

active opposition, faith at the time of baptism.”<sup>4</sup> This faith God creates “*in the infant in baptism, in and through the word that is heard through his Holy Spirit.*”<sup>5</sup> Thus baptism is an actual means of grace, “a washing of regeneration, that gives salvation and new life.”<sup>6</sup> He notes further that “the life that is created in the child through baptism, is a true and genuine life with God, that can be lived out where the person does not turn the back on God.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition to baptism as a Gospel means of creating faith, Wisløff states that there are those who are regenerated through the Word of the Gospel.<sup>8</sup> In their case “it is the Word of the Gospel that meets them with the message of grace in Christ, and it is this Word that creates faith in their hearts, - and thereby they are regenerated.”<sup>9</sup> Luther is quoted for support: “Those who believe before baptism, have their faith through the Word that goes before.”<sup>10</sup> Wisløff adds that “this biblical teaching is maintained by the Lutheran church fathers.”<sup>11</sup> He gives primary emphasis to the preached Gospel Word as a faith creating means. This is seen in several of his writings as has been already noted.

The Gospel Word is not only the faith creating means for the unbaptized, as is the case on the mission field, but also for the baptized who have fallen from baptismal grace. Wisløff

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. See also Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 138. ... in the washing of regeneration God receives the helpless child and makes it His. This is the miracle of regeneration.

<sup>5</sup> Wisløff, *Jesu dåp og vår dåp* (1941), 13. *Gud skaper troen hos barnet i dåpen, i og ved det ord som lyder, ved sin Hellige Ånd.*

<sup>6</sup> Wisløff, *Vår lutherske arv og hva vi eier i den* (1945), 43. Dapen er et gjenfødelsens bad, som gir frelse og nytt liv.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Det liv som ble skapt i barnet ved dåpen, er et sant og ekte liv i Gud. Som kan vare livet ut der hvor ikke mennesket vender Gud ryggen.

<sup>8</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 140.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Det er jo evangeliets ord som møter dem med budskapet om nåden i Kristus, og det er dette ord som tenner troen i deres hjerter, - og dermed er de gjenfødt.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Som Luther sier: <<De som tror før dåpen, har sin tro ved det foran- gående ord.>> This is a citation from SA III, VIII, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Enne bibelske lære fastholdes av de lutherske lærefedre.

believes that “under the present conditions most fall away from the covenant of baptism and go away from God.”<sup>12</sup> He rejects the approach of Jerome, who advocated a turning to the second plank of penance.<sup>13</sup> He points out that Luther also rejects Jerome’s position, as one can see in the *Large Catechism*.<sup>14</sup> What then is the meaning of one’s baptism in this situation? Wisløff states that “baptism’s work continues, its meaning stands sure. God does not forget, even if we forget it.”<sup>15</sup> He points to Luther’s teaching in the *Large Catechism*, Part IV, 75-79. Wisløff explains what Luther says here in this way.

The ark of salvation, the boat that carries us saved over the world’s sea, it is in reality neither baptism as an external action nor the word as an external means. The boat is Jesus Himself! When we praise baptism and the word so high, then it is because God through these external means brings us into life-fellowship with Jesus. To fall from baptism, means to fall from Jesus – that is fatal. But if I am now fallen from such – has then baptism come to nothing? No, for then Jesus has come to nothing. Baptism was nothing other than that I come into relationship with him. The covenant he made with me in baptism, that he does not forget, for then he must deny his own faithfulness. The boat does not come to nothing! And then I am allowed to – if I do not resist his calling grace – to come up into the boat again, the boat who is Jesus. Through the word’s regenerating power I come once more into life-fellowship with Jesus. I have part in the same life that I one time received part in through baptism.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 139. Under våre forhold går det slik med de fleste at de faller fra dåpens pakt og går bort fra Gud. This has been Wisløff’s position since 1946. See idem., *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* (1946), 177.

<sup>13</sup> Taped Lecture 10/11/78.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Wisløff, *Barnedåpens...* (1942), part 2. Dåpens gjerning vedblir, dens betydning står fast, Gud glemmer den ikke om vi glemte den.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Den frelsens ark, den båten som bærer oss frelst over verdens hav, det er i grunnen hverken dåpen som utvortes handling eller ordet som utvortes middel – baten er Jesus selv! Når vi priser dåpen og ordet så høgt, så er det fordi Gud ved disse utvortes midler bringer oss i livssamfunn med Jesus setter oss ombord på båten, som er vår Herre Jesus. Å falle fra dåpen, vil si å falle fra Jesus – det er det skjebnesvangre. Men om jeg no er falt fra slik – er da dåpen blitt til intet? Nei, for så var Jesus blitt til intet, dåpen var jo intet annet enn at jeg kom i forbindelse med ham. Den pakt han sluttet med meg i dåpen, den glemmer han ikke, for da måtte han glemme sin egen trofasthet. Båten ble ikke til intet! Og så får jeg lov til – om jeg ikke står hans kallende nåde imot – å komme opp i båten igjen, båten som er ham. Ved ordets gjenfødende makt kommer jeg atter i livsforbindelse med Jesus, får jeg del i det samme liv som jeg en gang fikk del i ved dåpen. Oddvar Johann Jensen has commented to the author that Wisløff does not interpret Luther correctly here. He says that according to Luther the ark is not Jesus but baptism.

This means that there is no need for baptism to be repeated, for it stands sure from God's side. We observe that the return to baptism is spoken of as a return to Christ. Wisløff says in another place that we should not say "turn again to the baptism you received! But we should say: Turn again to the Savior who one time met you in baptism, he who now meets you in the word, in which he will give you a solid ground to build on. There is true guidance to peace with God. For in the word is salvation's Gospel, peace, and new life."<sup>17</sup> This way of speaking gets refined in a later writing of Wisløff, which we will soon consider.

Wisløff rejects the approach of a "certain high church Lutheran tradition that usually says that whoever has lost his baptismal grace should return to the baptism."<sup>18</sup> The high church Lutheran tradition that Wisløff has in mind are those who believe that the regeneration that happens in baptism cannot be lost. They believe that baptism is the only means of regeneration. Wisløff describes their approach as saying, "you are God's child, you belong to him even if you have turned away from God."<sup>19</sup> In such a case you are to "return to your baptism, accept the fact that you were at one time made a child of God, firmly believe that you are God's child still and keep honestly toward being a Christian."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Wisløff, *Jesu dåp og vår dåp* (1941), 18. Vi skal heller ikke si: Vend deg om igjen til den dåp du mottok! Men ve skal si: Vend deg om igjen til den frelser som en gang møtte deg i dåpen, han som nå møter deg i ordet, hvori han vil gi deg en fast grunn å bygge på. Det er sann veiledning til fred i Gud. For i ordet er frelsens evangelium, fred og nytt liv.

<sup>18</sup> Taped Lecture 10/11/78. The high church tradition that Wisløff has in mind has its roots in Grundtvigianism. See Wisløff, *Do the work...* (1990), 2-4.

<sup>19</sup> Taped Lecture 10/11/78.

<sup>20</sup> Taped Lecture 10/11/78. In a sermon Wisløff says, "I must confess that I am uneasy about the preaching of baptism that is heard from certain areas in our church. They say you were reborn in baptism. There is no other rebirth to be found than that which happens in baptism. Perhaps you have gone away from the grace of baptism – but then you must only turn back to your baptism and begin to live as a Christian again." Her må jeg få bekjenne at jeg er urolig over den dåpsforkynnelse som høres fra visse hold i vår kirke. Gjenfødt ble du i dåpen, sier de. Det finnes ingen annen gjenfødelse enn den som skjer i dåpen. Kanskje er du kommet bort fra dåpsnåden – men da må du bare vende tilbake til din dåp og begynne å leve som en kristen igjen. Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Vitnesbyrd om Jesus* 1979, p. 31.

Wisløff identifies that the intention of this emphasis is “to guard the word about justification by faith against every confusion.”<sup>21</sup> In the process it ended up concentrating “all that has to do with the life with God around this God’s act of grace in baptism.”<sup>22</sup> Wisløff concludes that this resulted in preaching legalistically about the Christian life because the person is admonished in the sermon “to reach out their hand and take it (baptism) into use again.”<sup>23</sup> They are also exhorted to begin to live as a Christian and the preaching moves “one-sidedly around the ‘outward’ sins while the sins against the first table of the Law are left in the background.”<sup>24</sup> This appears to be a situation where the Law is not being preached full blast.

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<sup>21</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 172. Intensjonen hos Svedberg og andre ortodokse er ganske klar: De vil verne ordet om rettferdiggjørelse av nåde ved tro fra enhver forplumring.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Men i det de ensidig så på den objektive adoptio hos Gud, barnekåret som en objektiv tilhørighet i kraft av Guds nådetilsagn, kom de til å konsentrere alt som har med gudslivet å gjøre omkring denne Guds nådehandling i dåpen. Wisløff finds this situation to also exist among those who teach universal justification. This gets applied in the preaching when they say “that God abandoned his wrath and forgave all men their sins when Jesus died on the cross; from God’s side everything was settled and decided to the extent that even the most unrepentant sinner, in reality, has received forgiveness of his sins from God already in Jesus’ death, the lost lie in hell with forgiven sins.” Hos disse heter det at Gud lot sin vrede fare og tilga alle. Mennesker deres synder da Jesus døde på korset, alt er fra Guds side i den grad opp - og avgjort at selv den mest ubotferdige synder i virkeligheten har fått tilgivelse for sine synder hos Gud allerede i Jesu død, - de fortapte ligger i helvete med tilgitte synder. (*Ordet* p. 173) Wisløff believes that this way of speaking results in people no longer sensing the need to think about contrition and faith, or be concerned about the heart’s opposition to God, or waste many words about the differences between a true and a false faith. (Ibid.) He agrees with the critics of this approach when they say “that men can easily be satisfied with an assumed faith.” (Ibid.) A faith which they imagine and which is not accompanied with a regeneration of the heart, a faith which does not live in fear and trembling. (Ibid.) He concludes that one finds something decidedly legalistic about this kind of preaching where faith no longer is trust in grace created and worked by God’s word and Spirit, that is a faith that lives in flight from everything its own, but one that so easily becomes a sort of intellectual accounting where one puts his own name in John 3:16, and then dismisses all anxieties.” ... troen blir ikke lenger en av Guds ord og And skapt og virket tillit til nåden, en tro som lever i flukt fra alt sitt eget – den har så lett for å bli en slags intellektuell regneoperasjon hvor man setter sitt eget navn inn i Johs. 3,16, og så er man ferdig med alle bekymringer. (Ibid.) The word of the gospel is for terrified consciences who know the law that has penetrated the conscience. (Ibid.)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 173. Når alt som har med gudslivets oppståen å gjøre er avgjort i og med dåpsakten, så er det ganske riktig ikke mer å gjøre for mennesket enn å >>rekke ut sin hånd og ta det i bruk igjen<<, og prekenen blir da en formaning til å gjøre nettopp dette!

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Forkynnelsen kommer til å kretse ensidig om de >>ytre<< synder, mens synd mot budene i lovens første tavle kommer ganske i bakgrunnen.

It would also seem that baptism is not being preached as pure Gospel through which God gives salvation gifts.

The one-sided concentration on the *act of baptism* can produce a “unique mixing of assurance and legalism.”<sup>25</sup> This happens by saying “everything is in order since one has been baptized!”<sup>26</sup> In other words, “you *are* a child of God; just begin *to live* as a child of God!”<sup>27</sup> Wisløff observes a strange paradox among those orthodox theologians who in their thinking are quite strict on our lost condition, the unchanging enmity of the flesh against God and the bondage of the will, yet they often leave these themes out of their preaching.<sup>28</sup> Wisløff argues that the cause for this lies in a one-sided emphasis on the state of being a child of God that became ours in baptism and which cannot be lost.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, since this is the case, there is something offensive in the preaching of these truths of lostness, flesh, and bondage to those who insist on calling all baptized persons Christians.<sup>30</sup> Since it is unnatural to address “Christians” as being “under the wrath of God”, and “lost” and on the way to hell if they are not saved, the preaching will involuntarily move into other categories such as admonishing and urging Christians to now become what they in fact, by virtue of their baptism, already are.<sup>31</sup> Wisløff sees that by urging people to become what they are, even when they are not or

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<sup>25</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 173-174. ...en ensidig konsentrasjon om dåpsakten komme til å føre til den samme eiendommelige blanding av sikkerhet og loviskhet.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 174. Alt er i orden i og med at du ble døpt! This assumes that everyone who was baptized has continued in their baptism, an assumption Wisløff cautions against.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* Du *er* et Guds barn, begynn bare *å leve* som et Guds barn!

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* It must be taken into consideration that Wisløff is writing this in the context of a folk church baptismal practice.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

may not be, we direct them in the way of the Law, and by-pass faith because it is assumed.<sup>32</sup>

He emphatically asserts that the sermon must not tire of stressing “that the Word of Scripture about the sinful flesh and the God-hostile heart of the unbeliever applies in truth to everyone who does not belong to Jesus, whether baptized or not. Also the baptized person who has fallen away from God, needs to be converted and born anew.”<sup>33</sup> Wisløff seems to be describing a situation in which both Law and Gospel are being distorted. The Law in all its severity is missing and as well as the Gospelness of baptism that is received by a sinner as a gift from the Lord in the way of faith.

An example of Wisløff’s approach in preaching is found in a sermon on Matthew 3:13-17. He says “perhaps you were baptized as a child such as most in our country. It was God’s grace that was out after you. He made you his own in baptism’s washing of regeneration. But if you do not now live in faith, then you are now just as lost as if you had never been baptized.”<sup>34</sup> If this is the case “you must be converted and you must not wait, for the time of grace can soon be over. Receive the Word about Jesus – through the Word you receive a living faith and become born anew (I Peter 1:23).”<sup>35</sup>

Wisløff suggests that those who tie regeneration exclusively to baptism will have difficulty with the terminology of the awakening sermon, for such a preacher cannot say,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 175. Nei, Skriftens ord om det syndige kjød og det gudfiendske hjerte hos den vantro gjelder i sannhet enhver som ikke hører Jesus til, om han er døpt eller ikke. Også den dømte, som er falt fra Gud, trenger til å omvende seg og bli født på nytt.

<sup>34</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* (1973), 45. Du ble kanskje døpt som barn, slik som de fleste i vårt land. Det var Guds nåde som var ute etter deg, han gjorde deg til sin i dåpens bad til gjenfødelse. Men om du nå ikke lever i tro, så er du nå like fortapt i deg selv som om du aldri hadde vært døpt.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Du må omvende deg, og det må du ikke vente med, for nådetiden kan snart være slutt. Ta imot Ordet om Jesus – ved det Ordet får du en levende tro og blir født på nytt (1 Pet. 1, 23).

thinking of the unconverted, “‘you must be born anew.’ Instead he must say to him, ‘you are born anew.’”<sup>36</sup> When Wisløff says “you must be born anew,” he means that those who do not have a living faith need to be born anew.<sup>37</sup> This living faith, as Melancthon says in the *Apology* “is not an idle thought, but frees us from death, brings forth new life in our hearts, and is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this cannot exist with mortal sin, but whenever it appears it brings forth good fruits.”<sup>38</sup> This faith comes into existence “through God’s Word in a repentant and penitent sinner and with faith follows a new life.”<sup>39</sup> Wisløff’s emphasis on being born anew is aimed at the danger of a faith which is only an idle thought or a self-made religiosity.<sup>40</sup> Wisløff understands regeneration as ‘*donatio fidei*’.<sup>41</sup> Since he says that “the only correct mode of expression will be that which ties regeneration to the moment when a person comes to faith,” it follows that we must speak in a way that corresponds to faith, that is, in the way of Law and Gospel.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 175. Er dåpen gjenfødselsens middel alene, så kan al,tså ikke forkynneren si med tanke på den uomvendte: Du må fødes på ny. Han må i stedet si til ham: Du er født på ny.

<sup>37</sup> In an American context the ‘born again’ terminology may also be heard as referring to some kind of experience which the person is led to believe he lacks, and not to the need to come to faith as Wisløff means it. For Wisløff ‘you must be born anew’ is law not gospel. He points out that Jesus states the need for conversion when He says “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” Therefore “you must be born anew!” Wisløff concludes that “it is this basic truth that must be the refrain in preaching and conversion.” Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 164. Such preaching is a preaching of the Law. As we have already observed, Wisløff defines the Law as that which focuses on me and makes demands.

<sup>38</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Du fødes må på ny” *Fast Grunn* 40 no. 6 (1987), 323. The *Apology* IV, 64, citation is from Tappert, 116.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* Men troen blir til ved Guds ord hos en angrende og botferdig synder, og med troen følger et nytt liv.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 176.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Men da vil den eneste riktige uttryksmåte være den, som knytter gjenfødselen til det øyeblikk da mennesket kommer til troen.

Wisløff does not believe that baptism makes “conversion and faith superfluous but expressly presupposes them.”<sup>43</sup> But how can one preach so that both remaining in baptismal grace and the loss of baptismal grace are taken seriously? Wisløff points in the right direction but doesn’t explicitly articulate it. He has stated that the baptized child needs to hear both Law and Gospel through which God works both contrition and faith. In so doing, such a one who receives this message will walk in baptism, for “if you live in repentance, you walk in baptism.”<sup>44</sup> This is the right meaning and use of baptism. At the same time, the person who has gone away from baptism needs to be renewed in contrition and faith. He states: “Baptism stands firm and does not need to be renewed, but the *use* of [walking in] baptism must be renewed, that is, the person who has fallen away must be renewed in contrition and living faith.”<sup>45</sup> This is also the right meaning and use of baptism. It is also in harmony with what the Bible teaches about regeneration. So by way of the proper distinction and application of Law and Gospel, the message that is needed by all, whatever their relationship is to God, will be heard.

