

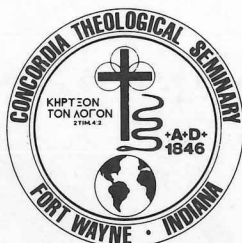
CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

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Announcement:
**Fourth Annual Symposium
on the Lutheran Confessions**

January 28 — 30, 1981

**A Convocation for Pastors and Laypeople
sponsored by**

**The International Center of
Lutheran Confessional Studies
to be held at**

**Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana**

The Fourth Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions will commemorate the four-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the *Apology* of the Augsburg Confession (1531) and will have as its theme the doctrine of *justification*, which the *Apology* identifies as the central article of the Christian faith.



Fourth Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions

Wednesday — January 28, 1981

- 1:00** Welcome
"Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification:
Introduction to the Issues"
Dr. Robert D. Preus
- 1:30** "The Doctrine of Justification in Apology IV"
Dr. Martin Warth
- 3:00** Break
- 3:15** "The Roman Catholic Response —
The Confutation, Trent, and Vatican II:
Has It Really Changed?"
Dr. Harry McSorley
- 6:00** Dinner
- 7:30** Concert: The Lutheran Confessional Heritage in
Church Music
- 8:45** Reception in the Commons

Thursday — January 29, 1981

- 7:00-8:00** Breakfast
- 8:50** Chapel
- 9:30** "Contemporary Lutheran Views on Justification"
Dr. Richard Klann
- 10:30** Break
- 10:45** Panel: "Does and Can the Doctrine
of Justification Have Meaning Today?"
- 12:15** Lunch
- 1:30** "American Protestant Fundamentalism and
Justification: Noting Similarities and Differences"
Dr. Milton Rudnick
- 2:45** Break
- 3:00** "Seventeenth Century Lutheran Pietism: Support,
Denial, or Advancement of Justification"
Dr. Skarsten
- 4:30** Responses
- 6:00** Banquet
"An Apology for the Apology"
Dr. August Suelflow

Friday — January 30, 1981

7:00-8:00	Breakfast
8:50	Chapel
9:30	"Justification as Doctrine of the Old Testament: A Comparative Study in Confessional and Biblical Theology" Dr. Raymond Surburg
10:30	Break
10:45	Responses to Dr. Surburg

- Registration and material is \$35.00 per person, and \$55.00 for husband and wife. (Thursday banquet included in registration fee.)
- Motel reservations are available should that be preferred.
- We will provide limousine service from the airport — when given your schedule at least two days in advance.
- Limited dormitory space will be available for registrants and their wives. The cost for a room is \$6.00 per person. There will be two people in each room.
- Please include your name, address, congregation, and telephone number with your request for registration. Early pre-registration by mail will guarantee the accommodations of your choice.
- Breakfast, lunch, and supper may be purchased in the Seminary Dining Hall.
- Send address requests for registrations (or requests for further information) together with the registration fee to the International Center of Lutheran Confessional Studies, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825 or call 219-482-9611.

Chemnitz and the Book of Concord

J.A.O. Preus

The year 1980 is most significant in the life of the Lutheran churches of the world. It is the year in which we celebrate the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of our basic confessional document, the Augsburg Confession, and the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of the document which really saved Lutheranism as a theological movement and established Lutheranism as an officially recognized and united church. In many ways, the publication of the Book of Concord at the end of the great period of controversy guaranteed the very existence of the Lutheran movement established by the Ninety-Five Theses and confirmed by the Augsburg Confession. The Augsburg Confession was followed by fifty years of conflict — political, theological and ecclesiastical — to determine whether Lutheranism as a movement and as a church could survive. The adoption of the Book of Concord marks the establishment of a Lutheranism which was able to withstand the terrors of the Thirty Years War culminating, finally in 1648, in the Peace of Westphalia. This Peace, in turn, remained in effect for virtually three hundred years, until the close of World War II. During these three hundred years almost countless generations of people were brought up under the symbols of Lutheranism, and Lutheranism as a theological entity was established to the point where even the vagaries and the uncertainties of post-World War II theology, together with the enormous political upheavals of this last generation, have not been able to obliterate it from the face of the earth.

It is interesting that in this year 1980 churches whose Lutheranism has been seriously questioned are celebrating these events and are identifying with the great central truths of the Lutheran understanding of the Christian faith. It is also significant that in this last generation we have witnessed an erosion of the biblical Christian faith and consequently of confessional Lutheranism that is certainly equal to, if not even greater than, that which was endured during the period of rationalism. Thus it behooves us once again to study our roots and our theological foundations.

Present-day Lutheranism can be extremely grateful to various theologians and churches which have, beginning in 1977 and continuing up to the present, endeavored to state in modern language and in forms which can be studied by clergy and laity alike the basic fundamentals of our faith. I make particular reference to

the translation and publication by Concordia Publishing House of the remarkable work translated by Dr. Fred Kramer, the *Examination of the Council of Trent*, written by Martin Chemnitz in the years between 1565 and 1573. Dr. Eugene Klug's outstanding work, *From Luther to Chemnitz*, is an extremely valuable contribution, as are Robert Preus's two volumes dealing with post-Reformation Lutheranism. Certainly to be included in this collection of works are *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*, edited by Robert Preus and Wilbert Rosin, with the description of the remarkable historical background of the Formula prepared by Robert A. Kolb, and the series of materials coming under the general heading of "A Formula for Concord," prepared by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. I also am exceedingly grateful to have been asked by Concordia Publishing House to make my own humble contributions to this effort in the translation of Chemnitz's work on *The Two Natures of Christ* and on *The Lord's Supper*. Other works of significance could also be mentioned.

This essay attempts to give in very cursory fashion a brief summary of the particular and peculiar contribution of Martin Chemnitz to the Formula of Concord. This document should be looked upon, as it was by its authors, as an attempt to state in very succinct and careful language what the correct biblical faith of Lutheranism actually was. It was a preserving document. It makes no pretense of being innovative, but rather is simply an attempt to state Lutheranism's understanding of the biblical faith as it had been enunciated during the preceding fifty years — based on the ancient creeds, patristic evidence, and the writings of Luther and Melanchthon, and growing out of controversies which had arisen in the period between the death of Luther and the adoption of the Formula over the correct understanding of the Gospel.

Likewise, the document cannot be understood unless it is very clearly stated that the document looks into the future with the idea that out of the adoption of this document a united church would arise in lands which had subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and which had every intention, under God, of retaining that faith. It is really only at the time of the adoption of the Book of Concord that we begin to see emerging a specified body of documents, a *Corpus Doctrinae*, for all of Lutheranism. This was an action which pointed not only to the past and to the present state of affairs but most particularly to the future.

Considering the heat of the controversies, the involvement of the great and beloved Melancthon and his deviations from the common understanding of Lutheranism, the tremendous political pressures which were applied not only by the constant attacks of Rome but also by the conflict with the emerging Reformed party, travel conditions, the use even at this late date of handwritten documents, and the political division within Germany, one stands in almost stunned unbelief that a document of this size, with this degree of theological unity, and with such historically binding results was ever able to emerge. It is certain that in our own age, despite vastly improved communication and transportation methods, printing, and all kinds of related technology, we could never possibly come to as high a degree of agreement on as broad a range of subjects within the family of Lutheranism, to say nothing of the ecumenical endeavors which have been undertaken. One can almost say that we have here in this great Book of Concord a miracle.

And while the particular person singled out in this essay for emphasis is Martin Chemnitz (who indeed did play a major role, and whose theological stance and personality made the endeavor possible), the fact is that the work is really the work of individuals, of committees, of entire faculties, of leading lay theologians, and of churches whose entire ministerium ultimately signed the document. One need know very little about the Book of Concord to recognize the names of Andreae, Chytraeus, Selnecker, and Chemnitz, but one also has to give special mention to the Elector August of Saxony, to the faculties of Wittenberg, Leipzig, and Tuebingen, and to countless unnamed and long forgotten theologians, pastors, and lay-people. The Book of Concord is truly a product of the entire church.

Chemnitz, nevertheless, plays an extremely constant role in this entire development, in that he was chosen from as early as the time when he was a librarian at the University of Königsberg to serve in capacities of mediation among warring factions within Lutheranism. He was selected at a very early date to attempt to bring about the conciliation of Flacius and some of his opponents. In this endeavor he failed in the beginning and succeeded at the end. In 1561 he was asked by his mentor, Mörlin, to assist him with a certain pastor Hartenberg, who was charged with crypto-Calvinism. In 1564 he was involved in the development of the *Corpus Doctrinae* for Brunswick, a document which included the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the two Catechisms of Luther. This document, quite

obviously, was a predecessor of the Book of Concord.

In 1568 he met Jacob Andreae for the first time and both of these men, who had been previously engaged in unification efforts, now began the activities which resulted ultimately in the development of the Book of Concord. Thus, Bente is correct in his statement, "Andreae and Chemnitz are the theologians to whom, more than any other two men, our church owes the Formula of Concord." In these two men we also have a conjunction between the north and south of Germany, with Chemnitz coming from Brunswick and Andreae from Tübingen. Their first joint effort, at the request of their respective princes, was to conduct a joint church visitation in Brunswick, in which they dealt with such articles as justification, good works, free will, adiaphora, and the Lord's Supper. This resulted in a revision of the *Corpus Doctrinae* of Brunswick, thereafter called the *Corpus Doctrinae Julium*, in honor of Duke Julius of Brunswick. It is interesting that, when they first met, Chemnitz was not entirely certain of the orthodoxy of Andreae, and there may have been some reason for this, because Andreae was charged with having sometimes compromised doctrine in order to bring about unity.

During this same period, Chemnitz also made the acquaintance of Selnecker, who had previously been a very ardent supporter of Melancthon. It appears that Selnecker's conversion to a very orthodox position, which ultimately brought him into the role of author of some portions of the Formula of Concord, was brought about by the ministrations and witness of Chemnitz.

The effort toward unity really got underway, however, with the publication in 1573, of Andreae's "Six Christian Sermons," in which he dealt with the controverted doctrines then dividing Lutheranism. These sermons might well be called the embryo of the Formula of Concord. In 1573 the sermons of Andreae were recast in thetical form to produce what was known as the Swabian Concord. The Swabian Concord was revised in 1575 by Chemnitz, on the basis of comments from theological faculties, conferences, and individual theologians, into a document that came to be the Swabian-Saxon Concord. Osiander and Bidebacht in 1576 drew up the Maulbronn Formula, and at the initiative of Elector August a conference of theologians was held at Torgau, where the Swabian-Saxon Concord and the Maulbronn Formula were combined into what was known as the Torgau Book. Andreae produced a summary of the Torgau Book, which today is known as the Epitome of the Formula of Concord. After

various groups had studied and commented on the Torgau Book, it was reworked at Bergen Abbey by Andreae, Chemnitz, and Selnecker into what today is called the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord. For a brief period after 1577 it was called the Bergen or Bergic Book.

These documents were an attempt by their various authors and commentators to bring about a settlement of three decades of conflict between the followers of the honored and revered Melanchthon, who had veered off course, and the true or authentic Lutherans, known as the Gnesio-Lutherans, who themselves had divided into parties during the years of conflict. There was the adiaphoristic controversy (1548-1555), which grew out of the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims. There was the Majoristic controversy (1551-1562); the synergistic controversy (1555-1560); the Flacian controversy, (1560-1575); the Osiandrian controversy, (1549-1566); the antinomian controversy, (1527-1556); and the Crypto-Calvinistic controversy, (1560-1574). Many of these controversies have their roots in Melanchthon's wavering; some were prompted by the interims, some by the rise of Calvinism; and all of them had served to divide Lutheranism. The purpose of the Formula of Concord was to reestablish doctrinal unity and doctrinal purity among the followers of the Augsburg Confession and to bring about peace and harmony among them. In the settlement of these controversies Chemnitz played a significant role.

To dwell a little more fully on the theology and personality of Chemnitz himself, it should be pointed out that somewhere during these years of conflict the decision was made that the documents that were finally drawn up should not contain attacks against people by name. While abundant use is made of the church fathers down to Luther, and while Luther is always quoted favorably, it is notable that the name of Melanchthon, despite his involvement in so many of the conflicts, is never mentioned in an unfavorable light, and very seldom in a favorable light. Some of the theologians of the period were dissatisfied with this omission of names; but it is my personal opinion, from having studied Chemnitz's writings, that he probably had a great deal to do with this procedure, because in his voluminous *Two Natures of Christ* and also in *The Lord's Supper* he is extremely careful of the way in which he talks about the contemporary errorists. He seldom, if ever, mentions Melanchthon. Calvin is mentioned only once or twice, and even Zwingli is seldom called in. Only in his *Examination of the Council of Trent* does he allow himself the pleasure of certain sarcastic and polemical statements relative to his Roman antagonists.

Another quality that shows up both in the writings of Chemnitz and in the Formula is the reluctance to try to solve the insoluble. Chemnitz, in a rather whimsical way on several occasions, refers to the fact that the answer to certain questions must be left until "we enter the heavenly academy," where then all things will be known to us. It is interesting to see how he avoided the difficulties of the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ in such things as a pile of cow manure and other unsavory ideas by simply stressing that we believe that Christ is present fully and according to both natures in the places where the Scripture says He is fully present, and for our purposes that means He is present in the Sacrament with His body and blood.

Another quality which is very evident in Chemnitz's own writing, and which carries over into the Formula of Concord, is the absence of scholastic argumentation. Chemnitz is at all times a theologian of the Scripture, a very strong supporter of the ancient councils and creeds, extremely well acquainted with and supportive of the church fathers and of Luther, but singularly unimpressed with scholasticism and the use of philosophic terminology.

While it is interesting that, aside from the opening portion of the *Examen*, in none of Chemnitz's writings does he have a *locus de scriptura*, yet his view of Scripture, or his formal doctrine of Scripture, as Klug has so cogently shown, appears on every page of his writings. If the Scripture settles the matter, that is it. It is beyond argumentation. He follows a very simple grammatical method of interpreting Scripture, avoids all reference to allegorizing or esoteric methods of interpretation, talks constantly about the proper and natural meanings of the words (*propria et nativa sententia verborum*), has a good understanding of some of the textual problems which were beginning to arise during his day, and shows at times a remarkable understanding of the isagogical background of the various books of the Bible. Yet the main thrust of Chemnitz's use of the Bible is to show that he regards it as the Word of the living God, before whom we bow, taking our reason captive, and saying, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." There is a reverence about him and a piety which we could well emulate in our own day.

The Formula of Concord, therefore, exhibits the theological influence of Martin Chemnitz in demonstrating with Luther that doctrine is not the product of the church but the revelation of God. Likewise, all doctrine is to be drawn directly from the Scripture and is to be established on sound exegetical principles, using

the proper and natural meaning of the words. Chemnitz does not refer to the so-called literal sense (*sensus literalis*), but rather he prefers the expression *propria et nativa sententia verborum*. For example, he says in his *Lord's Supper*, "Just as all the dogmas of the church and the individual Articles of Faith have their own foundation and certain passages of Scripture where they are clearly treated and explained, so also the true and genuine meaning of the doctrines themselves should rightly be sought and developed accurately on the basis of these passages. Likewise, it is beyond controversy that the correct belief concerning the Lord's Supper has its own particular foundation and its own basis in the words of institution.

"But who does not know this, you say, or what sane man would deny it? My reply is that all do admit it and concede it in their words, but when we come to the matter itself, there is clear diversity. For all the sacramentarians, no matter who they are, derive some of what they want to believe and understand regarding the Lord's Supper not from the words of institution in the proper and simple sense clearly conveyed to our understanding, but they come with preconceptions on the basis of other passages of Scripture, most of which say nothing about the Lord's Supper. Each refers to certain passages which he interprets for himself according to his own analogy. When they have gone through this process they decide on the basis of other passages whatever they want to be believe regarding the Lord's Supper. Finally they approach the words of institution, and at this point it becomes necessary for them to force upon the words of institution their preconceived meaning brought in from elsewhere on the basis of some distorted and twisted interpretation."¹

Consequently, Chemnitz opposed all compromise where the least part of doctrine would be sacrificed for the sake of peace, although, on the other hand, he did not deliberately set about to stir up conflict. He opposed all ambiguities or indistinct formulas by which contradictory statements were to be harmonized.

Chemnitz, moreover, using the device which was common in Luther and picked up by others (such as Flacius in his *Magdeburg Centuries*), has great respect for the church fathers. He does not swallow them hook, line, and sinker. He recognizes their weaknesses; yet, using the old dictum of Luther, "if the Devil writes a good hymn, I'll sing it," he draws heavily on the fathers when they support the unbroken tradition of the church on various doctrines. For example, in *The Two Natures*, he makes reference to John of Damascus, whom he describes as a late arrival and in

general a very poor theologian, but a man who wrote an excellent book on Christology and whom, therefore, we still utilize. Chemnitz makes great use of this father for that reason.

If one were to analyze the history of Lutheranism between the death of Luther and the writing of the Formula, one would have to say that Lutheranism was suffering terribly for the lack of a good leader who could stand his ground, unite his followers, and lead a well-reasoned and comprehensive attack against the enemies of the church. Melanchthon was simply incapable of filling this void, and the theologians of the Augsburg Confession scattered throughout Germany were likewise unable to supply the kind of leadership that was necessary.

It probably is correct to say that in Andreae and Chemnitz two such leaders emerged. It is historically beyond debate that these men saved Lutheranism and that they established it on a basis which has guaranteed its continuance until the present day. When one considers the earlier lapses of Andreae and the salutary effect that Chemnitz had both on him and on Selnecker and the fact that, with all of Chemnitz's exertions, he does not seem ever to have made any serious doctrinal error or fallen over into any kind of extremism, one can probably be historically very correct in saying that this man, above all others, supplied the kind of leadership that was able to unite and preserve Lutheranism. When one looks at the ultimate result of this effort it was nothing short of phenomenal. At the end of it all, the Formula of Concord and the Book of Concord were adopted by three electors of the Holy Roman Empire, twenty dukes and princes, twenty-four counts, four barons, thirty-five imperial cities, and eight thousand clergy, comprising two-thirds of German Lutheranism. It is interesting that, to this very day, as new Lutheran churches come into being, they all subscribe to the entire Book of Concord. Somebody was supplying leadership.

As the really undisputed leader of Lutheranism, in his attempt to bring about peace and harmony without compromise of the truth, Chemnitz has an interesting personality. In the thousands of pages of his writings, which are extant, one learns almost nothing about his person, his autobiography, or his personal likes and dislikes. As far as his personality is concerned, he keeps a very low profile. Likewise, he indulges in very little sarcasm or personal attack. He deals with issues and he deals with the issues on the basis of Scripture. He is extremely thorough and to some readers might appear prolix, but in all instances he is slowly and laboriously and patiently and systematically making his points.

When he is finished, there is nothing left to say, and no way in which he can be opposed. He is overpowering in his argumentation. He is, by modern standards, completely non-political. Yet in this very stance he succeeded in one of the greatest political endeavors ever accomplished within the church, namely, to bring about peace between warring factions within a strife-torn and leaderless church. Luther shows his personality, his likes and dislikes, his emotions, in strong and often extravagant language. Chemnitz does none of those things but systematically proceeds to demolish the arguments of his opponents by straight biblical teaching and laying out the facts as they are clearly set forth in the Scripture.

The influence of Chemnitz is beyond all debate. Krauth, in his great work, *The Conservative Reformation*, has said, "The learning of Chemnitz was something colossal, but it had no tinge of pedantry. His judgment was of the highest order. His modesty and simplicity, his clearness of thought, and his luminous style, his firmness in principle, and his gentleness in tone, the richness of his learning and the vigor of his thinking, have revealed themselves in rich measure in his works . . . which mark their author as the greatest theologian of his time — one of the greatest theologians of all time."²

Fred Kramer, in the preface to his magnificent translation of the *Examen*, says "Martin Chemnitz was in many ways an ideal theologian — pious, humble, learned, thorough, moderate, peace-loving. Theology was for him not merely an intellectual pursuit. For him theology existed to serve the church. He believed that there was a consensus in doctrine within the ancient church, though he was not unaware of the aberrations which had occurred in every period of the church. He believed that Luther and the adherents to the Augsburg Confession had returned to this consensus in their theology, and he labored ceaselessly both as churchman and as theologian to keep the church within this consensus."³

This observation is echoed by Eugene Klug, who says, "Doctrine for doctrine's sake is never the answer for Chemnitz. Theology always had to be useful and functional, that is, it must of necessity be soteriological, vibrating with that which is necessary for man's knowledge and salvation and also doxological, bringing glory where it ought to be — to God, for Christ's redemptive work, and not to man."⁴

In conclusion, I should like to illustrate these eulogies by the quotation of a passage from *The Lord's Supper*. Remember that

this work was directed against the sacramentarians, both inside and outside of the Lutheran church. There was every opportunity for unbridled polemics. The sacramentarians were not only affecting theology, but they were affecting the very unity and peace of the church. Yet, when it comes to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper itself, Chemnitz is not a polemicist, nor a logician, nor a man who is playing theological one-up-manship. He is a child of God, a man of the Scripture, a man of the church. He says:

Our faith ought to lay hold on Christ as God and man in that nature by which He has been made our neighbor, kinsman, and brother. For the life which belongs to the deity resides in and has in a sense been placed in the assumed humanity. The adversaries teach that faith ought to turn itself away from the present celebration of the Supper and in its thoughts ascend above all heavens and there seek and embrace Christ in His majesty, although they themselves admit that they do not know in what place in heaven He is dwelling according to the mode of His true body. But the proper, simple, and natural meaning of the words of institution teaches that Christ himself is present with us in the celebration of the Supper with both His deity and His flesh, and that He comes to us in order to lay hold on us (Phil. 3:12) and join us to Himself as intimately as possible. This brings sweetest comfort. For Christ, both God and man, must lay hold on us in order that there may be a union between Him and us. But we, weighed down by the burden of sin and pressed under the weight of our infirmity, are not yet able to enter the secret places of heaven (Col. 2:18) and penetrate to Him in glory. He himself therefore comes to us in order to lay hold upon us with that nature by which He is our brother. And because our weakness in this life cannot bear the glory of His majesty (Matt. 17:2ff.; Acts 9:3ff.), therefore His body and blood are present, distributed, and received under the bread and wine. Nor does He will that we wander around the gates of heaven uncertain in which area of heaven we ought to look for Christ in His human nature or whether we can find Him; but in the Supper He himself is present in the external celebration and shows by visible signs where He wills to be present with His body and blood, and there we may safely seek Him and surely find Him, for there He himself through the ministry distributes His body and blood to the communicants. These most sweet and necessary comforts will be completely snatched away from us

if the substantial presence, distribution, and reception of Christ's body and blood are removed from the Supper

There is a salutary change of which the fathers often reminded us with a special joy of the Spirit. Our nature, at the beginning created in God's image, had been adorned with all heavenly and divine gifts, blessings which had been bestowed upon Adam as the founder of our race. But through his fall not only were these blessings lost, but our nature became corrupted by sin and doomed to death. The Son of God, therefore, in order that He might become the second Adam, assumed our nature, but without sin, and in that nature condemned sin, destroyed death, and restored that nature to life. Thus first of all in His own person He sanctified, restored, and blessed human nature. And now in order that we might be made certain that these blessings apply also to us and our wretched nature, and have truly been communicated to us, Christ in His Supper again offers us that very nature which He has assumed from us and in Himself first restored, so that when we receive it with our poor flesh we are no longer in doubt concerning the salvation also of our nature through Christ. For in this way He, as it were, grafts our miserable and corrupt nature into the holy and life-giving mass of His human nature, as Cyril says, so that our depravity and misery are cured and renewed through the remedy of this most intimate union

The price of our redemption is the body of Christ which is given for us and His blood which is shed for us. Among Christians no one doubts that by this giving of Christ's body and shedding of His blood the wrath of the Father has been satisfied and eternal redemption gained. But the question is, to whom does this promise pertain and who are the receivers of this benefit of Christ? To be sure, the teaching of the Gospel in general pronounces that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). But anxious and fearful minds, when they consider their sins, their unworthiness, their weaknesses, and their many temptations, become so terrified and disturbed that dangerous doubts arise concerning the individual application, that is, whether I myself have with sufficient certainty grasped the benefits of Christ and so faithfully cling to them that my conscience can stand before the judgment of God. For this reason Christ in His Supper willed to confirm and seal to His disciples the demonstration and application of the promise

of the Gospel with a certain and firm guarantee, so that in the face of all temptations faith can stand strongly and firmly in the assurance that it is a participant in Christ and all His benefits unto salvation

But how? For this purpose He uses bread and wine, to be sure, but because these elements are diminished by use, as Augustine says, or are partly expelled from our system, as Origen puts it, it is manifest what kind of confirmation and sealing this is if in addition to these external elements nothing else is present and distributed in the Lord's Supper. Therefore Christ in the Lord's Supper distributes to us His very body which has been given for us and His very blood which has been shed for us, and He offers them to us to take and eat

. . . .