Wisløff rejects the way of speaking that calls people to return to their baptism and appeals to Luther for support. Luther says “you should return through faith to the abiding and enduring promise of God.”<sup>46</sup> Wisløff adds, “Luther does not invite us to return to the act of baptism in itself. He does not say return to the fact that you were baptized. He says you may

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 175. Dåpen gjør ikke omvendelsen og troen overflødig, men forutsetter dem uttrykkelig.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 177. <<Dersom du lever i boten, så vandrer du i dåpen<<.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Dåpen står fast og trenger ikke å fornyes, men dåpens *bruk* må fornyes, det vil si: Den frafalne må fornyes til anger og til en levende tro. See also LC IV, 74-79.

<sup>46</sup> Taped Lecture 10/11/78. See AE 36:61. Such a person is the one who returns through faith to the abiding and enduring promise of God.”

return to the promise that was given to you in baptism.”<sup>47</sup> Wisløff advocates that this approach is significantly different “because if you say the abiding and enduring promise of God then faith is included and according to Luther we should never never talk about these things without mentioning the promise of God, the Gospel of God applied to everyone in the moment of his salvation and our faith in the Gospel.”<sup>48</sup>

If the emphasis on the promise and faith are lost, Wisløff concludes that “we end up in sacramentalism and we lose the real blessing of baptism, which is given through faith in God’s promise, faith in the Gospel.”<sup>49</sup> Wisløff teaches that if the regeneration of baptism is lost, then one needs to be born again by the word of God, for “baptism is not the only means of regeneration. The word of God has the same effect.”<sup>50</sup> We have already explored Wisløff’s teaching on this.

Wisløff also rejects the approach of those in the Grundtvigian school who “say that in baptism we receive a holy fire, a spark in our hearts, and that spark will always be there. It may be hidden for a time but the hidden life will always be there, even if you do not believe any longer, and some day the Holy Spirit will breath on the spark and it will flare up again in full fire.”<sup>51</sup> Wisløff believes there is reason to warn against such expressions in preaching.<sup>52</sup> “They are apt to create the impression that baptismal grace is a kind of *gratia infusa*, an

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Wisløff does not give a reference for this quote from Luther. It appears that it is from *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* 1520. However, in this piece and in other places including the *Large Catechism* Luther uses return to your baptism language.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Wisløff is following Pontoppidan here.

<sup>51</sup> Taped Lecture 10/11/78.

<sup>52</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 171.

‘infused’ grace which can exist without faith.”<sup>53</sup> For Wisløff where there is no faith there is no life. Not wanting to diminish baptism he says, “Let us hold fast to the blessing and promise that is given in the child’s baptism, as the *Catechism* teaches. But let us at the same time remember that the one who does not live by faith in Jesus, he is as lost in himself as if he had never been baptized. He must be born again through God’s Word, I Peter 1:23.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, as “Luther says, you may of course lose your new birth, but so listen to the Gospel that is able to give you the new birth again.”<sup>55</sup>

In the context of discussing how one comes into a living connection with Jesus Christ, Wisløff says that “through the Lord’s Supper as a means of grace we also come in a distinct way into a living contact with Jesus.”<sup>56</sup> He bases this on 1 Corinthians 10:16. He could say the same thing of the word of absolution.

In the preaching of today’s evangelicals it is not uncommon to find a strong emphasis on invitations to believe, usually at the end of the sermon. We have already observed that Wisløff has clearly stated the importance of preaching the Gospel rather than preaching about the Gospel. At the same time he does give a place to invitations to believe. However, they appear in the context of the Gospel, they are brief, and they do not appear very often. In a sermon on John 6:1-15 near the end he says, “This is what Jesus would say to us in the Gospel

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. De er nemlig egnet til å vekke den forestilling at dåpsnåden er en slags gratia infusa, en >>inngydt<< nåde som kan eksistere uten troen.

<sup>54</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Vitnesbyrd om Jesus* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1979), 31. Å oss holde fast ved velsignelsen og løftet som blir gitt i barnets dåp, slik katekismen lærer. Men la oss samtidig huske at den som ikke lever i tro på Jesus, han er like fortapt i seg selv som om han aldri hadde vært døpt. Han må bli født på nytt ved Guds ord. 1. Pet. 1, 23.

<sup>55</sup> Taped Lecture 10/11/78.

<sup>56</sup> Wisløff, *Barnedåpens ...* (1942), part I. Ved nattverdens nådemiddel kommer vi også på en særskilt måte i livsforbindelse med Jesus. 1 Kor. 10, 16: Velsignelsens kalk, som vi velsigner, er den ikke samfunn med Kristi blod? Brødet som vi bryter, er det ikke samfunn med Kristi legeme?

text today. ... Have you seen it? Have you seen that Jesus is your refuge, your only way out so you have turned to him in full confession of all sins and with trust in his name?”<sup>57</sup> This is followed by Wisløff pointing out “that it is one and the same matter that is spoken about the whole way through this chapter of John, To eat the bread of life and drink his blood, to come to him, and to believe on him – that is one and the same matter. All depends on that I know him – for there is eternal life in God’s Son.”<sup>58</sup>

Preaching on Matthew 25:14-30, Wisløff appeals to the reader: “Dear reader, if you find yourself here ( i.e., before God who is hard and demanding), can’t you now let the Gospel have a chance? Can’t you now once simply listen to the word that God loves you and that Jesus died for sinners, actual sinners? Can’t you let the Gospel have a chance in your heart?”<sup>59</sup>

Another example comes from his devotional book *Daglig brød*. “Receive then this for yourself today! Receive it in faith. This message aims at your faith and will awaken faith in your heart. Hear what God has done for you. He gave his own son Son in bloody death in order to forgive us. Jesus God’s Son has paid the price. Come then to him with repentance and faith! It is only what he waits for.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* (1973), 97. Dette er det Jesus vil si oss i evangelieteksten i dag. Dette var det han ville få menneskene til å høre om, i og med at han ga dem brødet som et tegn. De ville ikke se tegnet, de fleste av dem. Har du sett det? Har du sett at Jesus er din tilflukt, din eneste redning, så du har vendt deg til ham i full bekjennelse av alle synder, og med tillit til hans navn?

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Det er den ene og samme sak det er tale om hele veien i dette kapittel hos Johannes. Å ete livets brød, å ete og drikke hans blod, å komme til ham og a tro på ham – det er en og samme sak. Alt avhenger av at jeg kjenner ham – for det evige liv er i Guds Sønn.

<sup>59</sup> Wisløff, *Vitnesbyrd om Jesus* (1979), 60. Kjære leser, Om du kjenner deg selv igjen her: Kan du nå ikke la evangeliet fa slippe til? Kan du ikke nå en gang simpelthen lytte til ordet om at Gud elsker deg og at Jesus er død for syndere, virkelige syndere? Kan du ikke la evangeliet få slippe til i hjertet ditt?

<sup>60</sup> Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (1983), 143. From a devotional on Isaiah 43:25. Ta da til deg dette i dag! Ta imot det i tro. Dette budskap sikter på din tro og vil vekke tro i hjertet ditt. Hør hva

Wisløff understands this kind of invitation to believe as being put in the way of the Gospel and faith. For the Gospel is “an invitation and a promise that does not demand but *creates* faith.”<sup>61</sup> In his major work on preaching *Ordet fra Guds munn* he states that the “invitation must be extended – the invitation which on the basis of the promises, says to souls: Come, for all things are ready, Matt. 22:4; Rev. 22:17.”<sup>62</sup> On the basis of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ Wisløff says that “we invite all people to come.”<sup>63</sup> He continues that “because it is sinners that are invited by Jesus; because it is the ungodly that are justified for Jesus’ sake (Rom. 4:5), the preaching can rightly say: Come today! Come as you are!”<sup>64</sup> Wisløff’s approach is in contrast to the invitations that end up going the way of the Law, using such language as surrender, choose, commit, etc. For him the invitation is Gospel and thus it is to be spoken as Gospel and this means in a Gospel way.

### The Assurance of Faith and the Means of Grace

The issue of assurance was very important for Wisløff personally. He admits that he personally struggled with doubts. Not about the existence of God, but about whether or not he

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Gud har gjort for deg! Han gav sin egen Sønn i en blodig død for å kunne tilgi oss. Jesus Guds Sønn har betalt prisen. Kom så til ham med anger og tro! Det er bare det han venter på.

<sup>61</sup> Wisløff, *Forkynnelsen...* (1944), 11. Evangeliet krever intet, evangeliet er bare en innbydelse og et løfte, som ikke krever men *skaper* tro.

<sup>62</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 152. Og sammen med denne advarsel må *innbydelsen* få lyde, - innbydelsen som på løftets grunn sier til sjelene: Kom, for alt er ferdig! Matt. 22,4. Johs. Ap. 22,17.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Vi innbyr alle til å komme, og innbydelsen skjer på den grunn som er lagt ved Jesu frelsende død og oppstandelse.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 152-153. Og for,di det er syndere Jesus innbyr, fordi det er ugudelige som blir rettfærdiggjort for Jesu skyld (Rom. 4,5), derfor kan forkynnelsen med all rett si: Kom i dag! Kom som du er!

dare to believe that he was a child of God.<sup>65</sup> It took a while before it became clear that he had to build on something that was outside of himself – on Jesus and on the foundation he laid by his death and resurrection.<sup>66</sup> He says he got to see that such a foundation holds. He describes his experience by saying that “in fight and soul-struggles later in life I have had always to turn back to the word concerning him who died for me and who opened the door to God’s kingdom for me.”<sup>67</sup>

When Wisløff speaks of assurance he means that one can be certain of his salvation. He says, “the assurance of salvation is assurance that God’s word actually applies to me.”<sup>68</sup> This does not mean that one never experiences doubts or spiritual soul-struggles, and the battle can be hard before one again gets rest in God’s word.”<sup>69</sup> In response to those who ask whether or not assurance is possible Wisløff answers with a solid yes. He points out that John’s first letter speaks about assurance and was written “so that you who believe in the name of God’s Son shall *know* that you have eternal life.”<sup>70</sup> It is normal for a Christian to be assured of his position in grace.<sup>71</sup> The believer can be certain that he is saved, and the reason lies in the fact that the certainty does not build on anything in me, such as my conversion, my faith, or my Christian life.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Sjaastad, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Og i kamp og anfektelser senere i livet har jeg alltid måttet vende tilbake til ordet om ham som døde for meg og som åpnet døren til Guds rike for meg.

<sup>68</sup> Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (1983), 13. Frelsesvisshet – det er visshet om at Guds ord virkelig gjelder meg.

<sup>69</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 108. En kan nok komme i tvil og anfektelse, og kampen kan være hård før en igjen får hvile i Guds ord.

<sup>70</sup> Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (1983), 13. Dette er skrevet for at dere skal *vite* at dere har evig liv , dere som tror på Guds Sønnns navn.

<sup>71</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 108.

<sup>72</sup> Wisløff, *Daglig brød* (1983), 179.

Wisløff makes a clear distinction between faith and assurance. When the clouds hide the sun and soul-struggles take hold of the heart, then one “shall know that you are saved by faith – the faith that grips God’s word of salvation for Jesus’ sake.”<sup>73</sup> For “it is through faith you are saved, not by the assurance. Assurance is not a condition for being saved.”<sup>74</sup> Wisløff sees it as a fruit produced by the Spirit in the heart that believes in Jesus.

When Wisløff takes up the topic of assurance in his doctrine book, the point of departure is Romans 4:16, “Therefore he (Abraham) received the promise through faith, so that it can be of grace, so the promise can be sure for all his seed.”<sup>75</sup> He points out that the verse teaches that God justifies by grace through faith so we can be sure of our salvation. “Justification by grace through faith is of the greatest significance for a Christian person’s *assurance of faith*.”<sup>76</sup> The justification by grace way to assurance comes clear with the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.<sup>77</sup> Wisløff finds support for this in the theology of Luther, who found the assurance of salvation “when he became clear on the distinction between Law and Gospel.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 14. Når det skjer, skal du vite at du er frelst ved troen – den tro som holder seg til Guds ord om frelse for Jesu skyld.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Det er ved troen du er frelst, ikke ved vissheten - vissheten er ingen betingelse for å bli frelst.

<sup>75</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 107. Translated from the Norwegian. 1 Rom. 4, 16 sies om Abraham: <<Derfor fikk han løftet ved troen, for at det kunne være som en nåde, så løftet kunne stå fast for hele ætten.>>

<sup>76</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 87. Rettferdigjørelsen av nåde ved troen er av den aller største betydning for et kristenmenneskes *trosvisshet*. He notes that “in all the years he fought and struggled to come to clarity, it was the assurance of salvation Luther longed for.”

<sup>77</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 107.

<sup>78</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 87. Han fant den da han ble klar over forskjellen mellom lov og evangelium.

The Law places on the person conditions for salvation which must be met perfectly. However, this means that “we can never be quite sure if we have fulfilled it.”<sup>79</sup> Wisløff makes the point by recalling that “the Law states that you must from the heart have forgiven the one who has sinned against you, so one never knows if one has completely and fully managed this forgiveness.”<sup>80</sup> As a result you “will constantly fear that there is something that is not forgiven.”<sup>81</sup> Or if assurance is based on surrendering completely to God then “the miserable wretch will never come during his whole life to a complete surrender to God, for there will always be one thing or another in thoughts, word, or deeds that is not completely surrendered to him.”<sup>82</sup> Given the sinful persons that we are, such a surrender would require changing one’s entire nature, which is precisely what no one can master.<sup>83</sup> Thus under the Law no one can be certain of one’s salvation.<sup>84</sup>

On the other hand, “the one who believes the testimony of Scripture concerning justification, can be sure in this matter.”<sup>85</sup> This is because the Gospel “does not put conditions for salvation. It merely tells that God is reconciled by the power of Jesus’ finished

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<sup>79</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 107. Bli det satt en eller annen betingelse for frelsen, et vilkår som en må oppfylle, så kan vi aldri være helt sikre på om vi har oppfylt det.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Heter det at du må først av hjertet ha tilgitt den som syndet mot deg, så vet en aldri om en helt og fullt har maktet denne tilgivelsen.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. ... en vil stadig på nytt engste seg for at det likevel er noe som ikke er tilgitt.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Og sier en at den søkende først må overgi seg helt til Gud før Gud kan frelse ham, så kommer stakkaren aldri i hele sitt liv til ende med å overgi seg til Gud, for det vil stadig være ctt og amnet i tanker, ord og gjerninger som ikke er ganske overgitt til ham.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Wisløff states that the Roman Church sets forth in clear language that a person can not be sure of one’s salvation. This is in harmony with what they teach about justification.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Men den som tror på Bibelens vitnesbyrd om rettferdiggjørelsen, han kan være viss i sin sak.

work. All that must be done in order that we shall be saved, Jesus has done it.”<sup>86</sup> This Gospel explicitly puts the basis of our salvation outside of ourselves.<sup>87</sup> Wisløff says that “when salvation is built only on Jesus and his finished work, which we receive with faith’s empty begging hand, then we build on a basis that holds. Then nothing rests on me – all depends on him.”<sup>88</sup>

The delivery of this assurance happens as “we listen to the word’s testimony of the finished salvation, and while we do that, the Spirit whispers in our heart: ‘This was for you’.”<sup>89</sup> And in this way “a Christian is sure that he possesses grace; he knows that as surely as God’s word and promise are true, so he is saved.”<sup>90</sup> Wisløff sees that “Luther’s answer is that the assurance builds only on God’s Word and promise.”<sup>91</sup> This is illustrated when at Luther’s appearance before Cajetan “he enumerated a long line of such promises before the Cardinal, and explained that such promises one can receive when one simply believes them.”<sup>92</sup> “This is the basis of assurance.”<sup>93</sup> For Wisløff, “the assurance of faith is an

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 107-108. Or dette evangelium setter ingen betingelser for frelsen, det forteller bare at Gud er forsonet i kraft av Jesu fullbrakte verk. Alt det som måtte gjøres for at vi skulle bli frelst har Jesus gjort.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 108.

<sup>88</sup> Wisløff, *Sola fide* (1945), 20. Når frelsen bygges bare på Jesus og hans fullbrakte verk, som vi får ta imot med troens tomme tiggerhånd, - da bygger vi på en grunn som holder. Da beror intet på meg – alt beror på ham.

<sup>89</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 108. Vi lytter til ordets vitnesbyrd om den fullbrakte frelse, og mens vi gjør det, hvisker Anden i vårt hjerte: Det var for deg.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. Derfor er en kristen viss på at han eier nåden, han vet at så sant Guds ord og løfter er sanne, så er han frelst.