The New Testament is that covenant of grace which is described in Jer. 31:33, 34: 'I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and their sins will remember no more I will be for them a God, and they shall be for Me a people.' This covenant toward God the Father is established and confirmed by the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. But it is necessary for the salvation of individuals that they be brought into this covenant and remain in it. To be sure, we are received into this covenant by the Spirit through Baptism and preserved in it through the Word. But fearful minds are concerned as to whether they actually are firmly and surely in this covenant. They desire, they long for this, that they may be certain they are going to remain forever and persevere in this covenant of grace. Therefore the Son of God willed that in His Supper our faith should be strengthened by a definite pledge and guarantee, so that we might be assured that we are under this covenant and included in it; and to this end He bears witness that He strongly wills to preserve us in this covenant. For He says: 'Drink, this is My blood which is the blood of the new covenant.' Therefore by this very blood, by the shedding of which this covenant with God the Father has been established, He also ratifies, confirms, and seals the covenant with us, so that He offers this very blood for us to receive.⁵

FOOTNOTES

1. Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, tr. J.A.O. Preus, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 31.
2. Charles Porterfield Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1899), p. 310.
3. Fred Kramer, "Preface," in Martin Chemnitz, *The Examination of the Council of Trent*, tr. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), I, pp. 23 f.
4. Eugene F.A. Klug, *From Luther to Chemnitz on Scripture and the Word* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1971), p. 146.
5. Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, pp. 187-192.

Confessional Music

Daniel G. Reuning

Three basic opinions regarding music have been voiced within Protestantism since its genesis. Even though each regarded forms of worship as adiaphora (not prescribed in Holy Scripture), each viewed this assumption in dramatically different ways. The *radical party* (followers of Carlstadt) held that, since music is an adiaphoron, it must be abolished. Thus, the sermon-lecture emerged as the dominant or only feature of the service, since, in the opinion of the radicals, that was the only element commanded by God. Today, few Lutherans would identify with this viewpoint.

The *enthusiast party* (followers of Müntzer) was similar to the radicals in abolishing traditional music and making the sermon-lecture the dominant feature of worship. However, it embellished its service with contemporary folk liturgies and popular songs for the congregation. This procedure was a radical departure from past church music, because the "worship service" now featured hit-parade, theatre, and entertainment music, designed for dancing and eliciting bodily responses, such as foot-stomping and hand-clapping, and arousing outward emotional reactions in people. It was a logical departure, however, because the dominant concern of the enthusiast's theology was with visible, yet very subjective, manifestations of the faith (i.e., tongues, visions, healings, testimonies, uncontrolled outbursts of joy and sadness, etc.) Thus, to use music designed specifically to produce physical and outward emotional reactions was exactly what the enthusiasts needed to support their worship, activity which served to furnish the external, yet subjective, proofs of one's standing as a Christian. Programs of "spiritual" entertainment were the order of the day, and could rival any secular production available. Today, we see this approach most blatantly evidenced in sectarian radio and television shows, in charismatic prayer groups, and in most "contemporary" liturgies and songs, which have infiltrated even some of our own Lutheran parishes.

The *confessional party* (followers of Luther), most interested in the mind, learning, emotions controlled by conviction, and the response of the heart, chose to follow quite a different musical direction than the outwardly and excessively emotional enthusiasts. As much as Luther and other contributors to the Book of Concord insisted that music was an adiaphoron, they

were just as insistent that music was, nonetheless, not a matter of indifference, but a matter that required both theological and musical judgment, especially because the rubrics were not laid out for us in the Holy Scriptures. Logically, the confessional party refrained from using the popular musical idiom which was compatible with the enthusiast's theology. Rather than employing an idiom that was designed to entertain and elicit bodily, outward, superficial responses, they used music to alert the mind to the meaning of the text. They employed a kind of music that emphasized the content of the words — in fact, a craft molded by the words, an idiom designed to deal interpretatively with the text, a music that preached.

To summarize, in Luther's day, as in our own, music served two primary functions: (1) to get physical and outward emotional response, and (2) to encourage an enduring response of the mind and heart. Thus, body-music has the task of getting the body rhythmically responding, outwardly and emotionally, and is logically associated with the entertainment world (those activities that depend upon the pleasure of the people — parties, dancing, popular music) and with the theology of the enthusiasts. In contrast, mind-music is written to move the mind and heart, inwardly and intellectually, in a deep-seated response to the text — by engaging the materials of music to interpret, clarify and reinforce the meaning of words — and is most often associated with education and worship. Incidentally, the notion that Luther used bar songs as sources for his hymns has been totally discredited by modern musicology. Confessional composers who did use bar songs as sources for hymns drastically changed their predictable dance-rhythms in order to prevent bodily reaction. This alteration, furthermore, disguised the source so much that it was hardly recognizable, having virtually no association with the original. Luther's sources, however, were all mind-music sources; which is indeed logical for a man who insisted that music's task in the church was to preach the Gospel, not to entertain as the devil would want, since body-music could easily distract people from the real task of worship.

Luther's most complete descriptions of the learning process appropriate to worship occur in his first Wittenberg sermon, his Torgau dedication sermon, and his introduction to the *Deutsche Messe*. He defined the task of Lutheran worship as a teaching-preaching task, maintaining that every element in worship should serve that function. Worship was to reinforce the following characteristics of faith and love:

FAITH (given by God through His Word and Sacraments):

- (a) acknowledges that as sons of Adam we are all corrupt sinners under condemnation (Rom. 5:12, Ps. 51:5), and
- (b) trusts that as sons of God we are saved through the merits of Jesus Christ from such corruption, sin, and condemnation (Rom. 1:29, 4:25, 5:15 ff., John 3:16)

LOVE (our response to God's gift of faith; sacrifice):

- (a) serves and does good to everyone, as Christ has done for us (Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:13, Matt. 25:40), and
- (b) suffers all kinds of evil and gladly endures as Christ did (Matt. 5:11, Heb. 12:6)

In contrast to the radicals and enthusiasts who abolished all tradition, Luther and the churches that adopted the Book of Concord retained all that supported his faith-love hermeneutic. Only that which disagreed with it was abolished. But as insistent as he was on preserving the faith-love tradition, he was just as insistent upon using it in a context of explanation. For instance, when a Latin text was used, it was preceded or followed by a translation, usually in the form of a hymn or choral paraphrase. In this way, anyone that might not understand Latin would not be hindered in the learning process, which required clear explanations if worship was to fulfill its teaching task. Preserving the faith-love tradition also showed that Luther's theology was nothing new. It had been in the church since its beginning. It just became more and more hidden because of the increase of false tradition through the ages. Luther's theology was based on the sure foundation of God's Holy Word and was thoroughly supported by the early church. Thus, the traditions of the early days of Christianity and those that followed their faith-love direction were especially dear to Luther and his church. Here a continuity between the early church and Luther was demonstrated.

Luther wanted to show, however, not only a continuity with the past, but also a continuity with the present, to show that Christianity was for the world. The use of languages in worship other than the vernacular was for Luther a way to help people see beyond their immediate culture and be reminded of their missionary responsibilities. It might even begin to teach people another language that could be used by them in a foreign land. At the very least, it would implant the desire of going beyond one's own nationality with the Gospel. Significantly, Luther's *Deutsche Messe* (German Mass) offered no translation for the Greek "Kyrie eleison"; and the other parts, in the vernacular, were never

intended to be used in isolation from faith-love traditions, other languages, and new contributions. Also, all of Luther's over two dozen hymns were paraphrases of specific traditional elements of Christian worship; he intended his hymns to be used in alternation with these constituents of the tradition. (Incidentally, Luther's *Deutsche Messe* constituted no translation into the street language or any dialect of the people. The German was not common or conversational, but was the language of the Saxon Court and the intellectual world, although, of course, it could be understood by the people in general — which was, reasonably enough, a requirement of worship for Luther. Similarly, King James English provides us today with a form of liturgical language that is clearly understood in most cases, but is no particular dialect, transcending provinciality and representing the most universal and all-encompassing form of the English language in the English-speaking world.) Language alternation was also employed for the purposes of explanation. It is my conviction that language alternation was so much a part of early Lutheran worship that, when phrases were repeated in songs, the choir or congregation would ordinarily take the opportunity to sing the repetition in another language — and in this way to reinforce the concept of the universality of the Gospel and the missionary thrust of Christianity.

Universality was also expressed by Luther and the church that adopted the Book of Concord by employing composers that could write mind-music in a universal idiom. Thus, musicians who had been trained in the international centers of the Netherlands and Italy were ordinarily much preferred to those trained in Germany. Thus, the mind-music produced in the Lutheran Church had truly inter-national, pan-cultural, non-provincial characteristics. This fact was just another reinforcement of the concept of the universality of the Gospel and our mission task. Thus, Luther's "German Chorale" was German only in the sense that the words were in German. But the music showed none of the characteristics of German provincialism; the features were inter-national. In this way, Lutheran music never conveyed the idea that the Gospel was for Germans only or that Christianity was tied to the German culture. No, quite the opposite message was conveyed, namely, that the Gospel was for the world. Thus, the mind-music produced by the Lutheran Church featured these qualities: (1) continuity with the past (it was pan-era); and (2) continuity with the present (it was pan-cultural, international, non-provincial).

One final footnote: If you happen to be one that does not like Lutheran mind-music, you need not have a guilty conscience — you are not alone. Just do not require of mind-music what is required of body-music, which stands and falls on the basis of whether you *like* it or not — since body-music must *please* and get your body to respond. Rather than *liking* Lutheran music, think of responding to it inwardly, letting it, through the manner in which it proclaims the Word, teach, exhort, comfort, and edify you, taking you beyond your culture to think of a world that desperately needs the Gospel, and taking you beyond your culture again to remind you that you are part of a great eternal company of witnesses, including angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven, lauding and magnifying the glorious name of God.

The Roots of Theological Liberalism

Eugene F. Klug

Theological or religious liberalism may be said to reach back to the Garden of Eden. Its roots are traceable to man's yielding to Satan's tantalizing suggestion, "Yea, hath God said?" Ever since that time human doubt has challenged God's revelation of Himself, His Word, His mighty acts — in fact, God Himself. The person of Christ was often the target of early liberalism, particularly His true deity, but at times also His true humanity — a situation which has not changed, of course, up to this present time. Dynamic Monarchianism has been particularly influential among the intelligentsia of all centuries. It started with Theodotus of Byzantium (second century) and Paul of Samosata (bishop of Antioch, ca. 260 A.D.), surfaced again with the Socinians during the Reformation, and reaches down to contemporary times through theologians like Bultmann, among the Protestants, and Hans Küng, among the Catholics. In this way of thinking Jesus was a mere man — a man, however, into whom and upon whom divine power flowed (either at his birth, or his baptism, or his resurrection — the latter not necessarily an actual physical event), elevating him to the level of "God" in a manner of speaking. There probably is no form of liberalism which has been so long-lived, century after century. Dynamic Monarchianism intends to elevate Christ in some manner, but begins and ends with a denial of His full and true deity.

This de-potentialization of Christ, or stripping of divine majesty, is regularly accompanied by a companion de-potentialization of God's Holy Word, the Sacred Scriptures. Almost all forms of liberalism in theology wage a dual attack in this manner. The incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, and the inscripturated Word, the Bible, remain the focal targets of liberalism's assault. Neither is held to be sacred, certainly not above a certain amount of criticism, demythologizing, even outright reproach.

Liberalism likes to describe itself more as a method than as a religion. The fact is that it becomes the latter, too, in view of its arbitrary, stilted dialectic, which deliberately sets itself over the inspired Word of God and all the articles of Christian Faith. One of the tragedies of modern times is that this "religion" has become the warp and woof of the ecumenical movement, particularly the World Council of Churches, but also other pan-demoninational organizations as well. The shadow of liberalism is cast over much

of this organizational life, in the conception of faith, life, order, and work of the church. There is no clear-cut respect for the authority of Scripture, nor for Christ's true and full deity, or His work; nor for the meaning of the hope which the church preaches for the future, for salvation, for heaven. The focus instead is on a this-worldly sort of expectation in terms of social gospel and activism.

The consequences of rationalism in theology in our day are that Scripture is viewed as capable only of giving time-bound, though pious, testimony from the apostolic age, not actual revelation; that Biblical criticism, more generally known as higher criticism, or the historical-critical methodology, is conceived to be the Biblical theologian's proper task, questioning all the data presented as historical in the text, especially the so-called miracles and all that smacks of the super-natural; and that Jesus must be seen as a human being, like any other, an archetypal, prophet-like sort of man, upon whom the power of God came in an unusual way and measure, but not the very Word of God Himself, of one substance and being with the Father.

Liberalism has accepted the "findings" of the historical-critical school of Bible interpretations, which is ready to be informed as much by extra-Biblical sources as by the Biblical. Pre-eminent among these sources are the sciences of historiography and psychology. According to their dictates, it must be granted that all historically-oriented religions — Christianity not excepted — derive from the human spirit. It is the church's task to understand this process and translate it down to the masses. The result, of course, has been the virtual shredding, cover to cover, of Holy Scripture. The sophistication and conceit of these artisans of Biblical criticism have left the uninitiated spellbound with their audacious claim of increased self-understanding for the church, for its theology, for its Biblical basis.

Contemporary Liberalism usually traces its roots back to the period of the so-called Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Thus, the modern attack on the Bible began with Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791), professor at the University of Halle, who was among the first in modern times to assert that the Bible was to be treated like any other book. Since then there has been an almost uninterrupted chain of attacks on the Bible's integrity as the inspired Word of God, down to contemporary exponents of this way of thinking, like Rudolf Bultmann and his many disciples. Among liberals in all branches of Protestantism and the various schools of thinking within Roman Catholicism there is agreement

with Semler's dictum that the Holy Scriptures should under no circumstances be simply identified with the authoritative Word of God. The result, of course, is predictable: for the last two hundred years there has been no way of determining where, if anywhere, the Word of God can be found. The search for the "canon" within the canon of Scriptural writings has been as hopeless as Don Quixote's jousting with the windmills. In this scrambling, if one still is to be counted as Christian, the task is to try to determine what, if anything, can be identified with the *kerygma*, or "message". Under no circumstances must the *kerygma* be lost or yielded, said Bultmann. But what is this *kerygma*? The field, understandably, is wide open to uncontrollable subjectivism. Private scholarly opinion has totally supplanted the authoritative Word of God itself. The inspired Scriptures of the Holy Spirit, "who" — so the fourth century Christians confessed in the Nicene Creed — "spake by the prophets," no longer retain their normative authority.

If Semler was the progenitor of modern Biblical higher critics, then Friedrich D. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), professor at Berlin, is the grandfather of all liberals in systematic theology, the discipline which shapes or formulates doctrinal teaching. The platform for his reconstruction of theology was his book, *On Religion, Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799). This was a landmark achievement, a sort of "Copernican revolution" for liberal theology. Schleiermacher conceived it to be his task to entice the "cultured despisers" away from the by-now-repudiated Biblical text to a sophisticated mystical theology of religious experience, the so-called pious self-consciousness of the theologizing subject. The essence of faith, according to Schleiermacher, was feeling — specifically a felt dependence upon God, in the manner of Jesus. Schleiermacher's Jesus was the archetypal man (cp. the "New Being" of Tillich), because he achieved a perfect kind of God-consciousness.

The push was clearly away from substantive, cognitive truths taught for faith's acceptance (*fides quae creditur*) to faith as an internalized disposition or experience (*fides qua creditur*). Luther and the other Reformers absolutely repudiated an anchorless faith like this. For them it was not an "either-or," but a "both-and," proposition — *both* the clear-cut articles of faith taught in Scripture *and* a personal trust in Christ's atoning self-sacrifice (the chief article). They based their position on solid Scriptural grounds (e.g., Rom. 10:17); but Biblical authority meant little to Schleiermacher. Miracles, even Christ's resurrection, meant even

less. Thus, it is hardly a surprise today when seven British theologians fire a salvo at the resurrection of Christ and His incarnation (John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977). This is all part of the *Vorverstaendnis* (pre-supposition) of liberal theology since Schleiermacher's day. The church, by this posture, must not concern itself about whether Moses really confronted God in the burning bush, whether fire actually fell from heaven to consume Elijah's thoroughly soaked altar of sacrifice, whether Christ really walked on the water, whether He actually (i.e., physically) rose from the grave.

Sin, according to Schleiermacher, is primarily a serious disjunction putting man out of kilter with God — and not total depravity placing man, if left to his own resources, irreparably under the wrath and judgment of God. The best answer for sin is man's "redemption," but redemption in the sense of an individual's felicitous relationship with God and with the community of men around him. Jesus was the one who, best of all men, succeeded in this redemption by achieving a pre-eminent sort of consciousness of God and satisfactory relationship with the Father; and our redemption lies in emulating Jesus in this pursuit. Obviously missing in this "gospel" of Schleiermacher is any reference to vicarious atonement, forgiveness of sins, God's grace in Christ, or eternal life. Schleiermacher's "theology of experience" is little more than Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* couched in theological, Christian-sounding terminology.

After Schleiermacher the liberal mantle fell on Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), professor at Goettingen. He had been strongly influenced by Schleiermacher's theologizing and Kant's philosophy. Ritschl virtually denied every distinctively Christian article of faith, yet claimed to be a Lutheran. Ethical matters were decisive for Ritschl, and he emphasized that Christ most excellently exemplified conformity with the will of God through His life here on earth. Under the loving god of Ritschl (Ritschl rejected completely the concept of wrath in God) ethical conformity is the essence of true religion. Christ can be called "God" because His life had a divine sort of worth, conforming perfectly with the Father's will. Ritschl's theology played a major role in shaping social-gospel theology. In America the chief proponents of his thinking were Walter Rauschenbusch of Colgate University and Shailer Mathews of the University of Chicago.

A contemporary of Ritschl was Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), professor at Tuebingen, and founder of the so-called Tuebingen school of theology. He drew heavily on Hegel's idealistic philosophy and argued that man and the world are but the self-manifestation of God. Thus God can be known and understood from immanent principles discoverable by man through logical principles and observations of the realm of nature around him. Baur repudiated everything supernatural. Thus he denied miracles, the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ — in fact, the historical Christ Himself — though Baur, like other liberal thinkers, wished to hold onto the first-century Jew Jesus. The ethical system which Jesus taught was the only part of Christianity which had abiding value for us today.

Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), professor successively at Goettingen, Bonn, Heidelberg, and Berlin, was the founder of the famed history-of-religions school. His contention was that the same evolutionary process had gone on in the development of all religions as had occurred in all other areas of life. A similar psychological process had gone on in Christianity as elsewhere in world religions; only the symbols or names were different. Under the influence of Troeltsch the comparative study of religions became the queen of the sciences, and Christian doctrine was thought to have met its Waterloo. Like his liberal predecessors and contemporaries, Troeltsch denied every fundamental article of the Christian faith. Albert Schweitzer was also a disciple of his, agreeing fully that Christianity was only the highest form of psychological development in the field of religion and, therefore, by no means absolute.

One other figure looms large in the liberal movement at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, namely, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), professor for many years at Berlin. The simple religion of Jesus was quite different, Harnack argued, from the doctrine which the church formulated in His name. To Harnack dogma was the "creation of the Hellenic spirit on the soil of the Gospel," and was, therefore, to be repudiated. He was able, of course, to show that some dogmas were fabricated wrongfully through the centuries in various quarters of the church. He refused to acknowledge, however, that many articles of faith were clearly taught for faith's acceptance in Holy Writ. Like his predecessors, he granted only that the Bible was a wonderful book, but hardly authentically inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, authoritative and binding on faith.

The theological descendants of these liberal giants are more numerous than locust swarms. Needless to say, there is no section of the world where Christianity has escaped their impact and erosive effect. Sweeping claims are made that there is no theological school or scholar worthy of the name that has not absorbed much of the historical-critical technique, whether in Protestantism or Roman Catholicism. For a time it was thought that Karl Barth, and others of the so-called neo-orthodox or neo-Protestant or neo-Reformation school, had reversed the tide of liberalism. Barth, it is true, seemed to emphasize once again the importance of the Bible. He never gave up, however, the historical-critical methodology with its various negative judgments against the Scriptures. Thus, he did not agree that the New Testament was in and of itself the message of salvation, but only a reference to it, or a witness of it. The "divine Word" is something other, above and beyond the written Word, and comes "straight down from above." In Barth's teaching on Christ it is as difficult as with the Word to know what is actually event and what is mere sign or symbol. His dialectical method of theologizing (a thought process which sets differing points of view into opposition to each other in order thereby to shed light, hopefully, on the matter in question) has been seen by various scholars as a revival of ancient Docetism because of Barth's "reinterpreting" or reducing of the Scriptures to symbolical "meaning." This allows the old liberal categories to stand, though now garbed in orthodox language. Some have labeled this procedure a deceitful manipulation of fact and event, a serious charge indeed. Moreover, these scholars claim that a speculative form of universalism is implicit in Barth's thought, just as outspoken liberals of the past had entertained universalistic ideas.

The true horror of liberalism is evident precisely at the point where it denies Christ's unique role as the Savior of mankind through His vicarious suffering and death for men's sin. This is what the apostles proclaimed to the world, and this is the Gospel which Christ mandates His church to proclaim also now. The gospels do not consist in pious embellishments of what Jesus' followers thought about Him, fancifully enhanced by miracles and a fabricated report of His resurrection. These gospels consist in the revelation of God, recorded by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for faith's acceptance. It is not the faith *of* Jesus of which the Scriptures tell: it is faith *in* Jesus which they proclaim. To assert that Jesus was a remarkable person, but not God incarnate, may seem to some to be the way to get modern man to accept Him

without sacrificing intellect, scholarly know-how, and scientific bent. But such an assertion is diametrically opposed to Christian truth as revealed by God through His mighty acts and His inspired Word. Liberalism today should be seen for what it really is: the revival of dynamic Monarchianism! It is significant that even an outsider to Christianity like the Jewish scholar Pinchas Lapide should note the inconsistency of liberal theologians who profess to be Christian and yet deny the resurrection of Christ, thus "sawing off the branch of faith upon which they are sitting" (*Time*, May 7, 1979). At the same time that liberalism grants that Christ was a mighty fine person, it rejects Him for what He in fact was, God's own Son and mankind's Savior, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29; cp. 1 John 1:7, 2:2.) For this living hope Christ's triumphant resurrection was the seal (1 Pet. 1:3-21), in spite of all of liberalism's denials.