<sup>91</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1984), 87. Luthers svar er at vissheten bygger bare på Guds ord og løfte.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Han regnet opp en lang rekke slike løfter for kardinalen, og forklarte at slike løfter kan en få ta imot idet en ganske enkelt tror dem. For the proceedings at Augsburg see WA 2, 6-26 (AE 31:259-292). Luther’s use of Scripture before Cajetan seems to be quite important as a model for Wisløff’s approach to assurance.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Dette er visshetens grunn.

assurance of the truth of *God's Word*.”<sup>94</sup>

The key for the assurance that comes from the justification by grace is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. This means that “when justification is preached to the contrite consciences, the Law must be kept completely outside as if it didn't exist.”<sup>95</sup> Justification by grace through faith is impossible if even a little particle of the Law's commandment, demand, and conditions are allowed in.<sup>96</sup> No ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’ but only the Gospel, which “lays no heavy burdens on us that we should bear, but rather lays all our sin, the entire obligation of the Law, and curse on Jesus, and frees without further ado the soul that looks to Jesus, *as he is*.”<sup>97</sup> When uncertainty sets in, “one must cling to the Gospel until the heart is quiet in the assurance that Jesus Christ, God's Son's blood cleanses us from all sin.”<sup>98</sup>

In a sermon on the topic of assurance we see how Wisløff seeks to lead people to assurance.<sup>99</sup> Romans 8:14-16 is the passage he chose and in particular the sentence, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” A basic important truth for assurance is that by the word of two witnesses everything shall be confirmed. He states that “the Bible says there are two witnesses and when these two witnesses are in agreement with each other then I may say that I am a Christian.”<sup>100</sup> Therefore

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Trosvissheten er en visshet om *Guds ords sannhet*.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Når en skal forkynne rettferdiggjørelsen for de dømte samvittigheter, må loven holdes helt utenfor som om den ikke eksisterte.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Hvis en slipper aldri så lite grann av lovens bud og krav og betingelser inn, så er det ute med rettferdiggjørelsen av nåde ved tro.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Den legger ikke på oss noen tunge byrder som vi skal bære, men den legger all vår synd og hele lovens plikt og forbannelse på Jesus, og frikjenner uten videre den sjel som ser hen til Jesus, *slik som han er*.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Og så må en holde seg til evangeliet, inntil hjertet er stille i den visshet at Jesu Kristi, Guds sønns blod renses oss fra all synd.

<sup>99</sup> Taped Sermon given at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church, October 1978.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

“when I have the witness of my own spirit to agree with the witness of the Spirit of God, then I can be assured and I can be quiet because I can be sure I am a child of God.”<sup>101</sup>

The witness of the person’s spirit concerns whether or not one has taken the right attitude to the Word of God. The Word of God always comes to us as Law or Gospel. The word of God as Law comes as accusation, exhortation, and commandment. The right attitude toward such a word is agreement that what it says is true. This involves “a willingness to listen, a willingness to be taught, a willingness not to dispute with God and contradict him. ...to accept the condemnation given by the holy Law of God and bow your head to it and say it is true.”<sup>102</sup> This is the right position before the Law of God.

The Word of God as Gospel is the word of forgiveness for Christ’s sake because he took all the sins of the world upon himself being made to be sin for us so that we in him should become Christ’s righteousness. What is the right attitude to this Word of God? Wisløff gets at this through a series of questions. “Have you received the Gospel? Have you listened to the message of him who is the lamb of God and who carried away the sins of the world? Have you listened to that message in such a way that you know no other salvation and no other possibility for salvation than his cross?”<sup>103</sup> The answer to the questions regarding one’s attitude to the Word of God, both Law and Gospel, is the first witness.

The second witness that is crucial for assurance is the witness of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God will talk to us through the Word of God.<sup>104</sup> We are to listen to the Word of

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

God preached. We are to read the Word of God.<sup>105</sup> This is how the Spirit witnesses to our spirit.

Wisløff asks, “How can I have assurance of salvation when my spirit and God’s Spirit are in agreement that I am a sinner, but that I am a sinner who has put his trust in Jesus Christ who died for sinners?”<sup>106</sup> He says, “My spirit can give myself testimony that is the only thing I know and the Holy Spirit will give me testimony through the Word of God that such a sinner is saved because Christ died for sinners and he will not ever cast out anyone who will come to him.”<sup>107</sup> Wisløff concludes, “That is assurance of salvation.”<sup>108</sup> He sets forth that this “assurance rests upon the conviction that the Word of God can never lie.”<sup>109</sup> It also “rests upon the experience that I have met the Word of God and that I have accepted the condemnation, that just condemnation, in the Law of God, and that I have accepted the invitation of the message of the Gospel. The Gospel that Jesus Christ died for me.”<sup>110</sup>

Wisløff does not put any emphasis on the importance of having a specific date or day to point to or remember. What is important is that they have gotten to see their true condition as lost sinners in themselves and that they have gotten to see salvation in Jesus Christ.<sup>111</sup> They must be pointed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the basis for faith.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Sjaastad, 26.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

Wisløff does not seem to incorporate baptism, the Lord's Supper, or absolution when preaching and teaching on assurance. However, when Wisløff preaches and teaches on baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution, we discover that these means of grace are of considerable benefit for the assurance of salvation. He says that "baptism is a glorious reminder that my salvation is entirely God's work and not mine."<sup>113</sup> Baptism reminds us constantly that we have not chosen God but that he has chosen us, and infant baptism precisely makes it clearest of all.<sup>114</sup> This constant reminder of God's saving grace tells us that it is not we who had begun, but he who began the good work in us. He met us already before we could think of taking a stand on him.<sup>115</sup> It should also be added that "baptism is not only a blessing once for all, but an enduring blessing, a beginning of something that shall last. I shall get to live in the fellowship of life with Christ that is made possible through baptism. I am 'clothed in Christ' and shall get to continue to remain in him."<sup>116</sup>

In the Lord's Supper the Lord stands as a proclamation of the Gospel which says that he comes to us in a visible manner with all that he is and has done, delivering the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.<sup>117</sup> This is a great comfort when the believer wonders whether or not God would have him to be one of his.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Wisløff, *Barnedåpen...* (1942), part 2. Vi vil først si det slik: Dåpen er en herlig påminnelse om at min frelse helt og holdent er Guds gjerning, og ikke min.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. <<I har ikke utvalgt meg, men jeg har utvalgt eder.>> Dåpen minner oss stadig om det, og nettopp barnedåpen gjør det aller klarest.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Og dåpen er ikke bare en velsignelse en gang for alle, men en varlg velsignelse, en begynnelse på noe som skal vare. Livssamfunnet med Kristus som er satt ved dåpen skal jeg få lov til å leve i. Jeg er <<iført Kristus>> - og skal få lov til å fortsette å bli i ham.

<sup>117</sup> Wisløff, "Nattverden – fellesskap på syndsforlatelsens grunn" *Credo* No. 6,(1979), 11-12.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

## The Nurture of Faith and the Means of Grace

We turn to the nurture and growth of the faith and new life given by God to the believer. We will first consider this from the perspective of the development of the baptized child. In a lecture in 1942, Wisløff acknowledges that the tradition which he finds himself in has “for a long time been afraid to think and speak that some remain in the baptismal covenant their whole life without falling out of life with God.”<sup>119</sup> However, it is his conviction that “it is certain enough that there are believing people who in reality have lived from the moment of baptism their whole life with God.”<sup>120</sup> Wisløff says that preachers need to remember this in their preaching.<sup>121</sup> He asserts that it is “God’s will that the baptized child should *remain* in fellowship with him until his dying day.”<sup>122</sup> This should be the “normal experience, and we pray, therefore, that God may preserve baptized children in fellowship with him so that they will never go away from him.”<sup>123</sup>

Wisløff’s approach in ministering to such children still calls for them to “hear the word of conversion.”<sup>124</sup> They “live with God so long as they know themselves connected to

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<sup>119</sup> Wisløff, *Barnedåpen...* (1942), part 2. Vi har lenge nesten vært redd for å tenke og tale om at noen blir ende i dåpens pakt hele sitt liv, uten å falle ut av livet i Gud.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. Men det er sikkert nok at det finnes troende mennesker som i grunnen hele sitt liv har levd med Gud, like fra dåpens stund. In this article Wisløff gives an example from a summer school where he was teaching where over twenty men out of a group of perhaps eighty indicated that they had lived with God from the time when they were children.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 138. Det var Guds vilje at det dømte barn skulle *bli* hos ham like til sin siste stund.

<sup>123</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 169. Ja, egentlig er jo dette det normale, og vi ber derfor at Gud må bevare de dømte barn hos seg, så de aldri går bort fra ham. At the same time it appears that Wisløff believes that many depart from their baptismal grace. He says: “but for many it is such that the world’s spirit very early takes the childhood faith out of the heart.” Men for mange er det slik at verdens ånd meget tidlig tar barnetroen ut av hjertet. Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Det kristen livet* (Oslo: Lunde forlag, 1988), 67.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 169-170. Likevel vil også den som er så lykkelig at han alltid har levet i dåpens pakt trenge å høre ordet om omvendelse, og nettopp når vi gjør alvor av dåpen vil dette forhold bli lett synlig.

him in their conscience, such that they must confess their child-sins to God and receive forgiveness for Jesus' sake."<sup>125</sup> He points out that this fits with what the *Catechism* teaches about the significance of baptism. Luther says, "It signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence."<sup>126</sup> The relationship between baptism and repentance is such that Luther can say, "for what is repentance but an earnest attack on the old man and an entering upon a new life? If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism."<sup>127</sup> Wisløff emphasizes "that repentance always consists of contrition and faith, contrition that is worked by the Law and which means the death of the old man, and a faith that is worked by the Gospel, and which means the life of the new man with God."<sup>128</sup> This repentance is necessary for baptismal grace and "is only possessed by the person who lives in contrition and faith."<sup>129</sup> Because "contrition and faith are not won once for all, but must be awakened in us every day by communion with God in the Word, so it must be affirmed that the baptized person, who lives in baptism, must hear the word of conversion [repentance] as God's relevant message to him each day."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Det kristen livet* (Oslo: Lunde forlag, 1988), 67-68. Et barn lever med Gud så lenge som det vet seg knyttet til ham i sin samvittighet, slik at det må bekjenne sine barnesynder for Gud og ta imot forlatelse for Jesu skyld.

<sup>126</sup> SC IV, 12. Tappert edition p. 349.

<sup>127</sup> LC IV, 75. Tappert edition p. 445.

<sup>128</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 170. Boten består all tid av anger og tro, en anger som virkes ved loven og som betyr det gamle menneskes død, og en tro som virkes ved evangeliet og som betyr det nye menneskes liv for Gud.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. Dåpsnåden er ikke noen egen slags nåde, den består i Guds miskunn for Jesu Kristi skyld, og den eies bare av det menneake som lever i anger og tro.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Og så sant som anger og tro ikke vinnes en gang for alle, men må vekkes i oss hver dag ved omgangen med Gud i Ordet, så må det også stå fast at den døpte, som lever i dåpen, må høre omvendelsens ord som Guds aktuelle tiltale til ham hver dag. Here Wisløff is using

There is another dimension to Wisløff's approach that relates to the natural development of the baptized child which also needs to be considered. He believes that during the time of growing up there must be a conscious transition to an adult person's life with God.<sup>131</sup> Wisløff does not give any Biblical basis for this. Rather, he says that the reason for this is found in the nature of how the child develops.<sup>132</sup> At this time of transition "the baptized child will then experience an awakening and conversion."<sup>133</sup> It would appear that Wisløff is using the term conversion here in the sense of a break-through, for that is the term he uses in this context to describe this awakening and conversion.<sup>134</sup> He also states in another work that those who have never been consciously away from God since they were baptized shall not be converted.<sup>135</sup> Rather, he says that "they shall be kept for God, and be helped to a new personal appropriation of what they already possess in child-faith."<sup>136</sup> Wisløff also speaks of this transition time as the time when the young person is put facing "the call from God and must now take a personal stand to this. In practice it shows that confirmation and the preparation for confirmation play an important and very often quite a decisive role for those

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the word conversion in the sense of daily conversion (*conversio continuata*). Pieper states, "the *conversio continuata* is the same as 'daily repentance,' the same as the *continuata regeneratio, resuscitatio, illuminatio*." Pieper, III, 467.

<sup>131</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 138. I overgangsalderen må det da bli en bevisst overgang til et voksent menneskes liv i Gud. This appears to be a carry over from the teaching of Wisløff's teacher Ole Hallesby, who made much use of psychological categories.

<sup>132</sup> From a personal conversation with Carl Fr. Wisløff.

<sup>133</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 138. Den barnedøpte vil da oppleve en vekkelse og omvendelse.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. He states, "when one such youth becomes awakened and experiences a break-through, he will quite naturally think at first: now he has become a Christian for real." Når en slik ungdom blir vakt og opplever et gjennombrudd, vil han selv ganske naturlig tenke at først nå er han blitt en kristen for alvor.

<sup>135</sup> Wisløff, "Vår luthersk arv..." (1945), 44. I ungdomslagene vare er det sikkert mange som aldri har vært bevisst borte fra gud siden de ble døpt. Disse skal ikke omvendes.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. De skal bevares for Gud, og hjelpes fram til en ny personlig tilegnelse av det de alt eier i barnetroen.

who come forth to a conscious life with Jesus Christ.”<sup>137</sup> This means that “each person must through contrition and repentance confess their sins to God and come to faith in reconciliation’s grace for Jesus’ sake. Without this there is in reality no Christian life.”<sup>138</sup>

This time of transition is also found in his major work on preaching. He observes that when the child goes through the transformation from the immediate confidence of childhood to the life of the adult person in personal responsibility there will be a serious testing of walking in baptism.<sup>139</sup> He states that “if faith does not then get anchored in a new assurance of grace and in a well-grounded purpose to want to belong to Jesus, the God-life will ebb and die.”<sup>140</sup> For Wisløff there must be in the young person “a new appropriation of what he already possessed as a child; not as if he never had lived in grace, for that he has; but he must be brought into the basic conditions of grace and faith through daily contrition and faith with the adult person’s conscious *yes* to that which he already possessed in the immediate confidence of childhood.”<sup>141</sup>

Wisløff adds that the difference between this child and one who has fallen from the covenant of baptism is still great, for this child has never been away from God since his

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<sup>137</sup> Wisløff, *Det kristen livet* (1988), 68. I ungdomstiden stilles han overfor kallet fra Gud, og må nå ta personlig stilling til dette. Det viser seg i praksis at konfirmasjonen og konfirmasjonsforberedelsen spiller en betydelig og svært ofte en ganske avgjørende rolle for dem som kommer fram til et bevisst liv med Jesus Kristus.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Hvert menneske må gjennom anger og omvendelse bekjenne sine synder for Gud og komme til tro på forsoningens nåde for Jesu skyld. Uten dette er der i virkeligheten intet kristenliv.

<sup>139</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 170.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Det går ikke for seg uten kamp, og denne kamp er dypt alvor, for hvis ikke troen nå får feste i en ny forvisning om nåden og i et grunnfestet forsett om å ville høre Jesus til, så vil gudslivet ebbe ut og dø.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. Det må for den unge bli til en ny tilegnelse av det som han alt eide som barn; ikke som om han aldri hadde levet i nåden, for det har han jo – men nådens og troslivets grunnvilkår skal han nå i den daglige anger og tro bli ført inn i med det voksne menneskes bevisste *ja* til det, som han før eide i barnets umiddelbare tillitsfullhet.

baptism.<sup>142</sup> The child may have the impression that now he has become a real Christian, but Wisløff says “we must maintain that he had life in God also before; he lived the same life of grace as after his break-through.”<sup>143</sup> He emphasizes that the “God-fearing child’s life with God is not any less valuable.”<sup>144</sup> Wisløff points out that this means that the “child who dares believe that he has always lived with God from the moment of baptism is free from seeking in his life after the ‘day’ when it happened.”<sup>145</sup> It needs to be remembered that whether it is one’s baptismal day or conversion day there stands back of both the “great day when all was finished. That I am saved only says that one day I received part in that which happened then.”<sup>146</sup> The days of baptism and conversion are thus days when what was won for us on calvary was delivered by the means of grace and received through faith.

Wisløff does not see any conflict between the reality of baptism and the preaching of conversion to the baptized person who has remained in his baptismal grace.<sup>147</sup> In fact “it is something that follows from a true insight into the nature and meaning of baptism.”<sup>148</sup> He is referring to what we have just previously quoted from Luther in the *Small Catechism* on the significance of baptism and the *Large Catechism*’s teaching that to walk in baptism is to live

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<sup>142</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet på...*(1987), 139.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Men vi må fastholde at han hadde liv i Gud før også, ja han levde det samme nådeliv som etter sitt gjennombrudd. See also “Barnedåpens betydning for den vokse, *For Fattig og Rik* Oct. 11, 1942.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Det gudfryktige barns liv med Gud er ikke noe mindreverdige.

<sup>145</sup> Wisløff, “Barnedåpens betydning for den vokse, (1942), part 2. Den som tør tro at han fra dåpens stund alltid har levd med Gud, han slipp å lete i sitt liv etter <<dagen>> da det skjedde.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. For bak <<min dag>>, også min dåpsdag, står den store dagen da alt ble fullbrakt. At jeg ble frelst vil bare si at jeg en dag fikk del i det som skjedde da.

<sup>147</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 171. Å forkynne omvendelsen for den som er i denne stilling er derfor ikke noe som står i strid med troen på dåpens realitet,

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. - det er tvertimot noe som helt nødvendig følger av en sann innsikt i dåpens vesen og betydning.

in repentance, i.e., contrition and faith. This appears to be what is often called daily repentance or *conversio continuata*.<sup>149</sup> However, the use of the psychological terminology of break-through by Wisløff in *Jeg vet på hvem jeg tror* and other writings in describing the same reality, seems to indicate that in the case of this transition break-through he may be thinking of something different than the on-going daily repentance.<sup>150</sup> He is seeking to express how walking in one's baptism relates to the natural development of the child which includes a psychological self-conscious dimension. He does not want us to forget that we are dealing with persons who have a psyche. Wisløff does add a very important point when he says, "it would be different if by 'conversion' we only meant certain psychological experiences which must be gone through according to a certain method, such a definite 'recipe' for conversion we cannot require of anyone."<sup>151</sup> Conversion is to be understood and spoken in terms of Law and Gospel. A concern expressed by Wisløff is that "the child and young person who with a simple faith, belongs to Jesus is not to be confused by talk that makes him think that his childlike faith is something inferior."<sup>152</sup> However, if the child does not hear and understand conversion in the contrition, faith, Law, Gospel way, he may think his standing in grace is inferior. The use of psychological categories, an emphasis on the will, and faith as surrender would move in the direction of anthropocentrizing faith.

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<sup>149</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* Vol. 2, 467. "The *conversio continuata* is the same as 'daily repentance,' the same as the *continuata regeneratio, resuscitatio, illuminatio*."

<sup>150</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 138-139. See also Wisløff, *En grunn...* (1972), 4. In *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951) Wisløff does not use the language of breakthrough so his description of this transition corresponds much more to the language of daily conversion.

<sup>151</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 170. En annen sak ville det være om man med >>omvendelse<< bare forsto visse psykologiske opplevelser som måtte gjennomgås etter en bestemt metode, - en slik bestemt >>oppskrift<< for omvendelsen kan vi ikke kreve av noen.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 169. Det barn og den ungdom som med en enfoldig tro hører Jesus til skal derfor ikke forvirres med en tale som får ham til å tenke at hans barnlige trosforhold er noe mindreverdig.

Another dimension of nurture is treated by Wisløff under the doctrine of sanctification. He clearly distinguishes justification from sanctification without separating them. It is important to maintain that “a person cannot become more holy before God than he already is through justification.”<sup>153</sup> At the same time “God wills that he who, through justification, has become holy before him shall also gradually become holy in this life.”<sup>154</sup> Wisløff desires to guard against any treatment of sanctification that will give the impression that it “is something that both factually and chronologically belongs in a different and new connection than conversion and faith.”<sup>155</sup> The New Testament (I Cor. 1:30) teaches that “he who receives Christ by faith, receives simultaneously a share in all that he is and has. Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation.”<sup>156</sup> Wisløff emphasizes “that in contrast to the second blessing preaching, justification and regeneration, conversion and sanctification are but different aspects of one and the same matter.”<sup>157</sup>

Even though, however, we must not separate it is important to distinguish so that people can see the “difference between civil righteousness, the righteousness that men can

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<sup>153</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 109. Et menneske kan ikke bli mer hellig for Gud enn han alt er blitt i rettferdiggjørelsen.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. Gud vil at den som i rettferdiggjørelsen er blitt hellig for ham, også etter hvert skal bli hellig i sitt liv.

<sup>155</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 178. Vi kan på denne måten komme til å vekke det inntrykk, at hellig- gjørelse skulle være noe som både saklig og kronologisk hørte hjemme i en annen og ny sammenheng enn omvendelse og tro. He notes that “it is instructive to see how Article XX of the Augsburg Confession speaks about faith and good works. It cannot speak about good works without immediately going back to faith, the simple faith in Christ’s atoning work and the forgiveness of sins in his name.” Det er lærerikt å se hvordan Aug. XX taler om tro og gode gjerninger. Aug. kan ikke tale om de gode gjerninger uten straks å gå tilbake til troen, - den enkle tro på Kristi soningsverk og syndenes forlatelse i hans navn. Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 178-179. Den som tar imot Kristus i troen, får i samme øyeblikk del i alt det som han er og har. Hvor syndenes forlatelse er, der er og liv og salighet.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 179. Overfor alle typer av second blessing-forkynnelse skal derfor understrekes at rettferdiggjørelse og gjenfødelse, omvendelse og helliggjørelse bare er forskjellige aspekter på en og samme sak.

see; and the righteousness by faith, the righteousness that God alone can see.”<sup>158</sup> Such a distinction avoids running sanctification as a kind of humanism and on the other hand a depreciation of civil righteousness.<sup>159</sup>

The distinction is also important for they are quite different concepts. Wisløff says “justification takes place in heaven and is an act of judgment by God. Sanctification takes place in me and is a new life created and nurtured by word and sacrament.”<sup>160</sup> He notes further that “justification is based alone upon the finished work of Christ and the grace in God’s heart; no new life is demanded of me *before* this take place. Sanctification is the result of having been received in a position of grace and of having become holy and spotless in God’s eyes.”<sup>161</sup> The believer lives daily on the basis of what he has in justification.

Another distinction that is foundational for Wisløff’s approach to sanctification is that between the old man and the new man. The old man is our flesh, the sinful nature that continues to live on in the believer but must be put to death daily. The old man cannot be improved or made holy, but rather he must die. The new man is “the Holy Spirit’s lordship in me; he is the believer in so far as he is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator (Col. 3:10; II Cor. 5:17).”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 180. Den må vise forskjellen mellom vår borgerlige rettferdighet, den rettferdighet som mennesker kan se – og troens rettferdighet, den rettferdighet som bare Gud kan se.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 180-181.

<sup>160</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet ...* (1987), 110. Rettferdigjørelsen skjer i himmelen og er en domshandling av Gud. Helligjørelsen skjer i meg, og er et nytt liv som skapes og næres ved ord og sakrament.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Rettferdigjørelsen grunner seg bare på Jesu fullbrakte verk og nåden i Guds hjerte; der kreves ikke noe nytt liv i meg før den kan finne sted. Helligjørelsen er en følge av at jeg er blitt opptatt i nådens stand og er blitt hellig og ren i Guds øyne.

<sup>162</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 182. Det nye menneske er Guds Ånds herredømme i meg, det er den troende for så vidt han er fornyet til kunnskap etter sin skapers bilde. Kol 3,10; 2. Kor. 5,17.

Sanctification is the mortification (*mortificatio*) of the old man<sup>163</sup> and the “*growth of the new mind and nature born in us when we came to faith in Christ (vivificatio).*”<sup>164</sup> These are the same basic elements that constitute repentance, and thus “sanctification is actualized in daily conversion.”<sup>165</sup> Wisløff says that sanctification is not the development of that which is good in us nor the release of latent potentialities in our own nature.<sup>166</sup> The new life came into being through the Word of the Gospel and it is by the Gospel, which is the only source for a holy life.<sup>167</sup>

Wisløff distances himself from the *imitatio Christi* way of understanding sanctification in both the medieval imitation piety sense and the more modern expression of Sheldon’s *In His Steps*, as not representing the best aspect of sanctification.<sup>168</sup> He is more sympathetic to the concept of conformity, where Christ is formed in us, not through our own laboring but through God who takes us in his hand as he leads us through life, as he did his own son through the cross and adversity.<sup>169</sup> God uses the external cross of affliction and adversity and the inner cross of trials and “the inner experience of this daily work in slaying the old man

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...* (1987), 114. Men helligjørelsen er veksten av det nye sinn og den nye natur som ble født i oss da vi kom til troen på Jesus.

<sup>165</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1987), 182. Men dette er jo nettopp momentene i boten, og helligjørelsen virkeliggjøres med andre ord i den daglige omvendelse.

<sup>166</sup> Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 114.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 182.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 183.

(Rom. 6:8; Gal. 5:24).<sup>170</sup> It is in this connection that soul-struggles (*anfektelse*) also play a part in slaying the old Adam.<sup>171</sup>

The growth of the new man “is the place to speak about our use of the means of grace, about the use of the word and the Lord’s Supper, about ‘walking in baptism,’ and about prayer.”<sup>172</sup> An important key to sanctification is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. “The Law addresses itself to the *flesh*, and the Gospel to the conscience.”<sup>173</sup> Often, however, the exact opposite takes place so that the Law burdens the conscience and the Gospel addresses the flesh and becomes a pass to human laziness.<sup>174</sup> Wisløff emphasizes that there is “one condition that is more important than any other for a sound Christian life, and that is *the freedom of the conscience from the Law*.”<sup>175</sup> He points out that “words and commandments which would either send us into despair, or place us as lost sinners at the foot of the cross, are sometimes quite carelessly proclaimed as tasks which we now are to actualize.”<sup>176</sup> This can be confusing to people, for “they miss the anchoring in the Gospel word about Christ’s righteousness as our sole basis of salvation.”<sup>177</sup> Wisløff advises the

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 185. Korset er ikke bare utvortes trengsel for Kristi skyld, korset er den prøvelse som Gud gir meg å bære, det er den indre erfaring av hans daglige arbeid på å døde det gamle menneske. Rom 6,6; Gal. 5,24.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 185-187. This will be dealt with in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 187. Her er stedet til å tale om vår bruk av nådens midler, om bruken av ordet og nattverden, om å >>vandre i dåpen<< og om bønner.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 189. Loven har adresse til *kjødet*, evangeliet til samvittigheten.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 190. Det er derfor en betingelse som er viktigere enn noen andre for et sunt kristenliv, og det er *samvittighetens frihet fra loven*.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 193. Ord og bud som enten måtte sende oss inn i fortvilelsen – eller legge oss som fortapte syndere ved korsets fot blir stundom ganske sorgløst forkynt som oppgaver som vi nå skal virkeliggjøre.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. Mennesker som har lært å innse at de bare kan leve av Guds nåde føler seg hjelpeløst desorientert av slike toner, man savner forankringen i evangeliets ord om Kristi rettferdighet som vår eneste grunn til salighet.

preacher to “gladly let the commandment show us clearly and strongly what God expects of his children. But at the same time be clear that we are God’s children solely for Jesus’ sake.”<sup>178</sup>

Wisløff teaches that “the holy life has its source in its fellowship with Jesus” and that it “is the work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>179</sup> He observes that “in the New Testament a life in sanctification is regularly placed in connection with the fellowship of the sanctified.”<sup>180</sup> This “life-fellowship with Jesus is lived in the manner that one uses *the means of grace*, the Word and the sacraments.”<sup>181</sup> Wisløff states that “to live with Jesus implies certainly to read and hear his Word, and exercise itself in faith in this Word.”<sup>182</sup> Also he adds that “by making use of the Lord’s Supper in faith a Christian is strengthened to a life of sanctification.”<sup>183</sup>

Baptism also contributes to the nurture and growth of the believer. “Through the means of grace of baptism we become one with Christ, and the one who lives in repentance and faith, which baptism is the entrance to, lives in fellowship with Jesus.”<sup>184</sup> Wisløff draws from Rosenius who identifies baptism as both a letter of covenant and a letter of divorce.<sup>185</sup> He uses this way of speaking to show how baptism brings about a new relationship to sin.

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid. La gjerne budet vise oss klart og sterkt hva Gud venter av sine barn. Men la det samtidig være klart at vi er Guds barn alene for Jesu skyld.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., *Jeg vet...* (1987), 115-116. Det er selve livssamfunnet med Jesus som dette hellige liv har sin vilkår Gud har fastsatt. Helliggjørelsen er et verk av Guds Hellige Ånd.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. Det er av stor betydning å se at i det Nye Testamente er livet i helliggjørelse regelmessig satt i forbindelse med samfunnet med de hellige.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 117. Livssamfunnet med Jesus leves på den måten at en bruker *nådemidlene*, Ordet og sakramentene.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. Å leve med Jesus innebærer da å lese og høre hans ord, og øve seg i troen på dette ord.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. Ved å bruke nattverden i tro blir en kristen styrket til et liv i helliggjørelse.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. Ved dåpens nådemiddel blir vi ett med Kristus, og den som lever i den anger og tro som dåpen er porten til, han lever i samfunnet med Jesus.

<sup>185</sup> Wisløff, “Barnedåpens betydning for den vokse, (1942), part 1. Rosenius sier det slik: Dåpen er både et *paktsbrev* og et *skilsmissebrev*.

First “it is a letter of covenant as when God through baptism completes a covenant with the individual, cleanses him (Ephesians 5:26) and saves him (1Peter 3:21; Titus 3:5).”<sup>186</sup> And at the same time “it is also a letter of divorce, as when it puts a division between me and my sins. Christ has through baptism united himself so completely with us, that before God we shall be and have what he is and has.”<sup>187</sup> This means that “we have also endorsed a letter of divorce with sin, so we never more shall be its servant, but belong to him who has bought us with his blood.”<sup>188</sup>

In a sermon on Matthew 3:13-17 Wisløff says that “if you are a child of God through faith in Jesus, then you shall now be reminded that your baptism is a baptism to death.”<sup>189</sup> It is a constant source of power through which there is death to the whole old sinful nature which is to be drowned through contrition and repentance daily and a new person raised up that shall live with God.<sup>190</sup> He notes in this connection that the “Christian is called to live in true repentance, which means with an awakened conscience toward everything sinful, and with living faith in Jesus, our savior and reconciler.”<sup>191</sup> Thus “baptized into Jesus’ Christ’s death we shall live with him who died for us, and who lives for us.”<sup>192</sup> Wisløff references

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid. En er paktsbrev, idet Gud ved dåpen slutter en pakt med den enkelte, renser ham (Ef. 5, 26) og frelser ham (1 Pet. 3, 21; Tit. 3, 5).

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. En den er også et skilsmissebrev, idet den setter et skille mellom meg og mine synder. Kristus har ved dåpen forbundet seg så helt med oss, at vi for Gud skal være og ha hva han er og har;

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. ... men dermed har vi også undertegnet et skilsmissebrev med synden, så vi aldri mer skal være dens tjenere, men høre ham til, som har kjøpt os med sitt blod.

<sup>189</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, (1973), 45. Er du et Guds barn ved troen på Jesus, så skal du na bli minnet om at din dåp er en dåp til døden.

<sup>190</sup> Wisløff, “Barnedåpens betydning for den vokse, (1942), part 2. Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* p. 45.

<sup>191</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* (1973), 46. En kristen er kalt til å leve i sann bot – det vil si med våken samvittighet overfor alt syndig vesen, og med levende tro på Jesus, vår Frelser og forsoner.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. Døpt til Jesu Kristi død skal vi leve med ham som døde for oss, og som lever for oss.

Paul's expression "should walk in the newness of life."<sup>193</sup> He believes that the "should" is not a Law's should. "It is not an imperative, command and demand first and foremost, even if it still very strongly reminds us of baptism's holy obligation."<sup>194</sup> On the contrary "it is first and foremost a promise. ...we should walk in a new life. Baptism's heartfelt *life-fellowship with Jesus* is the *guarantee* for it."<sup>195</sup> Wisløff expresses appreciation for Luther's word that says that baptism's act is finally complete when death and the grave are behind and we are completely united with Jesus and have become like him.<sup>196</sup>

In this section we observe that Wisløff speaks in the doctrinal writings of the role of the means of grace including the sacraments in nurturing the Christian life, but when we turn to his preaching and devotional writings we find that usually the sacraments are not integrated into the message unless they are directly referred to in the biblical text he is preaching on. This seems to be the pattern throughout his entire ministry.

### The Trials of Faith and the Means of Grace

In this section we will consider how Wisløff uses the means of grace when dealing with *anfektelse*. *Anfektelse* is one of those untranslatable words. Like the German word *Anfechtung*, it can be defined as vexation of spirit, testing, agony of conscience, soul-struggles, temptation, and trial. Wisløff says "it is something that makes it difficult, something that will take from me the freedom in my relationship with God. Call it spiritual

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<sup>193</sup> Wisløff, "Barnedåpens betydning for den vokse, (1942), part 1.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. Det er ikke imperativ, bud og krav først og fremst, selv om det nok meget sterkt minner oss m dåpens hellige forpliktelse.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. Nei, det er først og fremst et løfte. ...vi skal vandre i et nytt levnet. Dåpens inderlige *livssamfunn med Jesus* er *garantien* for det.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., part 2.

battle, trouble and danger.”<sup>197</sup> He also refers to it as “the inner cross, that is the spiritual battle and fight that comes with being a Christian, when the devil, the world and our own flesh will bar the way for us. This deep inner battle that we fight is something that God allows to come in order to exercise us in the fear of God.”<sup>198</sup>

There is a difference between “what God puts on his children of trials (*anfektelser*) and comparable testings.”<sup>199</sup> It also must be remembered that there “is a great difference in how long a time the individual must go through the trial’s (*anfektelsens*) oppression. It even happens that some must, more or less, suffer under it through the whole life.”<sup>200</sup> Wisløff observes that there is little spoken on the subject and that it has for the most part been viewed as an abnormal state.<sup>201</sup> He notes that this was not the case with the old teachers, who were schooled in ‘the theology of the terrified conscience’ and who saw that trials (*anfektelse*) could be part of God’s guidance with us by which he is active in slaying the old man.<sup>202</sup>

One type of trial (*anfektelse*) has its basis in that God’s holy Law accuses and overwhelms by speaking about sins.<sup>203</sup> “The hardest with trials (*anfektelse*) is in essence that it actualizes your sins and holds them up before you.”<sup>204</sup> Added to this is the enemy of our

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<sup>197</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* (1973), 165. Det er noe som gjør det vanskelig, noe som vil ta fra meg frimodigheten i mitt forhold til Gud. Kall det like gjerne åndelig strid, nød og fare.