The Doctrine of Biblical Authority in the Theology of Henry Eyster Jacobs

C. George Fry and John M. Drickamer

As Lutheranism enters the 1980's some theologians are already suggesting that the denominational "battle for the Bible" waged with such fervor in the 1970's was really a "departure from mainstream classical Protestantism." These scholars contend that "the Scripture ruckus" was caused either by "the importation of Fundamentalism into Lutheranism" or else it was "a peculiar distortion wrought by modern Missouri." Such opinions could hardly be further from the truth. Lest this view gain undue credence, we believe it is helpful to indicate that Lutheranism, when it has been true to its tradition, has always had a high regard for the Scriptures as the Word of God. Such a conviction, furthermore, was, in former times, not limited primarily to the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. It was nearly universal among America's Lutheran bodies. An illustration of this thesis can be found by looking at the doctrine of Biblical authority in the theology of Henry Eyster Jacobs, a major Lutheran theologian of the start of this century, who had no organic connection with either of the Midwest Lutheran Synods that today uphold a "high view" of the Bible.

Henry Eyster Jacobs (1844-1932) was one of the most eminent theologians of the English-speaking Lutheran Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹ Born in 1844, into a pastor's home (Michael Jacobs, his father, was a professor at Pennsylvania College), Henry Eyster Jacobs graduated from Gettysburg Seminary, served congregations in Pennsylvania, and then, from 1883 until his death in 1932 served as a Professor, and then Dean, at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mt. Airy, Philadelphia. Editor of the *Lutheran Church Review* (1882-1896), *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, the *Works of Martin Luther*, and *The Lutheran Commentary*, Jacobs also wrote prolifically on a variety of topics — historical (as *Martin Luther, the Hero of the Reformation*), systematic (as *A Summary of the Christian Faith*), and exegetical (as his commentaries on Romans, I and II Corinthians, and Galatians). While Jacobs can be read for profit (and pleasure) on a variety of topics, it is especially instructive, during the current "Battle for the Bible,"² to review what he said

concerning the Sacred Scriptures. Since Jacobs was not by any means a child of Missouri or Wisconsin, but stemmed from the General Synod (later General Council, and, later still, the early United Lutheran Church in America), it is helpful to compare his understanding of Biblical authority with that of Missouri and Wisconsin today. Since it is similar, then we must conclude a high view of Scripture was part of historic Lutheran Confessionalism.

Early in his systematics, *A Summary of the Christian Faith*, Henry Eyster Jacobs takes up "The Word as the Means of Grace." Quoting Dr. Martin Luther, he states:

The soul can do without everything except the Word of God . . . But you will ask: 'What is this Word, and by what means is it to be used, since there are so many words of God?' I answer that the Apostle Paul explains what it is, namely, the Gospel of God concerning His Son, incarnate, suffering, risen, glorified.³

In this fashion, Jacobs takes up the problem of the definition of the term "the Word of God."

In the Sacred Scriptures the expression, "the Word of God," can have at least four different but related meanings:⁴

1. The phrase, "the Word of God," can refer to the means of God's power in creation. For instance, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews describes the creation of the universe as follows (11:3):

By faith we understand that the world was created by the Word of God, so that which is seen was made out of things which do no appear.

The same usage appears in the Second Letter of Peter where we read (3:5-7):

They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the Word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same Word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment . . .

In both these passages the term "the Word of God" refers to the means of the Almighty's creative and providential power.

2. The phrase, "the Word of God," is used at least twice in the Scriptures to designate a Person, Jesus Christ. St. John, in both his First Letter and his Gospel, calls Jesus the Word. We read almost identical language in the introductory verses of each work (I John 1:1,2; John 1:1,2,14):

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life — the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us . . .

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

In both these passages the term “the Word of God” refers to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ.

3. The phrase, “the Word of God,” can refer to the means of the application of salvation to the individual. Thus, St. Peter, speaking before the Jerusalem Council of the Church, could declare (Acts 15:7):

Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the Word of the Gospel and believe.

And Paul, who was present on that occasion, could write to the church at Colossae as follows (Col. 1:5,6):

Of this you have heard before in the Word of the Truth, the Gospel, which has come to you, and indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing . . .

In both contexts the expression “the Word” implies both God’s promises in the Gospel and God’s power to make them real for us in conversion and regeneration.

4. The phrase, “the Word of God,” however, most frequently is used to refer to the Bible. In his characterization of the traits of a pastor, St. Paul specified that (Titus 1:9):

. . . he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it.

Again, in his “High Priestly Prayer,” Jesus asked of the Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; thy Word is truth” (John 17:17). And in his history of the Church, St. Luke observed that “the Word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Beroea” and that “they received the Word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:13,11). For this reason, a twentieth century American Lutheran theologian, Dr. John R. Lavik, could write:

The Church is simply following the example of the prophet, and of Jesus and His apostles, when it designates the Bible as the Word of God.⁵

Or, as Dr. Jacobs noted, "There is deep significance in the fact that the title of 'the Word' is given both to Christ . . . and to the Bible . . ."⁶

That significance becomes obvious once we see that the four definitions of "the Word of God" really describe four dimensions of one dynamic process. Jesus Christ is the *Personal* Word of God, the second member of the Holy Trinity, the Eternal Son of the Living God. The Scriptures, which are the biography of Jesus Christ (by anticipation, by proclamation, and by retrospection), are the *Written* Word of God. Christ is present in and with the Scriptures as He is present in and with the word and water of Holy Baptism. Christ is in the canon, and it is God's Word for us. When the Scriptures are read, taught, or preached, we do meet Christ. The power of the Master is active in our lives (symbolized in Lutheran Churches by the act of standing when the Holy Gospel is read during the Service). Then the Bible is *the Word of God at work*. When this Word is received, the promises of the Gospel are "internalized" for an individual, and Christ "lives in him." A power is let loose in his life that alters him for both time and eternity and makes him resemble the Master in his mind, manners, and morals. In this way the Bible is *the Saving Word of God*.

By the term, "the Word of God," we mean, therefore, a Person and His promises and power which result in salvation. For us this Person, Jesus Christ, comes through the means of grace, the Written Word. Apart from the Scriptures we have no saving knowledge of God. It is His purpose to come to us in this "interim age" not immediately, or directly, but mediately, or through "means." Together with Baptism and the Supper, the Book is a means of this coming. So there is the Incarnate Word, Jesus; the Written or Inscripturated Word, the Bible; the Inculcated Word in the preaching-teaching-study of the Bible; and the Incorporated Word, "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) sustaining our faith.

Dr. Henry Eyster Jacobs believed that the Holy Scriptures were "inspired" through "the activity of the Holy Spirit in and through the writers when they were written." Then, quoting his predecessor, the venerable Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, he continued:

[Scripture] is inspired or it comes from God; it is human for it comes through man. But remember we do not say that the human is without the divine. The Spirit is incarnate in the Word, as the Son was incarnate in Christ. There is deep significance in the fact that the title of 'the Word' is given both to the Christ, the Revealer, and to the Bible, the revelation of God, so that in some passages great critics differ as to which is meant. As Christ without confusion of natures, is truly human as well as divine, so is this Word. As the human in Christ though distinct from the divine was never separate from it, and His human acts were never those of a merely human being, His merits and His blood were those of God, so is the written Word, though most human of books, as Christ, the Son of Man, was most human of men, truly divine. Its humanities are no accidents; they are divinely planned. It is essential to God's conception of this Book that it shall be written by these men and in this way. He created, reared, made and chose these men and inspired them to do this thing, in their way, because their way was His way.⁷

And so we have moved beyond a definition of the term, "the Word of God," and our identification of the Bible as God's Word, to the problems of inspiration and revelation.

By "inspire" is meant literally "to fill with the Spirit of God." The term means "to breathe in" the spirit of another, in this instance, that of the Deity. By "revelation" is meant "divine self-disclosure." Various expressions are used in English for "revelation," trying to convey the full meaning of the Greek and Latin originals. They imply such ideas as "to draw back a curtain," or "to unveil oneself," or "to disclose one's identity." Revelation is the process by which God appears openly to men. According to the Scriptures, this communication climaxed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and is now, therefore, completed and closed until the second coming of the Lord. The last book of the Bible, the Revelation of St. John the Divine concludes with words that apply specifically to that volume, but, as a principle about the exclusive right of God to speak for Himself, also to the whole Bible (Rev. 22:18,19):

I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

There is, for this reason, no continuing revelation (*revelatio continuata*). Since the end of the apostolic era, God works only indirectly, or mediately, through means, not directly, or immediately, in confrontation. For that reason, the church cannot regard any subsequent Christian as a legitimate prophet, any more than it can accept Muhammad as a prophet.

Dr. Jacobs quotes from various authorities at length in his treatment of the inspiration, revelation, and preservation of the Scriptures. For instance, he cites Christoph Ernst Luthardt, who in his *Glaubenslehre*, had said:

How marvelous is the harmony between the beginning and the end of Holy Scripture, from the creation of the heavens and the earth, to the new heaven and the new earth of the world to come! And the entire course from the beginning to that end is a great, progressive, and connected whole. Notwithstanding the different ages in which they were written, the diverse relations and circumstances, the varieties in station and culture of their writers, one thought pervades all, from beginning to end there is but one purpose.⁸

Again, Luthardt, writing in his *Saving Truths of Christianity*, said:

They who wrote the several parts often knew nothing of each other; they knew nothing of that whole for which they were laboring. Neither accident nor human intention brought this to pass, but a higher Spirit. Scripture is a wonderful structure — a structure for which there must have been an architect. It is the ruling mind that knows how to utilize and combine individual efforts.⁹

The Swabian exegete, Johann Albrecht Bengel, observed:

Not only are the various writings, when considered separately, worthy of God, but they together exhibit one complete and harmonious body, unimpaired by excess or defects.¹⁰

Again, the American theologian, Charles Porterfield Krauth, asked:

Why take many lutes and pipes, unless revelation were designed to be symphony as well as melody, whose unity should not be that of the simple string, but that by which the Great Composer pours His own divine spirit of music into many parts, whilst wind and touch on instruments faithful to their own nature unite in 'Creation' or 'Messiah' to form what is at once truly theirs, and, because such, truly His?¹¹

And lest this all seem exclusively Lutheran, Jacobs quotes St. Jerome: "Tota Scriptura sacra unus liber dicitur, quia uno

Spiritu scripta est" ("All of Holy Scripture is called one book because it was written by one Spirit").