<sup>198</sup> Wisløff, *Det kristne livet* (1988), 161. Det indre kors, det er den åndelige kamp og strid som følger med å være en kristen, idet djevelen, verden og vårt eget kjød vil stenge veien for oss. Den dype indre kamp som vi strider, er noe som Gud lår komme for å øve oss i gudsfrykt.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 163. Det er høyst forskjellig hva Gud legger på sine barn av anfektelser og lignende prøvelser.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* Det er også stor forskjell på hvor lang tid de enkelte må gå under anfektelsens trykk. Det hender til og med at noen må lide under slikt gjennom hele livet, mer eller mindre.

<sup>201</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 185-186.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>203</sup> Wisløff, *Vitnesbyrd om Jesus* (1979), 93.

<sup>204</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet om korset* (1973), 166. Det tyngste med anfektelsen er i grunnen at den aktualiserer dine synder og holder dem opp for deg.

soul the devil, who “takes the opportunity to make the Christian life so impossible that one gives up altogether.”<sup>205</sup> Trials (*anfektelse*) can also take the form of spiritual darkness when God hides himself from us as in Psalm 30:7.<sup>206</sup> The kind of trial (*anfektelse*) that is sent by God is the most difficult to understand.<sup>207</sup> Regardless of the shape it takes, Wisløff says that “all trials (*anfektelse*) shall, according to God’s will and purpose, bring us to God. He is the only one who can help with the need that is the greatest.”<sup>208</sup>

In seeking to help a believer who is going through such an experience Wisløff says “there is no other guidance that avails for the tried conscience than the simple preaching of the Word of the Gospel of God’s conciliatory heart in Christ. God loves the sinner and his thoughts with the trials are of grace.”<sup>209</sup> The preaching must set forth these truths “for there will always be people who need to hear that in the midst of their struggles and pain they are loved by God.”<sup>210</sup>

Wisløff also refers to Luther’s *Comfort When Facing Grave Temptations* for counsel on how to deal with these trials.<sup>211</sup> Wisløff summarizes the six points made by Luther.<sup>212</sup> The

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<sup>205</sup> Wisløff, *Vitnesbyrd om Jesus* (1979), 93. Og da kommer sjelens fiende djevelen, han vil benytte anledningen til å gjøre kristenlivet så umulig at en gir opp alt sammen.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Wisløff, *Det kristne livet* (1988), 162. Derfor skal etter Guds vilje og hensikt all anfektelse bringe oss til Gud. Det er bare han som kan hjelpe med den nød som er størst.

<sup>209</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 186. Derfor er det heller ikke noen annen veiledning som duger for den anfedtede samvittighet enn den ganske enkle forkynnelse av evangeliets ord om Guds forsonede hjerte I Kristus. Gud elsker synderen, også hans tanke med anfektelsen er nåde.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. Disse sannheter må forkynnelsen aldri glemme å holde frem, for det vil alltid være mennesker som trenger å høre at de midt i sine kamper og sin smerte er elsket av Gud.

<sup>211</sup> Wisløff, *Det kristne livet* (1988), 162. See AE 42:179-186. *Comfort When Facing Grave Temptations* 1521. (*Tröstung für eine Person in hohen Anfechtungen* WA 7, [779] 784-791).

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

person should not go according to his feelings, which fluctuate, but rather hold to God's promise in the word which stands fast. Secondly, he should not think that he is the only one who is going through this, but realize that there are many others in the same battle. Thirdly, he should not desire at any price to be delivered from these trials but rather hold out and try to see God's will in the burden he must go through. Fourthly, he should praise God as best he can, for the spirit of heaviness cannot be driven away except through praising God. Fifthly, he shall seek to thank God, who considers one worthy to go through such tests. Sixthly, he should not doubt God's grace but look to Jesus and his salvation.

The person who cares for souls needs to know how to explain to those going through trials "that God's grace is a reality that we shall be allowed to *believe* on the basis of the grace in Christ."<sup>213</sup> Wisløff says that we should help them to see that "my case can stand good with God even if my heart cannot feel it. My salvation rests on an acquittal that God has pronounced before heaven's judgment seat. If I cannot feel it, it is just the same a reality for me, as I look to Jesus with the heart's faith and longing."<sup>214</sup>

Preaching on election, Wisløff writes that a natural and right question by a person who is face to face with God's wrath is: "Will God have anything to do with me?"<sup>215</sup> He cites Luther as an example who, when he pondered this question, said, "I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 163. Da må en sjelesørger vite å forklare en slik sjel at Guds nådc er en virkelighet som vi skal få lov til å tro på grunnlag av nåden i Kristus.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., Min sak kan stå godt hos Gud selvom mitt hjerte ikke kan føle det. Min frelse beror på en frifinnelsesdom som Gud har felt for himmelens domstol, for Jesu skyld. Om jeg ikke kan føle dette, er det like fullt en virkelighet for meg, så sant jeg ser hen til Jesus i hjertets tro og lengsel.

<sup>215</sup> Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Utvelgelsen i Kristus* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1978), 13. Men vil Gud ha med meg å gjøre?

never been created a man, before I realized how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace.”<sup>216</sup> Wisløff says “there is no harm done to those who come into serious trials (*anfektelse*) by the thought of whether God, no matter what, will have him as his. The despair is in reality healthy. It ‘lies near grace.’”<sup>217</sup>

Wisløff responds to this trial (*anfektelse*) by stressing the importance of having a clear understanding of the Gospel. It is not sufficient to say that the Gospel is an offer or a promise.<sup>218</sup> Rather the Gospel is “a Word that tells that God has fulfilled his promises to send lost people a Savior. The promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God’s son, our brother. The sin is atoned! The debt paid! God has reconciled the world with himself so he does not charge them with their transgressions (2 Cor. 5:19).”<sup>219</sup>

He next asserts that “the election is an election in *Christ*. It is Christ who is chosen. God has chosen his Son, Jesus Christ, to be salvation for all who believe.”<sup>220</sup> It is important to recognize that “God’s eternal choice of grace is not an arbitrary matter.”<sup>221</sup> He did not say, “I want this one, but not this one.” His gracious will of salvation involves all. Therefore God chose to give his Son for our sins, and thus he chose him as the way of atonement.<sup>222</sup> The

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid. Luther quote is from AE 33:190.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. Jeg sier deg: Det er ingen skade skjedd med den som kommer inn i alvorlig anfektelse ved tanken på om Gud i det hele tatt vil ha ham som sin. Den fortvilelsen er i virkeligheten sunn. Den <<ligget nær nåden>>.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 17-18. Utvelgelsen er en utvelgelse i Kristus. ... Det er Kristus som er utvalgt. Gud har utvalgt sin Sønn, Jesus Kristus, til frelse for alle som tror.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. Guds evige nådevalg er ikke en vilkårlig sak.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

reason that God has chosen me and you, we who believe in Jesus, does not lie in you and me.<sup>223</sup> Rather says Wisløff, “he chose Jesus as the way to salvation.”<sup>224</sup>

In wrestling with this problem the believer must hold God’s word. He quotes Luther who says, “But you had better follow the order of this epistle (Romans). Worry first about Christ and the Gospel, that you may recognize your sin and his grace. Then fight your sin, as the first eight chapters here have taught. Then, when you have reached the eighth chapter, and are under the cross and suffering, this will teach you correctly of predestination in chapters 9, 10, and 11, and how comforting it is.”<sup>225</sup>

Wisløff teaches that one can know one is chosen on the basis of what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 and 2:13. Here Paul teaches that “the one who believes the Gospel about Jesus, he at the same time believes his election. The Gospel’s call of grace is God’s call; the realization of his eternal purpose of desiring to save the one who believes on Jesus.”<sup>226</sup> Those who are chosen are those who hear the Gospel and receive it. In this manner Wisløff deals with those who are troubled with the question of election.

In a sermon on sorrow and joy in the Christian life, Wisløff devotes a section to the trials (*anfektelse*) that a believer experiences.<sup>227</sup> As the believer is faced with his sins and weaknesses Wisløff says that “it can be helpful to confess to a father confessor who hears all you have to confess, and who then on the Lord’s behalf promises to you the forgiveness of sin

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. Nei, han valgte Jesus Kristus som vei til frelse.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., Luther quote translation is from AE 35:378.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 20. Vi har funnet svaret: Den som tror evangeliet om Jesus, han tror samtidig sin utvelgelse. Evangeliets nådekall er Guds kall, virkeliggjørelsen av hans evige forsett om å ville frelse den som tror på Jesus.

<sup>227</sup> Wisløff, *Vitnesbyrd om Jesus* (1979), 93-95. “Sorg og glede i kristenlivet” Mark 2, 18-28.

for Jesus' sake."<sup>228</sup> Through the open confession of sin and faith's trust in Jesus, his blood cleanses from all sin.<sup>229</sup> Wisløff has written that Martin Luther speaks much about trials (*anfektelse*).<sup>230</sup> He notes that Luther pointed out that in theory it is easy to distinguish Law and Gospel, but when it comes to practice, it is another matter. Then the Gospel is seldom a guest in the conscience while the Law is constantly there and the conscience is accustomed to the Law and the sense of sin.<sup>231</sup> In this situation "a very great help in this need is the private confession, where one confesses sins that press the conscience and has spoken to them the forgiveness of sins for Jesus' sake."<sup>232</sup>

Wisløff also includes the Lord's Supper as a means of comfort for the afflicted. He comments that as one gets older it does not get any easier to believe that one is a child of God.<sup>233</sup> When the living faith is tested (*anfektet*) by the enemy of the soul, then "the Lord's Supper stands for me as a preaching of the Gospel itself, which says to me, he comes to *you*. He comes in this external manner, yes visible manner. You should not imagine that you in great spirituality shall raise yourself to God. It has pleased *him* to come down to you and be near you."<sup>234</sup> This one who descends and is truly present gives the forgiveness of sins and

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 94. Det kan være en hjelp å bekjenne alt for en skriftefar, som hører alt du har å bekjenne, og som så på Herrens vegne tilsier deg syndenes forlatelse for Jesu skyld.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Wisløff, *Martin Luthers teologi* (1954), 88.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 88-89. En mektig hjelp i denne nød er det private skriftemål, der en får bekjenne synder som trykker samvittigheten – og bli tilsagt syndenes forlatelse for Jesu skyld.

<sup>233</sup> Wisløff, "Nattverden – fellesskap på syndsforlatelsens grunn" (*Credo* Nr. 6, 1979), 11.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 12. Nattverden star da for meg som en forkynnelse av selve evangeliet som sier til meg: Han kommer til *deg*. Han kommer på denne utvortes måte, ja, sansbare måte. Du skal ikke innbille deg at du i stor åndelighet skal heve vi deg inn til Gud. Det har behaget *ham* å komme ned til deg og bli deg så nær.

with that is life and salvation.<sup>235</sup> It is interesting to observe that Wisløff does not bring in the Lord's Supper as a means of comfort when he speaks on the trials (*anfektelse*) but only when speaking on the sacrament itself.

When speaking about trials (*anfektelse*) Wisløff does not appear to make any reference to the help and comfort that may be found in the Gospel word of baptism or the promise of baptism. However, when writing about the meaning of baptism he states that in the dark hours when we see our heart's fickleness we can remember our baptism which is a witness "that *God is the one who begins*. Before I can think of him, he thought of me, he found me and saved me. Especially is his calling even before my faith."<sup>236</sup> In the second place baptism witnesses that "God is faithful" even when we are faithless.<sup>237</sup> And finally it witnesses that "God will complete what he began. ... He himself will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."<sup>238</sup> He underscores that baptism "is not only a witness intended to be remembered, but

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Wisløff, "Barnedåpens betydning for den voksne, (1942), part 2. Før det første et vitnesbyrd om at *Gud er den som begynner*. Før jeg kunde tenke på ham, tenkte han på meg, han fant meg og frelste meg. Således er hans kallende nåde endog før min tro.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. Og for det tredje et vitnesbyrd m at *Gud vil fullføre det han begynte*. ... Og den gjerning som han begynte, den vil han selv fullføre inntil Jesu Kristi dag.

a witness with actual power in itself. For such is God's word and blessing, they are not as the word of men, no, it 'works in you who believe' (1 Thess. 2:13)."<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid. Og det ikke bare et vitnesbyrd beregnet på å huskes, men et vitnesbyrd med virkekraft i seg. For slik er Guds ord og velsignelse, de er ikke som menneske ord, nei, det <<ter seg virksomt i eder som tror.>> 1 Tess. 2, 13.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Summary**

Carl Fr. Wisløff is no stranger to the life of the Norwegian church. He has been active as a pastor, a writer, an editor, a professor, a lecturer, and a preacher from the early 1930s to the present day. He is a man of firm convictions. A Swedish professor characterized him as a person “who not only knows in *whom* he believes but also *what* he believes. And that is very rare among theological professors.”<sup>1</sup> We have sought to provide an introduction to Wisløff’s theological life and writings, particularly those that relate to faith and the means of grace.

We began our study by giving an overview of the historical background for Wisløff’s theology in general and the issues of our topic more specifically. In the stream of Pontoppidan, Hauge, Johnson, and Hallesby there was an emphasis on the order of salvation scheme as the way of appropriating the provided salvation. The Johnsonian and Hallesbyian line had been influenced by the Erlangen theology with its emphasis on experience and a strong psychological dimension. Here the will was highlighted and the importance of choice in conversion had a significant role. Awakening and faith were understood in the framework of this context.

In this tradition there was some variation in the understanding of the means of grace. Pontoppidan and Hauge taught that both the Word and baptism were means of regeneration. Johnson did not separate them and thus saw the Word and baptism as working together to

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Sjaastad, 7. <<Denne professor (Wisløff) vet ikke bare *hvem* han tror på, men også *hva* han tror. Og det er meget sjeldent blant teologiske professorer! >>

bring about regeneration. Hallesby saw baptism as the sole means of regeneration and the Word as the means for awakening and conversion, both of which were necessary for the baptized who were still living in grace and those who were apostate.

Next we gave consideration to a study of Wisløff's theological life and its unfolding. He was born, raised, and educated in the tradition of Pontoppidan, Hauge, Johnson, and Hallesby. In the 1930s Wisløff gradually began to become acquainted with a different understanding. It appears that this started with reading the writings of C. O. Rosenius which were recommended to him by Anna Iensen. Rosenius, whose writings are saturated with quotes from Luther, brought Wisløff into the Law-Gospel way of thinking. Along with Rosenius there were the conversations and the writings of Olav Valen-Sendstad. From America came the influence of Francis Pieper through his *Christliche Dogmatik* and C. F. W. Walther's *Gesetz und Evangelium*. Through these writings Wisløff also met Luther, the theologians of Lutheran orthodoxy, and classical Lutheran theology.

We observed that in the late 1930s and the early 1940s Wisløff began to distance himself from certain emphases of the tradition in which he was trained and yet at the same time sought to be a corrective to this tradition from within. This is seen in his anchoring of theology in the Bible as the authoritative, inerrant Word of God, which he believes to be the same view of the Bible as Jesus and the apostles. His view of the Bible stands in agreement with Walther and Pieper and in contrast with Hallesby and his other teachers at The Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology.

Next came his breakthrough into Law and Gospel as the brilliant light that opens Scripture and God's way of salvation with all of its accompanying doctrines. God does His work by way of words; the Law Word and the Gospel Word. All false teaching and dead piety

have their source in that Law and Gospel are not properly distinguished. We have also observed the influence of Walther, Pieper, and others such as Rosenius and Luther in this area as well. Wisløff broke with the order of salvation scheme typical of pietism that was very much a part of his training. He works rather with the categories of Law and Gospel and their corresponding counterpart doctrines of repentance and faith. He also sought to strengthen the place of the means of grace and baptism in particular over against the *Alliance Movement*, Reformed influence, and the lay theology that tended to downplay baptism.

During the late 1940s and on into the 60s Wisløff wrote on liturgy, the liturgical movement, and the ecumenical movement as it relates both to the church and to missions. It was during this time that he engaged in an intensive study of Luther which resulted in his doctoral dissertation *Nattverd og messe (The Gift of Communion)*. We have observed that with the publication of Leiv Aalen's book *Dåpen og barnet. Barsedåp eller "troendes dåp"?* in 1945 questions were raised about the means of regeneration and the relation of the Word and baptism. This front has similarities to the Grundtvigianism of the previous century. Wisløff deals with this, in part, in his major book on preaching *Ordet fra Guds munn* published in 1951.

Wisløff now begins to serve as a corrective to what he sees as a developing sacramentalism. In 1960 he writes "Luthersk sakramentsyn" in which he charts a course between the two fronts of sacramentalism and enthusiasm. He sees a need to be on guard against a security in the sacraments that exists apart from faith and on the other hand a trust in one's own feelings, experiences, etc., rather than in the Word and sacraments. In regard to the particular focus of our topic, it is to these two fronts that Wisløff is a corrective: enthusiasm in the early period and sacramentalism in the later. Wisløff, from the early 50s up to the present,

emphasizes the Word as the means of grace which regenerates. During this period he does not write as much about baptism as during the late 30s and early 40s. This does not indicate that there was a change in his basic understanding of baptism but it does seem to indicate a shift in emphasis due to the prevailing situation prompted by the teachings of Leiv Aalen.