Jacobs believed that the Holy Spirit, who was active in the incarnation of Christ and the inspiration of the Bible, also guided the preservation of the Bible. The indestructibility of the Word was assured by its authorship: "The Word of the Lord abideth forever" (I Peter 1:25). Since the true church is "the circle of humanity within which God inwardly dwells," and since that fellowship has the promise individually and collectively that Christ will ever be with it (Matthew 18:20), Jacobs taught that the Blessed Trinity presided over the preservation of Scripture in the church through the centuries. As Jacobs wrote:

Spirit and Word, or Word and Spirit are never separated. But the elementary stages in their joint work are the basis for their gifts in ampler measure. Through the impulse, therefore, of the Holy Spirit, working by the Word, first in the individual believer, and then uniting all in manifold testimonies conspiring to one end, there is a concurrence of numberless factors to results far above the intentional effort of any one when he wrote.¹²

Jacobs also taught that the same Triune God who had presided over the revelation, inspiration, and preservation of the Sacred Scriptures, also took care concerning their interpretation. In this connection, Jacobs asked: "What, then, is the supreme test of the claims of Scripture, or of any portion or book of Scriptures?" He answered:

Not literary-historical criticism, but the religious use of Scripture, i.e., its office and fruits as a Means of Grace. For if literary-historical criticism were the supreme test, then only the limited few who would have access to historical sources and would have the requisite literary training, could be judges. In view of constant progress in the collection of new sources of information and the adoption of improved scientific methods, each generation successively would discredit the results of those before it. The criticism of the beginning of the Twentieth Century will be an anachronism before the next century opens. But the test is to be made by the humblest of men. The Word of God and its inerrant record are not simply for the aristocracy of science but are intended for all. 'Erudition has never had the key to the Kingdom of Heaven' (Tischendorf). Scholar and peasant, the most cultivated and the most illiterate, meet here on an even footing. It is a radical error to elevate men who have no

higher than linguistic attainments to the chair of judges in regard to the real meaning and purpose of Scripture. As unquestioned attainments in the study of the English language and literature do not qualify one to be a critic and interpreter of Blackstone's Commentaries or of a treatise on physics or mathematics, or scientific music written in English; as even more than ability to read and write English with facility is necessary in order to interpret the masterpieces of English prose and poetry; so one may know Hebrew like the Rabbis of old, or Greek like the philosophers who heard Paul on the Areopagus, without being a competent judge concerning the Old or New Testament. Three qualifications are required of every competent translator, viz . . . knowledge of the languages from which he translates, knowledge of the language into which he translates, and familiarity with the subject that is treated. The most advanced authority in Semitic or Aryan philology can not assume to be a very successful interpreter of such treatises, deciphered from those languages, as are of a technical character. The jurist will have to aid him in regard to legal translations, and modern medical science in regard to the primitive beginnings of its branches found in the documents which he indeed must translate. As soon as he passes beyond the limits of his own calling as a philologist, he loses his standing as a scholar. Nowhere is the classical rule, *Ne sutor supra crepidam*, more pertinent than in Biblical Criticism.¹³

We see, then, that for Henry Eyster Jacobs the Sacred Scriptures were produced by the Holy Spirit, penned by men who received divine revelation in a number of ways, and preserved under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to make all people "wise unto salvation" through the proclamation of the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, for evangelical theologians such as Jacobs the Bible truly is the Word of God.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Gerhard E. Lenski, "Henry Eyster Jacobs," *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, edited by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), II, 1168; Anon., "H.E. Jacobs," *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, edited by L. Fuerbringer, Theodore Engelder, and P.E. Kretzmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 371; Anon., "Henry Eyster Jacobs," *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 527; H. Offermann,

"Henry Eyster Jacobs, the Theologian and His Theology," *Lutheran Church Quarterly* VI, 1-27; 220-224; B. Lotz, "Henry Eyster Jacobs (1844-1932) in Retrospect," *Lutheran Church Quarterly* XVIII, 382-393. See also Henry Eyster Jacobs, *Memoirs: Notes on a Life of a Churchman*, edited by Henry E. Horn (Huntington, Pennsylvania: Church Management Service, Inc., 1974), 3 vols.; John A. W. Haas, et. al., *Theological Studies, Dedicated to Henry Eyster Jacobs on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1924), and Henry Eyster Horn, "A Jacobs Trilogy," *The Lutheran Historical Conference: Essays and Reports*, 1974 (St. Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1977) 46-59.

2. This term is from the book by Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976).
3. Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A Summary of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: The Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1905), p. 267.
4. See C. George Fry, *A Book About the Bible* (Columbus: Hathaway Printing Company, 1971), pp. 11ff.
5. John R. Lavik, *The Bible is the Word of God* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1954), p. 16.
6. Jacobs, *A Summary of the Christian Faith*, p. 267.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 268, 269. While this analogy with the Incarnation may be helpful, no human cooperation with inspiration is to be imagined. Synergism would be as much an error in the doctrine of inspiration as it is in the doctrine of conversion. See Franz Pieper, "Der Synergismus in der Lehre von der Inspiration," *Lehre und Wehre* 38 (July 1892), 193-198.
8. Jacobs, *A Summary of the Christian Faith*, pp. 268-269.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 274-275.

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

A CALL FOR ADDENDA TO THE FORMULA OF CONCORD

"Alas, gone is the horseman and the chariot of Israel." In this way Melancthon solemnly broke the news to the students at Wittenberg that Luther was dead. Gone now, too, from the generation after the great Reformer, are the intrepid formulators of the Formula of Concord, chiefly Chemnitz and Andreae. With others, including stalwart laymen like Prince August of Saxony, they had so much to do with bringing concord and peace to the troubled Lutheran church in 1577. "What matter?" Philip Schaff would ask. By his estimate the Formula of Concord was the "Formula of Discord," highly esteemed only by "high orthodoxy" and destined for total oblivion, even within "the great body of the Lutheran Church" itself. It was his jaundiced view that "upon the whole (it) did more harm than good," and that "history never repeats itself," by which he means that no future generation would ever again take it seriously as a confessional standard.

Had Schaff prophesied correctly, there would have been no life expectancy at all for Confessional Lutheran theology any time in the future. Yet the nineteenth-century distinguished itself, especially in America, with a remarkable resurgence of the Lutheran Confessions, especially the Formula of Concord. Melancthon had pleaded poignantly, as he sorrowfully addressed the students: "Let us then hold dear the memory of the man [Luther] and the doctrine in the very manner in which he delivered it to us." History has repeated itself. There have always been those who rallied to the colors around the old flag unfurled by Luther at the time of the Reformation.

Each generation must take up anew the solemn charge left to it, to proclaim it, uphold it, defend it, "the faith once delivered unto the saints" The year 1977 saw a number of appeals calling for the same kind of rallying to "the old flag," as C.F.W. Walther called the Formula of Concord at the time of the 1877 tricentennial celebration. What was the meaning and intent of the Confessors at Augsburg in 1530? Nothing more, nothing less, than to set forth the doctrine "based solidly on the divine Scriptures," "as the ancient consensus which the universal and orthodox church of Christ has believed." (Preface, Book of Concord) This stance the Formula of Concord reasserted.

The spirit of secularism, humanism, and syncretism grips our present day. Even though evangelical theology has come in for more attention — in fact, resurgence — it still cannot be claimed that there is loud, clear, and wide-spread clamor for a return to theological integrity after the manner of the 1577 and 1877 Confessional theologians. It would be naive to conclude that an urgency is felt, even within Confessionally-minded Lutheran churches. There is no great clamor for the church to speak pointedly, for the sake of concord and unity, to the issues troubling modern-day Christianity, and especially Lutheran theology. Everyone knows the trouble areas. The doctrine of the Word, Holy Scripture, is widely and wildly disputed. Higher criticism continues to take its toll. Scripture's authoritative voice as the inspired Word of God bounces off seemingly deaf ears. Ecumenical, syncretistic, and unionistic fevers have so gripped the churches that the doctrine of the church itself as taught in Scripture is hardly recognizable.

The result is that no one seems to know, or, worse still, care about the proper basis for church fellowship. Does it have anything to do with agreement "in the doctrine and all its articles" (FC XI,31)? Does anyone still think in those terms, or are they completely outmoded and out of tune with the spirit of our times?

These are serious questions. They require answers. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, in convention at Anaheim in 1975, briefly considered Resolution 3-36 calling for an "international council" to produce a "Twentieth-Century Formula of Concord." The resolution died without being acted upon. Missouri's 1977 convention at Dallas languidly adopted Resolution 3-01, in which among other things it took note of the four-hundredth anniversary of the Formula of Concord. Missing was some of the old fire that electrified the church a century ago. The 1979 convention of the Missouri Synod, at St. Louis, was able to muster a little more enthusiasm for the Confessions. In Resolution 3-04 it called for implementation of celebrations to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of the Book of Concord and the four-hundred-and-fiftieth of the Augsburg Confession in 1980. Program suggestions have since appeared to help the congregations plan appropriate observances. It is hard to gauge their success at this point. There appears to be little hope that they will set the Lutheran world and Christianity in general on fire.

There are positive sides to the story, fortunately. All has not been bad news for the Formula of Concord in our day. Various publications have appeared. They aim to steer the reader back into the Confessions. Among them are *Getting into the Formula of Concord* (Klug-Stahlke), *Formulators of the Formula of Concord* (Jungkuntz), *Andreae and the Formula of Concord* (Kolb), *Getting into the Theology of Concord* (Preus), *Getting into the Story of Concord* (Scaer), *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord* (Preus, Rosin, and others), all published by Concordia Publishing House. The Evangelical Lutheran Synod produced a similarly helpful series on the Lutheran Confessions under the title *I Believe*, the whole series ably and succinctly written by Bjarne W. Teigen. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod likewise was busy, with various authors marking the anniversaries of the Formula of Concord, Luther's Catechisms, and other works. So, from the point of view of literary production by conservative Lutheran synods and their publishing houses, there have been efforts to spark useful anniversary observances.

But what about the churches, the pastors, the people? Does the flag still fly—the flag that says there is a cause which is still worth fighting for? Here the enthusiasm seems to be somewhat spotty, the response meager. However, many concerned congregations and their pastors have done in-depth study of the Formula of Concord or the Augsburg Confession or both during this anniversary period.

Now from Germany the heartland of the Reformation, there sounds a still small voice that pleads for "addenda" to the Formula of Concord, addenda that will address contemporary issues facing the Lutheran church in our day. "Such a statement should present in a united manner, what is required today on behalf of Holy Scripture and of the Holy Christian Church," states the venerable dean of Lutheran theologians in Germany, Dr. William M. Oesch, long-time professor at the Oberursel theological seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church. He notes that the stimulus can hardly come from Europe any longer, since "too much of the Confession has disappeared in western and eastern German." So he looks to the younger churches, particularly those in America, and specifically the Missouri Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian), and the

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, for leadership at this time. "How is the Committee to do the final writing?" he asks. "In a sence like Andreae, Chemnitz, etc.," by selected theologians, by men who still have a concern for the Confessions, from these various Lutheran bodies, preferably not from the officialdom. "Finally we must then secure one Missourian, and one WELS/ELS man, as well as one European man to be the 'public relations men' to get the Gnesio-churches *as such* to take that final joint public action of affixing their signatures with date to the ADDENDA," and then arranging for them "to be solemnly printed in an American and in a German edition of the F.C., or better, Book of Concord."

A grand idea? Wishful thinking on the part of an aged veteran who has lost touch with reality? Perhaps. But before leaping to hasty conclusions, let us sit back and consider the proposal with calm objectivity, as well as a spirit of fairness and deep concern for divided Luthern theology. Is Dr. Oesch not right in stating that it is the doctrine of Holy Scripture and the doctrine of the Church, especially as the latter also concerns the knotty question of fellowship, which have sorely divided Lutheran churches of our day — also those who have a history of Confessional commitment and integrity? Are there not, then, addenda on these two matters, as he says, which need to be considered by us in our day? Is it not entirely feasible that the pattern displayed in the negotiations, discussions, and formulations of the Chemnitz-Andreae era is still viable today? Oesch finds starting-points in things like *Getting into the Formula of Concord* and the ELS 1977 convention essay on the Formula of Concord (Tjernagel). His plea is that we seize the opportunity, while the iron is in the fire, and do something — not just anything! — but something that directly gets at the two matters which he has isolated carefully for present day attention.

Some may be troubled by the idea of adding *anything* to the Confessions. They find that suggestion repugnant. But is it realistic? Has not the story of the origin of the Confessions been one of pressure upon the church for answers against threatening heresies and false teachings that struck at the church's jugular vein, the doctrine it has received from God Himself? Few, if any, of the Confessions were written to be *new* Confessions as such. If they became that, they earned that esteem by their own merit. Nor need the proposed "addenda" be written in any other spirit. Time can only tell what standing it will have in the church, as it attempts to meet the contemporary challenges. More than that cannot be expected. But the threat is now there. Lutheran theology is being sorely tried and tested on at least two fronts. Confusion and a spirit of malaise as regards these issues slips more and more like a pall over the churches and the clergy. Is this not the right time, the *kairos*, for speaking out? Would our silence at a time like this serve our God and His Word? Edmund Schlink seems to catch the urgency of the moment well when he states (*Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, p. 31):

Even the most solemn reaffirmation of the Confessions may be a denial of them, if the errors of the day are passed over in silence . . . At the very least the church, confronted with new heresies, will have to furnish up-to-date and binding interpretations of her official Confessions. But also beyond this we must soberly reckon with the possibility, perhaps even the necessity, of meeting the invasion of new errors with the formulation and validation of new Confessions.