Wisløff seeks to avoid the anthropocentrizing of faith by understanding it in the context of Law and Gospel. Faith comes clear when the Gospel is clear. Faith comes forth from the Gospel. It is the Gospel that kindles faith. Faith is no longer understood in terms relative to the will, with it more or less in the center, nor expressed as choice or surrender which he puts in the category of Law. It rather corresponds to the Gospel which the person passively receives and so faith is spoken of as being created, kindled, given, and worked. Faith is trust in God's grace; the empty hand that receives. This is a clear departure from the Hallesbyian way of thinking. For Wisløff, regeneration is the *donatio fidei*. He often uses the same basic terminology of the tradition in which he was trained but it is filled with a different meaning. This can be confusing and problematic if the listener is not hearing the message with the intent and meaning of Wisløff.

Awakening is also carefully distinguished from faith and being made alive. It refers to awakening the conscience from the deep sleep of sin. There is no middle ground between life and death where the will is free and able to choose to believe. Awakening is not understood in a psychological manner but rather theologically, that is *coram Deo*. It gets redefined in terms of Law and is understood in the way of *Augustana XII*. Nor is awakening measured in terms of its intensity or as a state in which one must tarry until certain criteria have been met. Neither is there a series of stages one must pass through.

The means of grace are given a clear and central place as the way God gives His grace and salvation to us. Grace is set forth in an objective *extra nos* manner as the merciful disposition of God, *favor Dei*, toward sinners for Jesus' sake. It is not a medicine or power. Even though salvation has been won for all it has not yet become the possession of all, for it must be extended. God's grace is not something that is taken out of the air. Wisløff sets forth that the Word of the Gospel, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution, are all means of grace, each having the same purpose and effect. Each of the means of grace delivers the whole of God's grace. This is also the teaching of Walther and Pieper, which also may have had an impact on Wisløff's thinking in this matter.

The Word leads us to a correct understanding of the sacraments. He understands the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper to be pure Gospel. Both the Gospel Word and baptism are means by which God regenerates, that is, they give faith and new life. The Word has the power to create what it says. This is in contrast to the Grundtvigians on the one hand and Hallesby on the other, who locate regeneration in baptism alone. Also in the late 1940s and on to the present this emphasis of Wisløff is in contrast to the teaching of Leiv Aalen. For Wisløff, to the baptized person who is apostate, the Gospel Word is the means by which God regenerates him. And when such a one is regenerated again he enters back into all that God originally gave in the gift of baptism.

Baptism has an important place as the means of grace through which God regenerates the child brought to Him in baptism. Wisløff emphasizes that life with God is present so long as there is faith. When faith is lost, so is the life with God even though the person may have been baptized. No hidden baptismal life or seed remains in the person. In such a case, the person should not be called to return to his baptism but to return to the promise given in

baptism. In putting it this way, he seeks to preserve the place of faith, which is lost or depreciated in sacramentalism, and thus avoid baptism as just a ritual or an event of the past. Even though the person may not believe, the promise that God made and gave in baptism remains true. For Wisløff, the lasting significance of baptism therefore lies in the promise of baptism. This promise is distinguished from the promise given in the preached Gospel Word, for the promise given in baptism points specifically to the individual. However, Wisløff tends to preach this promise, not in the uniqueness that belongs to it by way of baptism, but in the general way of the preached Word. This tends to downplay the uniqueness of baptism. The distinction Wisløff makes between the promise of baptism and baptism is somewhat artificial and arbitrary. Baptism is both a promise and an act of God.

Wisløff makes this distinction between the promise and baptism: that we should not direct people to return to their baptism but rather to the Savior or the promise on the basis of what he has found in Luther. However, even though Luther does distinguish between the promise and baptism, he does not separate them. At times he speaks of the promise and at other times he calls people to remember their baptism. Thus he uses them interchangeably, for he knows that to speak of the promise is to speak of baptism and to speak of baptism is to speak of the promise and Christ. Rather than avoiding baptism talk, which has the result of marginalizing baptism, something which Wisløff accuses others of, especially in the late 30s and early 40s, it would be more consistent with Wisløff's own admonition to speak correctly about baptism. Wisløff does not see speaking less about baptism as being a viable corrective to sacramentalism nor speaking more about baptism as the way to correct enthusiasm, but

insists rather that we have a right view of these things.<sup>2</sup> That is, that we speak of baptism in a manner that makes it clear to the people that to speak of baptism includes Christ and His promise.

In the light of the sacramentalism front, there seems to be a shift in Wisløff's speaking about the lasting significance of baptism. In a lecture that he gave in 1942 he spoke about baptism as a constant source of power lasting the whole life and not being complete until death.<sup>3</sup> Baptism was also set forth as paradigmatic for the Christian life in that it consisted of practicing ourselves in baptism through the daily putting to death of the old nature and the coming forth of the new. This way of speaking does not seem to be given the same emphasis in the 60s and later.<sup>4</sup> Wisløff does not anywhere deny the power and lasting significance of baptism, but the absence of this teaching may tend in practice to deprive baptism of its full meaning and significance.

Wisløff notes that baptism is foundational for the child's Christian life when it awakens to conscious faith. We saw that he retains in his baptismal understanding some of the Erlangen theology. He does not break completely with the Hallesbyian line in using conscious faith language or in speaking of the need for a breakthrough (*gjennombrudd*) to a conscious faith. Thus he continues to recognize a psychological dimension in faith. However, he understands the breakthrough in terms of Law and Gospel as these relate to the natural development of the child. In his earlier writings (1939-1946), Wisløff was critical of

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>3</sup> Wisløff, "Barnedåpens betydning..." (1942). See Appendix 1. This lecture has material from Luther's *Large Catechism* (1529) and his *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519), AE 35:25-43.

<sup>4</sup> In a letter to the writer dated September 4, 1996, he expressed that he had just read the lecture which was published as two articles and that his thinking on the subject "seems to be the same today as it was so long a time ago."

the psychological emphasis and categories. A misunderstanding and misuse of *gjennombrudd* could end up in this category.

In *Ordet fra Guds munn* when Wisløff discusses the life of the baptized child he does not use the language of breakthrough but rather speaks of daily contrition and faith (daily repentance) with the adult person's conscious *yes* to God, which is in reality what it means to live in one's baptism.<sup>5</sup> Here his way of speaking is shaped by Luther in the *Large Catechism*. In this context he points out that by conversion we do not mean "certain psychological experiences which must be gone through according to a certain method. Such a definite 'formula' for conversion we cannot require of anyone."<sup>6</sup> We may ask why Wisløff in other writings continues to keep the breakthrough way of saying it when he has at his disposal a better alternative that avoids what he has warned against.<sup>7</sup> It may be that he maintains this approach in recognition of the fact that each person has a psyche and also as a defense against the sacramentalism of Leiv Aalen.

A brief summary observation is in order concerning the approaches of Aalen and Wisløff even though this study is not an indepth comparison of the two. They have many things in common. Both desire to avoid spiritualism on the one hand and sacramentalism on the other. They have a common concern to objectivize salvation in the means of grace. They distanced themselves from the pietistic scheme of the order of salvation and its psychologizing tendency. They were troubled with soul-struggles (*anfektelse*) in the sense of whether or not they were included in the salvation provided by Christ. Relative to our topic

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<sup>5</sup> Wisløff, *Ordet fra Guds munn* (1951), 170-171.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 171. En annen sak ville det være om man med >> omvendelse << bare forsto visse psykologiske opplevelser som måtte gjennomgås etter en bestemt metode, - en slik bestemt >>oppskrift<< for omvendelsen kan vi ikke kreve av noen.

<sup>7</sup> See Wisløff, *Jeg vet...*(1987), 138-139.

they can in a very general way be contrasted in the following manner. Aalen found rest in baptism, through which the Gospel is delivered, as foundational and paradigmatic for the Christian life. Aalen accents the sacrament of baptism delivering the Gospel. Wisløff found the Gospel in the form of the Word of promise, which is delivered through the various means of grace, as his resting place and foundational for the Christian life. Wisløff accents the Gospel Word of promise which creates faith that trusts it.

We have observed concerning the relationship between the various aspects of the faith-life and the means of grace that in doctrinal writings Wisløff gives very clear and consistent teaching. However, when it involves the integration of the sacraments into the preaching and devotional material he at times seems to be reluctant to incorporate them. For example, when Wisløff preaches or teaches on assurance he does not bring in the value of the sacraments. However, when he preaches and teaches on the sacraments, he brings out their value for assurance. The same seems to be true when he deals with the nurture of faith and the trials of faith.

What is central in his treatment is the proper distinction of Law and Gospel with the Gospel as the heart of the life of faith. His approach seems to support his principle that “we shall reckon with baptism but we shall not preach baptism.”<sup>8</sup> On this particular point Wisløff does not seem to bring his Gospel understanding of baptism into the Gospel proclaimed in the sermon. If baptism is Gospel, as Wisløff has so clearly articulated, then his principle, “to reckon with baptism but not preach it,” does not seem to be consistent with his teaching of baptism as Gospel. The same would seem to apply to the Lord’s Supper and absolution.

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<sup>8</sup> Sjaastad, 56.

In addition, “to reckon with baptism but not preach it,” appears to work against the concerns that Wisløff himself expressed in his doctrinal writings during the late 30s and the early 40s. He observed that “baptism is sometimes hanging in the air for many; it has little or no connection with the rest of the Christian life.”<sup>9</sup> It would seem fair to conclude that one reason why baptism is “hanging in the air for many” is that it is not integrated into the preaching. This lack of integration and the absence of baptism in preaching, which seems to be generally the practice throughout Wisløff’s entire preaching ministry, leaves a gap and seems to fall short of the freedom to preach and sing about baptism that he speaks of in “The Lutheran View of the Sacraments.”<sup>10</sup>

It must be noted that there is in Wisløff a concern that his audience be given that which would be the most helpful for their receiving of the Lord’s gifts in the means of grace and faith. To some he spoke in a manner that would lead bit by bit in the way of a better understanding of the sacraments and to others in the way of faith but all into Christ. Each accent appropriate to the need and yet without the exclusion of what else the Lord gives. So we must exercise caution in interpreting what he accents in one context as a denying of what is not being emphasized, or implying that it is of secondary importance. At the same time we must see the importance of speaking the whole of what the Lord has given so that nothing gets lost. Then each gift will be there with its particular blessing and value. Then there will not be a dichotomy between what is set forth in doctrine books and articles and what is proclaimed from the pulpit.

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 2.

There is no doubt that Wisløff has made a great contribution to church life in Norway and throughout the world especially through the various Norwegian mission organizations in such countries as Japan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Taiwan, Tanzania, etc. He has been a spokesperson for conservative evangelical Lutheran Christianity. He has been a major influence in the direction of classical Lutheran theology within the Scandinavian Lutheran pietistic tradition. Wisløff has done much to set forth what the Lord has given. His ultimate concern relative to our topic was that both the salvation gift delivering means of grace and the receiving of this salvation through faith be preserved. He set forth the resources for this to happen in terms of the proper distinction and proclamation of Law and Gospel and a Biblical understanding of the sacraments as Gospel. In this way the sacraments can be freely preached and have the vital place in the life of the believer without people going in the direction of either sacramentalism or spiritualism. Thanks and praise be to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for salvation gifts bestowed by way of the means of grace and received through the empty hand of faith. Soli Deo Gloria. To God alone be glory.

## Appendix 1

Wisløff, Carl Fr. "The Meaning of Infant Baptism for the Adult" (Barnedåpens betydning for den voknse) (1942) Translated by Eugene L. Boe.

### 1. What does it mean for me that I am baptized?

Our New Testament teaches us that the life with God consists in knowing Jesus and to be in living contact with Him. Jesus Himself says, "This is eternal life that they know you the only true God, and Him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3). He compares this knowledge, this fellowship of life, with the relationship between the vine and the branches: I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in Me, then I will abide in you! (John 15:1-6).

And John says, "This is the witness, that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son." (I John 5:11). Therefore a Christian stands the entire time in this living in Him and to be and remain in Him, that is the life. Paul desires nothing else than to be found in Him, Philippians 3:9. This is the testimony of the entire New Testament.

To be a Christian is not a matter of the reason. If I have learned all the Christian truths by heart and can recall them on my fingers – I would still be dead in my sins, if I did not have a living fellowship with the Savior. Paul therefore was not tired of enjoining, not the least in the face of the intellectualistic Corinthians, that it does not depend on "excellence in speech or in wisdom," but on the simple and despised word of the crucified Jesus Christ, I Corinthians 2:1-2.

It is neither in the first hand a matter of the will or a matter of works, even if these things are involved. If I give for food to the poor all I possess, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, then it benefits me nothing, I Cor. 13. And the love, that is

precisely born in the saved heart's fellowship of life with Jesus; we love because he loved us first, I John 4:19.

Do you possess this fellowship of life with Jesus?

If there is someone in the gathering who comes to the knowledge: No, such a fellowship of life with Jesus I do not have – then naturally enough the question will awaken in you: *How do I come into such a living relationship with him?* What does the Bible say about it?

Here the N.T. answers by pointing to that which we have called the means of grace: The Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper. God has arranged it so for our salvation, that he has bound himself to certain external means. In and through these means Jesus comes to us; he comes not before these means or with them, but precisely through them.

This the N.T. testifies clearly and abundantly. It is through the means of grace of the Word that we come to faith, John 17:20. Not least is Romans 10:17 an important passage; Faith comes by preaching. That you come to faith is not your affair; there is something that must go before faith. The Word is before faith. Faith is not a decision of the will that I make. "I believe that I cannot of my own reason or strength believe or come to Jesus --." Through the Word, God first strikes the sinner to the knees and makes him into a lost sinner in himself; that is the preaching of the Law. But through the Word, God promises the repenting sinner forgiveness for all his sin – and kindles faith's spark in his heart. That is the preaching of the Gospel. – In accord with this we must understand Jesus' word, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," John 15:16.

Through the means of grace of the Lord's Supper we also come in a distinct manner into a living relationship with Jesus. I Corinthians 10:16 says, "The cup of blessing which we

bles, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

We will not speak more about these means of grace here for baptism is our theme. Perhaps some of my hearers are already thinking that I have delayed too long before coming seriously to baptism. To that I will say, it is with clear deliberation I have organized this little lecture in this manner. I believe that sometimes when we talk about baptism, we make a very big mistake. We go directly to the passages in the N.T. that speak about baptism without putting all that has to do with baptism into its organic relationship with our whole Christian faith and the Christian life. Therefore baptism is sometimes hanging in the air for many; it has little or no connection with the rest of the Christian life. And it is precisely that connection we must have hold of when the theme is infant baptism's meaning for the adult.

And it is exactly that connection we now come to. We have reminded each other of the main truth in our New Testament, that the life with God consists in the life of fellowship with Jesus. And we have further established anew that God has arranged it such that he has bound this fellowship of life to certain definite, external means.

One of these means is baptism. Here baptism does not stand alone. It stands together with the Word, the externally heard and read word that is the primary means of grace. And it stands together with the other sacrament, the Lord's Supper, that also is one such external means. An external means in which unbelief does not see anything other than an offense. But faith sees something more, faith sees a word and clings to the Word, "This is my body, this is my blood."

So it is also with baptism. When unbelief looks at baptism, it sees nothing other than that which a cow can see, says Luther, it sees water that can be drunk. But faith sees something more; it sees the Word that belongs to this water.

It is enormously important for our Christian life to be clear about this in regards to the means of grace. Many awakened, yes many believers too, struggle tremendously with their faith. They do not get it. They can not grasp it, they say. But how releasing is it not, to see that there is something that goes before faith; something that faith builds on. And this is God's actions with us through the means of grace. "Now are they so crazy", "No er de sá gale" says Luther of the svermerne. They who do not want to know of the means of grace. "They separate faith and the thing that faith clings to, and that it is bound to, even if it is something external, so that one can grasp it with the senses and thereby bring it into the heart. What God does and works in us, that he will work through such external institution."

When we then turn to what the N.T. says about baptism, then we see that baptism is just such a means of grace, that puts us in living relation with Jesus. Take one passage like Romans 6:1 ff. It does not say that one perhaps can believe when one reads it superficially, nor does it speak about the apostle's subjective personal experiences at the time he was baptized. It does not talk about what he personally experienced in his feelings, how he "knew it" and had it. No here is spoken purely and simply of something that God did with him. God took him and united him with Jesus. Here something happened not only on earth, as Paul "knew it" so. No, here something happened in heaven. God dealt with him, God grasped him and united him with His Son. And here something happened to him; something that was greater and more important than his feelings and experiences in that holy hour. He became one with Jesus. Jesus' life and grace became his; the branch was grafted into the vine.

What does it mean for me then that I am baptized? Exceedingly much. I was united with Jesus. Once in my life this happened to me. One time eternity fell down and touched time in a holy moment. And the point of contact, that was me. Once there was put a holy, a new beginning in my life. I was clothed in Christ, Galatians 3:27.

This can not be done again. According to its nature, baptism is a sacrament that shall not be repeated with a person. But not only therefore is it true that this action can not be done again. For even if I later waver and stumble on the way – it can not change the fact that he one day took me into his embrace. Yes, even if I fall from him in sin and unbelief, and become as lost as if I never had been baptized – there is nevertheless something that happened to me once that I can not do over again.

So strong as we can, we must stick to God's action with us in baptism.

And baptism is not only a blessing once for all, but an enduring blessing, a beginning of something that shall be. The fellowship of life with Christ that is made through baptism I shall get to live in. I am "clothed in Christ"- and shall get to continue to remain in him.

But to be baptized means one more thing. We have seen that baptism gives us part in Jesus' life, put into his atoning fruit. But the matter has one more side. Rosenius says it this way: Baptism is both a covenant's letter, as when God through baptism concludes a covenant with the individual, cleanses him (Ephesians 5:26) and saves him (I Peter 3:21; Titus 3:5). But it is also a letter of divorce, as when it puts a division between me and my sins. Christ has through baptism united himself so completely with us, that before God we shall be and have what He is and has; but thereby we have also endorsed a letter of divorce with sin, so then we never more shall be its servant, but belong to him who has bought us with his blood.

We are baptized into his death. Jesus' death was a bitter death. It will also become ours – the flesh shall die and it must and will always cost pain. “The one who is baptized, he is condemned to death. Just as the pastor, when he baptizes, says: See, you are sinful flesh, therefore I drown you in God's name and condemn you to death, that with you all your sins shall die and go under”(Luther).

Paul also says it in another way: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” This that we “should” walk in a new life, is not the Law's “should.” It is not imperative, command, and demand first and foremost, even if it still very strongly reminds us of baptism's holy obligation. No, it is first and foremost a promise. We should, God be praised, walk in a new life. Baptism's heartfelt fellowship of life with Jesus is the guarantee for it. As it also states in Romans 6:14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you.” We easily read this “shall” as a demand. But it is not that at all. It is not imperative, it is the future form that is used. Therefore says Melancthon about this passage that it is “a comfort, a promise, yes the sweetest comfort.”- So great is it to have a part in baptism, the washing of regeneration.

## 2. What does it mean for me that I am baptized as a child?

It depends much on who this “I” is that asks. The decisive thing is if it's a matter of one who still stands in his baptismal covenant.

We have for a long time nearly been afraid to think and speak that some remain in the covenant of baptism their whole life, without falling out of life with God. But it is certain enough that there are found believing people who in reality have lived their whole life with God, as from the moment of baptism.

We saw it so during N.M.S.'s summer school at Birkeland this year. During a group meeting for men we received testimonies from different ones about how God found them. Then came a couple who testified that they had always lived with God, but broke through to conscious life with God in their youth. It happened naturely that one of the leaders asked if there were others for whom this was true. And then there rose over 20 men in the group of perhaps 80. Twenty men who had lived with God from when they were children. Some had experienced a conversion in the form of a breakthrough to a more conscious life in their adult age, but who had never been away from God. A little testimony like that is perhaps not so seldom either, - and is a reminder to preachers to remember it in their preaching. It should also be the normal way that happens with one who is baptized as a child; here the Christian home has its great responsibility, yes our entire Christian children's and youth work.

What does baptism mean for one who is so fortunate that he has always had fellowship of life with Jesus, entirely from the moment of baptism?

The problem that arises here for us is exactly this that one was baptized as a child. One has no personal memory that one was baptized. One was in the whole not awakened to a conscious life at the time. One did not have such a conscious faith as one has later. The personal breakthrough to an adult person's life with God came later; in any case a good number of years afterwards. What is then the role of the baptism that one received as a child ?

We will first say it this way: Baptism is a glorious reminder that my salvation is entirely God's work and not mine. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." John 15:16. Baptism reminds us constantly of this; and it is precisely infant baptism that makes this clearest of all.

We have already spoken of God's word of grace that goes before faith. Here we must remember it again. There is a soul-struggle (anfektelse) that runs counter to this: Children can not believe, it is said. I could not believe at the time I was baptized for I was very little.

Here we are at the point which is much discussed, and where the opponents to infant baptism make their objections. But here I must say, that the longer I have thought over this matter, the less I understand the whole discussion. I can well comprehend that those who think faith is a decision of the will stand by this. Those who state that faith is a decision that I take with my will, when I will and where I will – they will have difficulties here, or more correctly said, they will naturally reject infant baptism completely. But according to the clear word of the New Testament and according to our Catechism's testimony, faith is not any such decision of my will; it is the Holy Spirit's work and gift in my heart.

Therefore one can surely say, "Children cannot believe. No of course not." Tell me you who are an adult sinner, you who are awakened and see your lost condition, tell me, can you believe? Is it not your greatest need that you cannot believe? Did not Jesus himself say that no one can come to Him unless the Father draw him? John 6:44. And did not Paul say, "It does not depend on those who run, or on those who will, but on God, who has mercy?" Romans 9:16. No, you cannot believe at all, regardless how grown you are; that is the issue. Therefore we also confess, I believe that I cannot of my own reason or strength believe – or come to Christ – but it is the Holy Spirit's work.

So we can confidently close the whole debate about whether the small children can believe or not, and leave completely the argument to those who think they can be saved through a faith they have made by a decision of the will. God gives children faith in and through baptism, that is the issue.

The matter is then that we do not base the Gospel on faith, but we base faith on the Gospel. That means, we do not say, Believe then God is gracious! No, we say, God is already gracious on the basis of the finished work, believe it! Faith is not first, and then comes God's grace. But God's grace-word comes first, and then follows, in those who are not obstinate, faith. – In baptism's water, God gives through the Word faith's spark in the child's heart.

So then baptism is for those who have always remained in their baptismal covenant, a constant reminder of God's saving grace. "He has chosen me, wretched as I was, by grace I am now His bride." It is not I who had begun. He began the good work in me. He met me already before I could think of taking a stand for Him. And when you then later in life are allowed to break through to an adult person's relationship with God, then this also happens by the same grace that found you when you were a little child. – For also the little child needs salvation; that which is born of the flesh is flesh. We were by nature not innocent children – but children of wrath. Ephesians 2:3.

The one who dares believe that he from baptism's moment has always lived with God, he is free from seeking after the "day" in his life when it happened. In Norwegian – American church fellowships they make much of the baptismal certificate that is supplied with an attractive picture and that fits in a frame and put up on the wall. There you have the day! And with that day we are also spared from falling into the trap that we otherwise easily fall into when we think of our "day". In baptism God does all. On the day of conversion, He must also finally be allowed to do it. And nevertheless it can happen that we "do" come to play so great a role in our consciousness that we forget at times that the whole work is His. For back of "my day", also my baptism day, stands the great day when all was finished. That I am saved only says that one day I received part in that which happened at Calvary.

Baptism then becomes not only a reminder about something that happened once in my past. It is a constant source of power. It is a covenant's letter – and a letter of divorce. We should daily *practise ourselves* in baptism, says Luther. That is, baptism is an initiation to death for our whole old nature, and it shall daily be repeated in us. Luther has a wonderful word here. He says that when a person is dead, then baptism is actually complete. For so long as we live in this world, sin clings tightly to us. Baptism is the dying of this old nature. When death and the grave are behind and I am completely united with Jesus and have become like Him, then baptism's act is completed.

### 3. The fallen and baptism.

I must confess that I am among those who fell out of baptism's hold and needed to be converted and saved; I was as lost in myself as if I had never been baptized. So the question about what benefit I actually have from my baptism, I know quite well.

Accordingly we were awakened from our sleep in sin, got to see our lost condition, and began at last to seek grace with God. Then the Holy Spirit pointed us through the Word to Jesus and his finished work. There we believed forgiveness for our sins. In such a way we were saved. Has then my infant baptism any meaning for me who has it so?

This can become an important need for some – a need so great that where there does not come more light from God's Word, they may go on then to listen to a rebaptizers' agitation – and take a new baptism.

How it is with the apostate and baptism became already an issue very early in the Christian church, and it is instructive to look back on this. Early on the church was a mission church, and quite naturally constantly practiced adult baptism, because there were continually many pagans who were baptized. Along with this infant baptism was practiced the entire time

in the Christian family. But it happened, unfortunately not so seldom, that an adult baptized pagan Christian fell from it again. The old life was too strong, or persecution and testing became too difficult. But then it happened often also that such an apostate repented and wanted to be accepted in the congregation again. What then? Then there were some strict people, for example Tertullian, who said: These have received the forgiveness of sins in baptism. But now they have fallen again, there is no escape (hope) – we can not accept them in the church again.

But the church realized that this strict view was wrong. The whole Bible calls the apostate to turn again. Therefore the most said no: In baptism they have received the forgiveness of sins for all in their earlier life. But for the apostate there is found just the same a way out: They can do penance, and be accepted in the church again; but this can only happen a single time. There were many who saw it like this. Gradually, nevertheless, this view declined to that there was only room for penance once.

The church father Hieronymus (Jerome) gave expression of this view in the following manner: Baptism is a saving ark, a ship that carries us over the world's perilous sea. If a Christian falls out of baptism's grace, then there is found nevertheless a rescue plank, and this is penance, or as we will say repentance.

Accordingly we are in the picture that Hieronymus used: Considering we are in baptism's covenant, we are on board a safe ship. But if we fall out of the ship, then we have no more benefit from it. Then, baptism is not of any benefit to us. But there is found a rescue plank, which has nothing to do with the ship – we do not come up in it any more – but which nevertheless manages to carry us over the sea until we are in the harbor.

Now I can here self-evidently go more into how Hieronymus and the other church fathers should be understood. However, we may not be mistaken in observing that many today say approximately what he did. When we were baptized, we came on board a good ship. But then we fell overboard, and the boat went from us. But fortunately later we came on board in another ship, that is called repentance. Against this view Luther protested strongly. If we are fallen out of the boat then we cannot clear ourselves with any rescue plank, he says. We must swim to the boat anew! There is no other boat to be found, but God be praised, it is possible to come up into it again.

Luther is certainly right to maintain that repentance in its essence is nothing other than baptism. One must not only look at the outward action that has happened once, he says. Baptism's action continues, its meaning stands sure, God does not forget, even if we forget it. "What is repentance but an earnest attack on the old man and an entering upon a new life? If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins and promotes it. In baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and power to suppress the old man so that the new man may come forth and grow strong. Therefore baptism remains forever. Even though we fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the old man. But we need not again have the water poured over us. Even if we were immersed in the water a hundred times, it would nevertheless be only one baptism, and the effect and significance of baptism would continue and remain. Repentance therefore is nothing else than a return and approach to baptism, to resume and practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned." (Luther LC, part IV, 75-79; Tappert, 445-446.)

Perhaps we can say it in another way which answers similarly to Luther's basic view: The ark of salvation, the boat that carries us saved over the world's sea, it is in reality neither baptism as external action nor the word as external means – the boat is Jesus Himself! When we praise baptism and the Word so high, then it is because God through these external means brings us into fellowship of life with Jesus, puts us on board the boat, who is our Lord Jesus. To fall from baptism, means to fall from Jesus – that is fatal. If it is thus from Jesus that I have fallen away, has then baptism come to nothing? No, for then Jesus has come to nothing, baptism was nothing other than that I come into relationship with Him. The covenant he made with me in baptism, that he does not forget, for then he must deny His own faithfulness. The boat does not come to nothing! And then I am allowed to – if I do not resist His calling grace – to come up into the boat again, the boat which He is. Through the word's regenerating power I come once more into life-fellowship with Jesus, I have part in the same life that I one time received part in through baptism.

It has been discussed among Bible believing theologians whether one should say that the apostate is reborn through baptism also when he a second time comes to life in God. Some have said: It is only baptism that is the means of regeneration. Rebirth happens only in baptism. If one falls from it and is converted again, then he is not reborn. Some put it this way that then they were “awakened up from the dead.” In this way they think that one gets clear the truth that baptism's power is still active.

But I do not believe that this is correct. If one is fallen out of the life with God that one received in baptism, then one is in himself just as lost as if one never had been baptized. And when he is then turned again, then he is born anew by God's Word. It stands sure that

the Bible speaks of being reborn through the Word. I Peter 1:23 and James 1:18. Pontoppidan says: Every awakening to a new life is a new birth. The life is life-fellowship with Jesus.

And here there is no reason to discuss whether it is now baptism that works again, so to say for a second time, or is it the Word. Baptism stands sure, for God does not forget the one he baptized. And the life I am reborn to, it is the same life I received in baptism – it is the same boat. Baptism is = the word and water; as Luther says: The water does not certainly do it, but God's word which is with us with the water. But the one who is fallen meets God through the Word without the water. Baptism neither can nor shall be repeated - as we heard Luther say it: Even if one is baptized a hundred times, there is only one baptism.

There can still be many things to talk about. But we conclude. To summarize what we have heard I will do it with Jeremiah 31:20, "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him says the Lord." Do you hear what the Lord says about the apostate Ephraim? After that I once have spoken to him, I earnestly remember him!

Once God has spoken to you in baptism. He has not since forgotten it. You forgot it perhaps, and turned your back on Him. But he does not forget you and will have pity on you again through the Word of life. The same Word of life that met you in baptism; it will put you in the same life-relationship with the same Savior!

So I will thank God for my baptism. It shall constantly stand for me as a witness especially about three things: For the first a witness that God is the one who begins. Before I can think of Him He thought of me; He found me and saved me. Especially, His calling grace

is even before my faith. And then I can in dark hours, when I see my heart's fickleness, say confidently: Nevertheless it was you, O God, who acted, and acted first!

For the second, a witness that God is faithful. I was faithless, but not He who once had spoken to me. He will nevertheless again have pity on me.

And for the third, a witness that God will complete what He began. He did not give up on me when I turned my back on Him. So He will always be faithful. And the action that He began, He Himself will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

And it is not only a witness intended to be remembered, but a witness with actual power in itself. For such is God's Word and blessing. They are not as the word of persons, no it "works in you who believe."(I Thess. 2:13) Also here it is true, "Heaven and earth can pass away, but my Word will by no means pass away.

## Appendix 2

Carl Fr. Wisløff, “The Lutheran View of the Sacrament: The Way between Sacramentalism and Spiritualism” a chapter in *Ordets svar på livsspørsmål i kirken* Håkon Fred Breen, redaktør, (Oslo: Naomi Forlag, 1960). Translated by Eugene L. Boe

We have before us a difficult question. It is difficult in many ways. There is no universal agreement on what sacramentalism is or what in its actual form can be called spiritualism.

Let me therefore immediately indicate what I understand by these words. By the Lutheran view of the sacraments I mean the view that is found in the *Augsburg Confession* and Luther’s *Small Catechism*. It is here that we find our Lutheran Church’s confession. However, I do not believe that we are obligated to whatever Luther or Lutheran theologians may have said. We find Luther’s writings, letters and comments in the Weimar Edition of 90 volumes. He has said incredibly much good, much that we constantly have reason to take to heart. But we are not obligated just because Luther has said it. On the other hand, Lutheran preachers have obligated themselves to the *Catechism* and the *Augsburg Confession* and should not act as preachers within the Lutheran Church unless they are convinced that these writings agree with the Bible.

By sacramentalism we mean an understanding that puts such an emphasis on the sacraments that the result is a one-sidedness in the understanding of Christianity. For example, personal faith is not given its full place, or it happens when the Word as a grace bringing message from God gets overshadowed.

Spiritualism, on the other hand, is an understanding that does not accept the external means God has given us (Word and Sacrament) as actual means of grace. This becomes evident in a false procedure which spiritualizes (*åndeliggjør*) (*spiritus*, Latin –*ånd*) all Christianity. The result is generally that one trusts more in one's own inner (*åndelige*, spiritual) impulses and senses than on God's Word, and more on one's own feelings, reactions and experiences than on Word and sacrament. Putting it in a very simplified form we can perhaps say: sacramentalism is false externality and spiritualism is false intimacy. Let this serve as just a preliminary explanation.

## I

Let us now first seek clarity over what is the Lutheran teaching on the sacraments, and what it aims at. It is necessary then to discover a key that opens the whole for us.

We find one such key in the manner of expression that Luther makes use of in many of his writings. He says that there are two things we should see in the sacrament, namely the Word and the Sign.

With "the Word" Luther does not mean the Word of Scripture as a whole, but the "sacrament-word," i.e. the word that the Lord used when he instituted this sacrament. Accordingly for the Lord's Supper: This is my body – this is my blood. We call them the Lord's Supper's *words of institution*. (Cf: *Catechism*) And concerning baptism's words of institution we find them in Matthew and Mark.

With "the Sign" Luther means that which has been called "elements," i.e. the communion's bread and wine, and baptism's water. Or for the Lord's Supper he can in part

speak of “the Sign” with the same meaning as “sacrament” in the narrower sense. The Sign is then simply Christ’s body and blood under bread and wine.

Or said differently: The Word is what we hear – The Sign is what we see. One should not allow oneself to be confused by the expression “sign.” Some think it sounds “Reformed” and they ask: Is it not the Reformed who speak of Sign, must not we Lutherans turn away this way of speaking? There was even one who wrote of Melanchthon’s *Loci*, when it came out in Danish translation, that here was much that was Reformed because Melanchthon spoke of “Signs.” It is, however a good Lutheran way of speaking. It does not say that the sacraments are “only” Sign, but that they are *Sign*, namely, means by which God’s gracious will meets us (*Augustana* Art. 13).

The sacraments consist accordingly of these two sides. And now we come to that which is so important for Luther. He underscores again that of *these two sides the Word is the most important. It is the Word we must look at if we shall understand what the sacrament is. It is the Word that is the key to the whole.*

It was here the Catholic Church had failed. Think on how the practice was – and still is – with the Lord’s Supper within the Roman Church. If you come into a Catholic Church in the morning, then you can see a priest who serves at the altar. He has an altar boy as a helper, in addition there are perhaps no hearers present. He reads Latin, but even if you were good in Latin, it wouldn’t have helped you, for he reads so low that no one hears him. When he has consecrated the bread and the wine, he partakes himself. But he does it perhaps alone, without sharing it with others. And if he shares it – and does it often – then the people receive only the bread.