Andreae and Chemnitz had their critics and detractors. So did Prince August. But under God their valiant efforts prevailed. Can we doubt that the present call from a modern-day "Andreae" in Oberursel, Germany, is worthy of our most

earnest attention and prayer and action by pastors, theologians, and laymen alike? If we hold dear the memory of that great teacher of the Lutheran church, Dr. Luther, and especially the doctrine which he so faithfully taught, can we do, think, or venture less than the heirs of the Reformation in 1577 or in 1877? *Quo propior Lutero eo melior theologus*. "The closer a man is to Luther, the better a theologian he will be."

E.F. Klug

A RESPONSE TO "CHARISMATA REEXAMINED"

A recent issue of the *Concordia Journal* contained an article by Dr. Armin Moellering, entitled "Charismata Reexamined,"¹ which was, in part, a review of my monograph, *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*.² I am sure that Dr. Moellering has exaggerated the importance of my book; but I am, of course, grateful for his attention, as well as for his anatomy of charismatic theology. The eloquence which is characteristic of an eminent preacher was also enjoyed. I was sorry to learn, however, that Dr. Moellering had certain "misgivings" concerning my work; I should like to assuage them in this response. This essay is intended, then, as a response, not to "Charismata Reexamined" in general, but only to those portions which relate to *An Evaluation*.

1. Dr. Moellering is concerned that I refer throughout my book to "prophetic gifts," rather than "charismatic gifts," and wonders whether or not these "prophetic gifts" embrace what he calls "the full range of charismatic gifts as ordinarily understood."³ I am afraid that I cannot answer this question, since Dr. Moellering does not delineate the number and nature of this full range of charismatic gifts. The phrase, "as ordinarily understood," is not very helpful in the context of the varied and frequently contradictory descriptions of "charismatic gifts" which occur both inside and outside of the charismatic movement. It was partly for this reason that I used the more precise term "prophetic gifts" and carefully defined at the outset of *An Evaluation* what I meant by the various prophetic gifts of which I proposed to speak.⁴

2. The necessity of careful attention to definitions similarly emerges in Dr. Moellering's second query, namely, as to whether contemporary pastors have "prophetic gifts."⁵ I do not quite understand why Dr. Moellering should look to Bonhoeffer for support on such a point, but I should certainly agree with the reviewer's opinion if I have understood him correctly. The pastors of the orthodox church are truly prophets, just as they are priests and kings, so long as we understand these terms aright — if, for example, we mean by "prophet" one who proclaims the Word of God in a general sense. In my book, however, I made it quite clear that I was using the word "prophet," not in this broad manner, but rather in the strict sense of one who utters words taught by the Holy Spirit and consequently, in the performance of his office, speaks and writes the infallible truth of God.⁶

3. Dr. Moellering is quite correct when he observes, "Perhaps it is not entirely fair to lament the absence of allusions to pastoral concerns."⁷ *An Evaluation* was published in a "Biblical Monograph" series. Under such circumstances the same man must write much differently than when he is preparing a sermon.

4. Dr. Moellering is rightly desirous of preserving the self-authenticating nature of Scripture from any slight.⁸ There is no antithesis, however, between the self-authentication and external authentication of Holy Scripture. Christianity (*pace* Barth and Bultmann) is so historical a faith that its Lord Himself deigned to verify His Gospel by means of His post-resurrection appearances. Likewise, the Christian church confesses the self-authentication of no scriptures for which it lacks historical evidence of their divine derivation. Indeed, its self-authenticating Scripture itself often appeals to instances of historical authentication (e.g., John 20:30-31; 21:24; 2 Thess. 3:17). There is no slight, therefore, to Biblical self-authentication when the church receives as prophetic, and hence as Scripture, only those books written or authorized by the prophets of the Old Testament era and the apostles of the New. Thus, the Blessed Martin Chemnitz asserts concerning those books inspired by the Holy Spirit: "But in order that this whole necessary matter might be firmly established against all impostures, God chose certain definite persons that they should write and adorned them with many miracles and divine testimonies that there should be no doubt that what they wrote was divinely inspired."⁹ Dr. Moellering points out, to be sure, that "we can no longer hear the apostolic voice authenticating Scripture."¹⁰ Chemnitz, however, explains that this fact presents no problem, since we possess the testimony of reliable witnesses as to which writings emanate from the authors whom God commended to his people by means of special testimonies:

Finally those divinely inspired writings were at the time of their writing laid before, delivered, and commended to the church with public attestation in order that she might, by exercising the greatest care and foresight, preserve them uncorrupted, transmit them as from hand to hand, and commend them to posterity. And as the ancient church at the time of Moses, Joshua, and the prophets, so also the primitive church at the time of the apostles was able to testify with certainty which writings were divinely inspired . . .

This witness of the primitive church concerning the divinely inspired writings was later transmitted to posterity by a perpetual succession from hand to hand and diligently preserved in reliable histories of antiquity in order that the subsequent church might be the custodian of the witness of the primitive church concerning the Scripture. There is therefore a very great difference between (1) the witness of the primitive church which was at the time of the apostles and (2) the witness of the church which followed immediately after the time of the apostles and which had received the witness of the first church and (3) the witness of the present church concerning the Scripture. For if the church, both that which is now and that which was before, can show the witness of those who received and knew the witness of the first church concerning the genuine writings, we believe her as we do a witness who proves his statements. But she has no power to establish or to decide anything concerning the sacred writings for which she cannot produce reliable documents from the testimony of the primitive church. These things are undeniably true, and the whole dispute can be most correctly understood from this basis.¹¹

5. It seems that in reading my book Dr. Moellering gets an "uncomfortable feeling that the apostles have almost taken over for the Holy Spirit."¹² It is difficult to respond to a feeling, but I hope that I can relieve Dr. Moellering's discomfort by assuring him that I ascribe as much significance as I do to the apostles for the very reason that I esteem them to have been the mouths, hands,

and pens of the Holy Spirit Himself (to use the terminology of the old dogmaticians). I do hold, moreover, that the work of the Holy Spirit is considerably wider than His role as the giver of prophetic gifts to and through the apostles. My monograph necessarily dwelt upon one particular aspect of the Spirit's activity, but even within its pages one can find evidence of my belief in other phases of His work. I affirm, for example, that "we know that no one can believe the gospel except by the operation of the Holy Spirit in his heart (I Cor. 12:3)."¹³

6. I agree with Dr. Moellering that we must respect the Holy Spirit's sovereignty (so long as that term be understood in a Lutheran sense).¹⁴ I do not assert that God is incapable of bestowing the same prophetic gifts upon us that He bestowed upon His prophets and apostles of old. Nevertheless, He has chosen not to do so, and He has revealed to us through His prophets and apostles the significance of His decision.

7. I also concur with Dr. Moellering that "the purpose of the prophetic gifts cannot be narrowly restricted to authentication of the apostolic mission."¹⁵ Indeed, I spend eight pages in my book discussing the other purposes of prophecy and speaking in unlearned languages.¹⁶ Dr. Moellering's citation of I Corinthians 14:4, however, is not relevant, since the clause cited is a statement of mere fact, rather than of purpose. The Corinthians who had the ability to speak in unlearned languages were using this gift to edify themselves; but it does not follow from their practice that the Holy Spirit had given them this gift in order that they might selfishly use it for the purpose of self-edification.

8. Dr. Moellering disagrees with my interpretation of I Corinthians 13:8-13.¹⁷ Such a disagreement comes, of course, as no shock. My understanding of the passage differs, after all, from that which we are used to hearing and expounding. Indeed, when I began writing *An Evaluation*, I still intended to defend an eschatological understanding, but subsequent study of the text compelled me to change my mind. There are certain elements in the passage which I simply could not reconcile with an eschatological viewpoint.¹⁸ The seeming necessity of a different interpretation, moreover, still troubled me considerably until I discovered that a number of my older colleagues at Concordia Theological Seminary had already come to the understanding of the passage to which I was lead. Nevertheless, I fully expect that, even among those who accept the validity of my other lines of argument (any one of which is sufficient to establish the book's thesis), many readers will continue to entertain exegetical differences with me concerning I Corinthians 13. Dr. Moellering's objections to my interpretation, however, are not primarily exegetical. He does, indeed, affirm a different understanding of *kathōs kai epegnōsthēn*, but he bases this affirmation on the prior assumption that the context is eschatological (by means of a quotation from the *Anchor Bible*). And he does, to be sure, make certain assertions concerning the interpretation of *to teleion*, *prosōpon pros prosōpon*, *ek merous*, *arti*, and *tote*; but since he does not seek to substantiate these assertions individually, I assume that their authentication rests upon the general grounds which Dr. Moellering presents on behalf of the eschatological view of I Corinthians 13. One of these general arguments is historical; the other, dogmatic:

a. The reviewer emphasizes that an eschatological interpretation is standard. This I freely admit. (As far as Dr. Moellering's choice of citations is concerned, to be sure I should not have considered Bengel or Conzelmann to be particularly reliable exegetes when it comes to eschatological matters; but I admit that one could easily produce citations from less dubious sources.) Nevertheless, the reviewer would, of course, agree that all commentaries are, in the final

analysis, secondary sources and that we must be willing to approach the original text afresh.

b. Dr. Moellering fears that a non-eschatological understanding of I Corinthians 13 produces "a kind of realized eschatology," by which he means a "premature anticipation of the eschaton."¹⁹ Now, most of what the reviewer says about this "realized eschatology" is evidently said not in response to *An Evaluation*, but in reaction to the charismatic movement²⁰ and to a certain exegesis of verse 12 which is contrary to my own.²¹ The only sentence, so far as I can see, which ties together my interpretation of I Corinthians 13 and the "realized eschatology" described by Dr. Moellering is the one which assumes that in my mind "the meaning of *kathōs kai epegnōsthēn* of verse 12 is illustrated by the apostle's 'seeing himself in a clear mirror ("face to face") and so perceiving himself as he is perceived by others' (Judisch, p. 50)."²¹ This assumption, however, has arisen from a misunderstanding of my words. I take *kathōs kai epegnōsthēn* as part of the "mirror illustration" and not as the truth illustrated by it. In other words, the prophetic-apostolic word in its complete form is comparable to a clear mirror in which one can see what he really looks like (that is, he perceives what other people perceive when they look at him). One may disagree with this figurative interpretation of the clause in question, but I am sure that no one will consider it an erasure of the dividing line between the present age and eternity. In a similar manner, after all, James compares the preached word to a mirror (James 1: 23-24), and we commonly call the second use of the law its "use as a mirror."

One of the reasons, as a matter of fact, for my dissatisfaction with the eschatological interpretation of I Corinthians 13 is the problem which it raises in regard to a proper distinction of the present and future ages — namely, by bringing faith and hope into the sphere of eternity even though elsewhere Paul describes hope and faith as things which would be quite out of place in eternity (Rom. 8:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1).²² Those orthodox exegetes, of course, who adhere to an eschatological view of I Corinthians 13 give new definitions to "faith" and "hope" in this passage in order to resolve this tension. I should certainly consider it improper, therefore, to accuse such men of confounding the present age with the age to come. Nevertheless, the invention of new definitions for words of well-established meaning is scarcely a satisfactory procedure.