But you notice still one thing. Right in the middle of the mass the priest takes the host – the communion bread – and lifts it high up. Next he kneels before it – in adoration. The people do the same. The consecrated host is worshipped. You come to the church for Christ's body's celebration. Then you see a ceremonious procession set itself in motion. You see a monstrance carried with great ceremony, and within the monstrance there is a consecrated host, communion bread that the priest has blessed. The people bow or kneel while the holy host is carried by. In the church you see the monstrance displayed before the people. In some places a monstrance is presented for long hours at a time, and people gather in devout adoration before the holy bread, which according to Catholic faith is Christ's body. A "transubstantiation" has taken place; the bread's "substance" has been changed to Christ's body. Only the bread's "accidents," i.e. its appearance, smell, taste etc. is still the bread's.

I have still not stated that which according to Catholic faith is the most important. During the mass a *sacrifice* takes place. The priest consecrates the bread and the wine, which is changed into Christ's body and blood. And thereby is offered – this is Catholic faith and teaching – Christ's body and blood to God. The holy sacrifice is offered for the living and the dead. Not least important is the sacrifice for the poor souls in purgatory.

We must ask: How did one come to such a faith and practice as this? Luther answers: *One has turned from the Word and sees only the Sign.* That means: One insists upon - surely enough to a form that is not biblical - that the communion bread and wine are Christ's body and blood. One retains accordingly the Sign. But then begins the false development. For then one turns himself to this mysterious sign, and begins to perform all kinds of speculation about it – without concern for the Word, which is the only guide we have when it concerns understanding what the Sign is! One says: When Christ's body and blood are here, then in

other words Christ himself is here. And then we must adore him, for then heaven's and earth's creator and Lord is in this bread. Just as the wise men from the East, the man born blind and many others bowed before Christ in adoration, so we must bow before him in adoration when he is present in the Sign.

And when his body and blood are here, then in other words the sacrifice is present that once was brought to God at Golgatha. Christ's sacrificial body and sacrificial blood is on the altar as a sacrifice – a sacrifice to God takes place here.

Further: When the bread is Christ's body, then it is clear that in the bread's form is also found Christ's blood, for his body is never without what goes with it; and so consequently his blood also. But then we do not need to give the Lord's Supper's communicants the wine, it is enough that they receive the bread – for then they receive Christ's blood together with it.

And still further: When Christ's body and blood are here, then we must be extremely careful so that nothing is spilled. No matter how small a crumb of the bread that falls on the floor – it must carefully be taken care of, for in the crumb is Christ. Not the smallest crumb must be left on the paten, not the smallest drop in the chalice – therefore the paten is carefully wiped and the chalice is poured and wiped by the priest during the mass.

How has all this taken place? Yes, it is all together consequential, says Luther. One looks at the Sign, and one then says: When the Sign is Christ's body and blood, then the following must be such and such and such. All together apparently much logic. But one has forgotten the Word. When one thinks on what the Sign is, then one should look at the Word, and give attention to what it says. Speculation around the Sign in and by itself leads only to

that which is useless and empty, yes, it leads to idolatry, heresy and dead worship. Or in short, to sacramentalism.

Now we have seen, namely what sacramentalism is. *Sacramentalism is the belief and the practice that circles around the sacrament, without allowing itself to be guided/ instructed by the Word.*

But if we now allow ourselves to be instructed by the Word, what conclusion do we come to then when it concerns the Lord's Supper? Yes, then we see what the Lord's Supper's gift is: It is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. The one who *in faith in Jesus' Word and promise* receives his body and blood under the bread and the wine, he receives – not all that which we have just heard about – but the forgiveness of sins. God has this one gift first and foremost, that he will give *through the Word and through baptism and through the Lord's Supper and through brotherly conversation and mutual admonition and comfort (Luther, SA III, IV): the forgiveness of sins. But where the forgiveness of sins is, there is also life and salvation.*

We look to the Word, and then we learn further how this sacrament should be used. Jesus says: Take and eat it – all drink from this. *The Lord's Supper is our Lord Jesus Christ's body under bread and wine, given us Christians so that we should eat and drink it (implied: - and not sacrifice (offer) it only in the procession, etc.).*

We get to know all about this sacrament by giving attention to the Word: What it is, what it benefits, who receives it worthily – cf. the *Catechism*.

But without the Word one should not speculate, and without the Word one should not arrange any form of worship.

But what of spiritualism, sacramentalism's opposite? It reaches an entirely different result. It says: Bread and wine can not be anything other than bread and wine. To eat and drink can not have anything to do with salvation and blessedness. Water is and remains water. That one is dipped in water can not have anything to do with a soul's salvation – the water reaches only the body, but the soul and its salvation is an inward matter. And so both sacraments are explained away. It is no longer a matter of the visible perceptible sign of God's gracious will toward us, the outward sign becomes "only sign," the only thing significant is that which happens "within" us, here there are essentially no longer any sacraments.

What is the error of this view? The error is exactly the same as with sacramentalism. *One has looked at the Sign without giving attention to the Word.* In both cases the Sign comes to be explained out from human wisdom, groping and erring human thoughts about God and the spiritual situation. The difference lies only in the point of departure. Sacramentalism lets itself be guided by churchly tradition, here it takes its point of departure. Therefore it does not deny the sacrament's reality, for it has stood high in all churchly tradition. It allows the Lord Supper's bread and wine to be Christ's body and blood, as it rightly is, and it maintains that baptism is a washing of regeneration. But about these things it does not think in strong connection to the Word; theologians and early church fathers get to be its commentary to the sacraments, while the commentary should be the Word alone.

Spiritualism on the contrary is readily skeptical towards the churchly tradition; its guiding star is its own enlightened spirit, that shall tell it what baptism and communion are. But because it does not keep itself strongly to the Word, then it looks only at the Sign – and so it explains this out from its own human reason. It looks at baptism's water, but it looks at it

just as the cow looks at the water in the bucket, says Luther; it looks at the water as something which can be drunk or used to wash and cook in. And so it says: Baptism is “only a symbol,” for water can not have anything to do with the soul. But then it forgets the Word, that says: The one who believes and is baptized shall be saved. And it does not let itself be guided by the Word, which says that baptism is a washing of regeneration.

It is the same way with communion. Spiritualism looks at the bread and the wine, and so it undertakes speculation. Can bread and wine benefit the soul? Can eating and drinking have anything to do with the forgiveness of sins? No, it is obviously impossible. It thinks thus because it has forgotten the Word: This is my body, this is my blood, that is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. If it had looked at the Word, then it would have known: *Water certainly does not do it, but God’s Word, that is with and in the water, and faith, that puts its trust in the word that is added to the water. For without God’s word the water is only water, and no baptism; but with God’s word it is a baptism; that is, a water of life full of grace and a washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. And he would have understood also that to eat and drink surely does not do it, but the word that here says: Which is given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. These words are together with the bodily eating and drinking the main point in the sacraments. And the one who believes these words, has what they say, and as they read, namely the forgiveness of sins.*

*The Lutheran view of the sacraments is also characterized by this that it will see the sacraments in the Word’s light with the greatest zeal. Luther uses the expression “des Sakraments im Wort Wahrnehmen”:* to comprehend, perceive, regard the sacrament in the Word.

## II

What we have all seen, is that the Word is the sacrament's interpreter in *the* sense that it is this Word that alone can tell us what the sacrament is.

But the sacrament comprehended in the Word, will tell still more. It will say that *the sacrament gives the same that the Word gives. Not more, but neither less.* Luther says: The Gospel does not only give its grace, counsel and comfort against sin in one way, for God is exceedingly rich in his grace. First, through the preached word, which is the Gospel's peculiar office. Next through baptism, next through the sacrament of the altar. Next, through the power of the keys (absolution), and then through the brotherly mutual conversation and comfort.

Some have sought to discover something that should be peculiar to the sacraments to distinguish them from the Word, so that the sacraments give a distinctive grace beyond what the Word gives. But there is no evidence for it in the New Testament. The Word does not speak so. The word of baptism speaks about salvation. The Lord's Supper's word about the forgiveness of sins, it is the Gospel's gift in one sum – and where the forgiveness of sins is, there is life and salvation.

Sacramentalism in all forms is readily interested in showing that the sacraments give more – or something other – than the Word. That we can also read in a book that came out here in our country a few years ago, that it is through the sacraments that a Christian lives in grace; the Word shall just once more turn him to it, it said. The altar stands metaphorically speaking higher than the pulpit. This is quite contrary to the understanding of Luther, who used to say with definite and clear words that the *preaching of the Gospel was the most*

*important, even more important than the administration of the sacraments.* The preaching of the Word for the Lutheran reformers was the magnetic pole that everything else in the pastor's service grouped itself around, as a Swedish researcher has correctly said.

All kinds of spiritualism will, however, go to the opposite extreme. The spiritualists will be glad and pleased to hear such words that I just cited from Luther, but he will give them a false meaning. He forgets, namely, as always, to see the sacrament in the Word's light; and when he says that the Gospel has greater emphasis and greater significance than the sacraments, then he means by this privately, that the sacraments in reality do not have any significance as a whole, except as pure "symbolic" or something in that direction. If he listened to the Word, and if he was willing to take it as it stands, then he would know better. Then he would know that the Lord's Supper was communion with Christ's body and blood, communion with Christ in a special way. For although the Lord's Supper's gift is the forgiveness of sins, as also the Word gives us, nevertheless the Lord here in His supper gives the forgiveness of sins through the true holy means as He stated, Jesus' true body and blood under bread and wine.

There is still one thing to say here before I go further. That the sacrament shall "be comprehended in the Word," means *that the sacrament aims at our faith, and that it will be for our salvation and benefit through FAITH, or not at all.* This is the most important point of all.

Luther himself saw a practice of the sacraments that did not give the right place for faith. The Roman Catholic Church had worked out its teaching of the sacrament's effect *ex opere operato*, i.e. that they effect only by the carrying out. Now I can not go more into that teaching here, frankly speaking I can only mention that although it is at times described

carelessly (as if it was pure magic, which no one in spite of everything has the right to say), so nevertheless, there is here always no doubt that faith is inadequate according to this view. The communion's intention is also to call to faith, to strengthen faith, to nourish faith. Without faith the Lord's Supper does not benefit. Luther was tireless in emphasizing just this matter. Why? Constantly the answer is the same: He gave attention to the Word, not only the Sign in and by itself, but the Sign in the Word. The Lord's Supper is therefore intended for a thirsty soul and a hungry heart.

Also here sacramentalism and spiritualism will go divergent ways. Sacramentalism will have a characteristic tendency to emphasize the sacrament such that faith is subordinated to it; sometimes it is even forgotten. To be sure not in theory, but very often in practice. We can think on the teaching of baptism. There we have heard many strange things about a baptismal life that hibernates in the baptized person who has gone away from God, a smoldering spark under ashes that can flare up again in God's time, a "remnant of baptism's grace" that hangs by itself to the worldly, unconverted person. All such is spoken without authority from God's word. The Word says: the one who believes and is baptized, shall be saved. Through faith alone I have life in God's Son, *and the one who has the Son, he has life.* I John 5:12 . That word shines right through all unclarity in the matter. *It is the way of death for an evangelical church if this tone does not ring true and clear.*

But spiritualism also goes wrong here, and for the same reason. It forgets to look to the Word. It looks to the Sign alone, and thinks: The water alone can not then mean anything more or less. But they forget that which also has found such clear expression in Luther: Faith must have something that it stands on and holds to. Faith does not build on the free air; it either builds on my feelings and experiences or my fullness of the Spirit or whatever one can

name. That is the same as building on one's self! Faith must have something outside of itself that it can stand on. Through the sacraments God comes to me through the outward/external sign. The water that touched my forehead, it is a sign for me that God has dealt with me. My baptism's day is therefore a great day in my life. That day God's gracious will was turned to *me* – God took me to himself. How do I dare believe it? The Word says that baptism is a washing of regeneration. And in the Lord's Supper God comes to me – to me, the individual – and gives me the bread and the wine as a sign of his gracious will. It is Christ's body and blood I receive. How do I know that? The Word tells it to me. So the sacrament is something that faith can cling to and support itself on. It does not support itself on the water or on bread and wine, that would be a false faith that would only result in judgment for me. But it relies on God's Word "that is with and in the water" (*Catechism*). And it relies on the word that bread and wine are comprehended in, and as I believe these words, "I have that which the words say, and as they sound."

Now we will in conclusion say a little on our actual situation in light of what we have found.

Then we must first ask: *Are there in our days any sacramentalistic currents to notice?* To that the only answer can be that without doubt there is a movement precisely in this direction through a great part of Christianity. That I can not talk about in detail. But it can be mentioned that in our easterly neighborland (Sweden) one such movement is highly noticeable. It has so manifested itself that the Swedish bishops have found it necessary to give a pronouncement. In certain areas there has been the reintroduction of the divine service's (*gudsstjenestlig*) practice of elevation (the Lord's Supper's bread and wine are lifted

up when the word of institution is read over them), and the liturgical wiping of the chalice during the divine service (*gudstjenesten*) (also a catholic practice, see above).

Also in our country one notes now that that the sacramentalistic views are encouraged in print and speech. One can see this in that the call to awakening and conversion has become strangely quiet, if it is there at all. One becomes so taken up with infant baptism that one does not see that unconverted persons must be called to serious conversion. *In all the stillness it is assumed that all the baptized are God's children.* Some have made an “inclusive” church view, to the effect that all who are baptized, are addressed as Christian and dealt with as Christians – which is directly in conflict with God's Word. Gradually the attention drifts away from the pulpit to the altar (to use the same picture again). And that which is preached, is not always the Gospel that can save and create anew the sinner. The preaching should only point the persons to the sacraments; such is the way of thinking with some. Sacramentalism is a noticeable feature in our day's weather and wind.

Sacramentalistic tones can also be heard concerning the Lord's Supper. The invitation to the Lord's Supper is an important matter. There can not be the least doubt about this that the Lord's Supper is for God's children, according to the New Testament. 1 Cor. 11:28. Sure enough, also the one, who has a weak and trembling faith, is welcome to the table of the Lord's Supper. Not only the old and tested Christian, but also the the youngest and inexperienced are also welcome there, and need to come there. We do not stand there in order to terrify away those who rightly ought to have the Lord's Supper's comfort and help in their fight and struggle. All this is true and must be underscored. But nothing of this can hide the fact that the Lord's Supper is for God's children. It is a serious matter if this is hidden or forgotten in the pastor's invitation and his discussion of the Lord's Supper.

What is the meaning of some things that a pastor may be seen doing at the altar? One can see pastors make the sign of the cross at the communion table before the distribution to the communion guests. It is a Catholic practice, and so how can it be here among us? Other pastors make a deep bowing before the altar both when they come there and when they go from there. Such is understandable when it involves Catholics, for they believe that Christ himself is present in the consecrated communion bread as is kept on the altar. But the evangelical church does not believe this, and so to what then shall the deep bowing be done?

That there are found spiritualistic tendencies among us, there can be no doubt. They are found both among theologians and laymen. They are evident in the form of a strange reserve and shyness; as if one does not talk about baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which case the reservations are so many and great that *they* receive the main emphasis. I will not say that this is usual, but I believe that none will deny that such are found both here and there.

And now there I have a word that lies on the heart.

First a personal confession. I have come to the conviction that sacramentalism is a very great danger in our time. I have written in part about it. But, and now comes what I really want to say, no one must believe that he restrains sacramentalism and hinders its forward march by spiritualistic *anti*-sacramentalism.

The Lutheran preacher – he can be lay or learned – must never imagine that here we have to do with a purely quantitative relationship. Many easily think so. That will say: One presents the matter such that the problem is speaking “*passe maget*” - “very modestly” - about baptism and communion; which he believes to be the error with the sacramentalists, while the spiritualists' error is that they speak “too little” about them. Nothing can be more incorrect. This analysis revolves itself around namely a quantitative relationship; it revolves itself

around mutually reciprocal views. If one then thinks some make “too much” fuss of the sacraments, then we do not help the situation when we on our part speak “less” about them. And if some speak “too little” about them, then it is certainly no help if we get ourselves to speak “more” of the matter. It is not a question of “more” or “less,” but about that which is right – even though I shall not deny that there can certainly be distortions even when a view which is correct in itself is emphasized in season and out of season. I believe, for example, one should not talk about baptism continually. What is important, is that we have received a right view on these things, and that we by God’s help can preach it, live in it and help others to do the same. What is decisive is if we have learned to “perceive the sacraments in the Word.”

With freedom we can then preach about baptism. With joy and thankfulness we shall sing: “I am signed by God’s hand, born anew by water and Spirit; God is Father, light and comfort, I his image, child and desire. Oh, I poor earth and clay, Christ himself my brother is – Could any desire more?---- Jesus a long time ago, has in baptism called me; me a sinner great before God, he has called me out of the dead, loved me as a bridegroom loves his bride,” (Bronson). In this faith our evangelical fathers have lived, in it they have passed away. And so should we not freely preach the same faith?

Spiritualism has no place for the Lord’s Supper. No one can deny that spiritualism is present in many places. Luther says that the one, who does not use the Lord’s Supper at least one time in the year, can not be considered a Christian.

We should hear seriously what he says here.

There is in our days a wind blowing toward Rome. That we will readily work against. But if someone believes he can work against it by showing contempt for the sacraments, then

he had better think again. Let us say: We trouble ourselves neither about the papacy nor the enthusiasts (*svermerne*): we keep ourselves to the Bible and our childhood teaching; in it is given wholesome food and sound growth.

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