9. Another concern of Dr. Moellering is that in my exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 I distinguish between the "stopping up" and the "cutting off" of prophetic vision and that I call the prediction of this "stopping up" the *explicit* witness of Daniel.²³ Daniel himself, however, (by quoting the archangel Gabriel) predicates the verb *hātham* ("stop up") of the noun *hazōn* in the verse involved, so that his prediction of the stopping up of prophetic vision cannot logically be called anything less than explicit. So far from being artificial, moreover, the distinction between the meanings of the verbs *hātham* ("stop up") and *karath* ("cut off") differ so widely elsewhere in the Old Testament that it would be impossible to equate them in Daniel 9:24-27.²⁴

10. Dr. Moellering feels that I should have concluded my study with "something more convincing" than an implicit testimony.²⁵ His advice I take to be of a literary, rather than a theological, nature at this point; and the rhetoricians do, indeed, teach that one ought to place his most persuasive arguments at the beginning and end of a speech or essay. I am, therefore, quite prepared to rearrange the chapters of my book in whatever order seems most elegant to those who surpass me in oratorical skill. (I am taking it for granted that Dr. Moellering

does not consider an implicit testimony to be less cogent *per se* than an explicit one, since our Lord Himself argues from implicit testimonies — e.g., Matthew 22:31-32 — as does His church in the demonstration of such articles of faith as the triune nature of God.)

11. Dr. Moellering considers the testimony of history to be less favourable to my thesis than *An Evaluation* would have it.²⁶ It may well be that someone will produce citations which will compel me to modify statements that I have made in this portion of my book; this historical section is only an appendix, since the Word of God must ultimately be the sole norm of theology. At this point, however, Dr. Moellering's concern has evidently arisen from a misunderstanding of my words, since none of the citations made in this section of his review contradict anything said in the appendix to *An Evaluation*. I shall, therefore, confine myself to brief statements of the reasons why there is no conflict between the various citations in the review and my own observations in *An Evaluation*: in regard to Irenaeus, he refers to miracles in general rather than to any specific instance of a miracle (as I already noted in my book) and he refers in part to phenomena (e.g., exorcism) which I do not classify as prophetic gifts;²⁷ as to Athanasius, he writes in the fourth century (when, as *An Evaluation* states, "the most astonishing 'miracles' receive citation,"²⁸ although there is no reference anyway in the sentences quoted by Dr. Moellering to any specific instance) and the last quotation refers to exorcism; in regard to the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the date of publication, according to Dr. Moellering, is late in the fourth century and there is again no specific instance cited in the passages quoted;²⁹ in regard to Acts 5, my point of contrast was Christ and Paul,³⁰ whereas this passage speaks about the Eleven; in regard to Acts 28, Paul lays claim directly to various miracles (e.g., Romans 15:18-19) and indirectly to the miracles attributed to him by Luke (by setting his apostolic imprimatur on Luke-Acts);³¹ in regard to Mark 16:17-18, it is not a record of anything miraculous, but a prediction; in regard to Luther, he refers to a phenomenon which I have not classified as a prophetic gift.

Dr. Moellering also thinks that I should have said more about Luther in the appendix to *An Evaluation*.³² The reviewer may be correct, but I cannot yet see how such an addition would have been relevant to the discussion. It is not quite accurate, however, to say that I leave "the reader in suspense concerning Luther," since I do quote his statement in the Smalcald Articles: "Accordingly we should and must maintain that God will not deal with us except through His external Word and Sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacrament is of the devil."³³ I have, admittedly, assumed this confessional affirmation to be representative of Luther's viewpoint and have not yet seen the need to revise this assumption, especially since colleagues so familiar with the Reformer's thought as Dr. Robert Preus and the sainted Dr. Harry Huth have regarded my position as corresponding closely to that of Luther and the other Confessors.³⁴

12. A final concern of Dr. Moellering is that, by calling such gifts of the Spirit as faith, hope, and love His "ordinary gifts" to the church, I imply that these gifts are inferior to the more spectacular ones.³⁵ Once again, I am happy to say, the problem is merely semantic. It is my impression that the ordinary meaning of the word "ordinary" is "customary; usual,"³⁶ rather than "inferior." When we speak of the ordinary significance of a word, we do not mean its inferior significance; when we say that baptism is necessary to salvation under ordinary circumstances, we do not mean that it is necessary only in inferior cases. I believe

and confess, indeed, that ordinary things (e.g., words, water, bread, wine) are often the most important things in the world.

I hope, then, that I have been able to alleviate the misgivings concerning *An Evaluation* expressed in "Charismata Reexamined"; most of them have arisen from gaps in communication between author and reviewer. In my estimation these misgivings evince valid theological concerns which I myself share, and so I have merely attempted to show that these concerns do not, in actuality, conflict with my conclusions. Exegetical differences will, of course, remain. Over the course of the centuries considerable diversity has obtained in the exegesis of numerous passages (aside from the *sedes doctrinae*) among capable theologians dedicated to a common confessional understanding of the articles of faith and a common rejection of contrary positions. In a similar manner, exegetical differences will doubtless remain among capable theologians dedicated to the common confessional principle that "God will not deal with us except through His external Word and Sacrament" and to the common rejection of contemporary charismatic theology.

FOOTNOTES

1. H. Armin Moellering, "Charismata Reexamined," *Concordia Journal*, V (1979), pp. 178-183.
2. Douglas Judisch, *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978).
3. Moellering, p. 178.
4. Judisch, pp. 13-14.
5. Moellering, p. 178.
6. E.g., Judisch, p. 59.
7. Moellering, p. 179.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), p. 176.
10. Moellering, p. 179.
11. Chemnitz, pp. 176-177.
12. Moellering, pp. 179-180.
13. Judisch, p. 27.
14. Moellering, p. 180. With regard to some necessary restrictions on the use of the term "sovereignty" in relation to God, see David P. Scaer, "The Charismatic Threat," *CTQ*, XLI, 3 (July 1977), pp. 52-54 (e.g., "The Holy Spirit can neither contradict Himself nor act contrary to His essence.").
15. *Ibid.*
16. Judisch, pp. 36-43.
17. Moellering, p. 180. (I am not as yet aware of the reason for the insertion of a "(sic)" in the quotation from *An Evaluation*.)
18. Judisch, pp. 47-48.
19. Moellering, p. 180.
20. *Ibid.*, paragraph 4, last four sentences. Alternatively, these sentences may be a description of "realized eschatology" in general.
21. Moellering, p. 180., last two paragraphs. I am not sure of the exact nature of this particular exegesis, but it seems to involve taking *epignosomai kathos kai epegnōsthēn* to mean "I shall know God fully even as God has fully known me," taking *blepomen* to mean "we see God," and then assigning these phenomena a place in the present age. Probably we should also

understand the first sentence of paragraph four as relating to this same variety of interpretation; I take it that in this sentence Dr. Moellering is objecting to someone's suggestion that in the present aeon we can see God face to face and know God even as God has fully known us. If, on the other hand, this sentence is directed against my own position, it presumably arises from the same misunderstanding of my words that is evinced in sentence two of paragraph seven on page 180 (a misunderstanding which we shall now proceed to consider).

- 21a. Moellering, p. 180.
22. Judisch, p. 47.
23. Moellering, p. 181.
24. Cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), pp. 367-8; 503-4.
25. Moellering, p. 181.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Cf. Judisch, pp. 75-79, especially notes 2 and 12.
28. Judisch, p. 79.
29. This response obtains for both mentions of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Moellering, p. 181, paragraphs 5 and 6). With respect to the *Didache*, cf. Judisch, pp. 75-76, note 2; p. 79, note 12.
30. Judisch, p. 80.
31. Cf. Judisch, p. 19.
32. Moellering, p. 181. In the same vein, Dr. Moellering would have liked more documentation in note 15 to the appendix to my book (concerning an erroneous assertion that Luther was a charismatic). To my mind, however, there is not much need to provide more information on this misconception since it is so obviously erroneous and anyone can pursue the matter further via the article cited in my footnote (especially since the article occurs in *Christianity Today*, a commonly accessible periodical).
33. Judisch, p. 81 (Smalcald Articles III, 8:10). In note 16 on this page I also refer the reader for an ampler discussion of this matter to David P. Scaer, "An Essay for Lutheran Pastors on the Charismatic Movement," *The Springfielder*, XXXVI (1974), pp. 211-214.
34. Indeed, Dr. Preus has written in the foreword to *An Evaluation* (p. 10) that my "conclusions correspond closely to those of Luther and other Reformation fathers."
35. Moellering, p. 182.
36. Charles E. Funk, ed., *Funk and Wagnalls New Practical Standard Dictionary of the English Language: Britannica World Language Edition* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1956), I, p. 927.

D.McC.L.J.

Homiletical Studies

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 13:11-14

November 30, 1980

V11: "And that": and this, too. "The time": the time period at which we have arrived. "Hour": used to designate a specific time. "Sleep": carelessness, insensibility. "Belief": came to believe (ingressive aorist). "The salvation": our transfer to heaven. "Nearer": namely, to us. V12: "The night": the present world age. "The day": the heavenly age. We do not know the time, Ac 1:7; 2 Pe 3: 4-14. Jesus points us to the flood and to Sodom and Gomorrah. "The works of darkness": the works of the devil. "Let us decisively put away from ourselves" (aorist middle); separate our selves from all such works. The danger of yielding to them. "Let us once for all clothe ourselves" (aorist hortative subjunctive). "Weapons of light": cf. Eph 6:13. Light refers to God whose attribute is light. V13: "Honestly": becomingly (ASV), with decency (NEB). "Rioting": carousing (Gspd), cf. 1 Cor 10:12; Lk 2:34. "Chambering": prostitution, sexual promiscuity (NASB), cf. 1 Cor 6:15-20. "Wantonness": indecency (Gspd), sensuality (NASB). "Envyng": jealousy. All are samples of the works of darkness. V14: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ": namely, as your armour. Luther: "Paul briefly draws into one heap all the weapons of the light." "Provision for the flesh": put a stop to gratifying the evil desires that lurk in your lower nature. The body is so responsive to sin, cf. Ro 6:12; 7:23. "Putting on Christ": 1) appropriating His righteousness, Is 61:10; Mt 22:12; 2) as our armour of defence and offense, Eph 6:13. Take Christ for your sanctification.

Introduction: Sleep is a gift of God, a great restorer of energy. But there comes a time when we have to wake up. So also spiritually, we are to arouse ourselves from the insensibility of spiritual sleep.

WAKE UP

- I. Because your salvation is near (v11).
 - A. It is in Christ: He is our salvation.
 1. He came into the world to be its Savior, Lk 2:11; Lk 19:10.
 2. He accomplished our salvation.
 - a. He kept the Law, Ga4:4.
 - b. He suffered our punishment, Is 53:5-6.
 3. The goal of His work is our salvation, Jn 3:16.
 - a. We have it now.
 - b. We will have it perfectly in heaven, Jn 14: 1-6.
 - B. This salvation is nearer than when we came to believe (v11).
 1. Because we may die at any time.
 2. Because Christ may come at any time, Mt 24:27.
- Therefore, wake up. Don't be insensitive to such a glorious prospect.
Use the means of grace to be strengthened.
- II. Because you must take time to prepare for His coming.
 - A. Cast off the works of darkness (v12).
 1. Examples are listed (v13).
 2. All are inspired by the prince of darkness to lead us astray, 1Pe 5:8.

3. Don't indulge the flesh, Ro 6:12; 7:23.
 4. Drown the Old Adam by daily contrition and repentance.
 - B. Put on the armour of light (v12).
 1. That means put on Christ (v14).
 - a. Appropriating His righteousness, Is 61:10; Mt 22:12.
 - b. As our armour of defense and offense, Eph 6:13.
 2. Walk decently (v13).
- Daily drown the Old Adam; daily put on Christ by faith and bring forth the fruits of faith. That's staying awake.

HJE

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 15:4-13

December 7, 1980

V4: "Our instruction": objective, for our receiving instruction. "Through perseverance and through admonition": the perseverance which the Scriptures produce in us by the admonition which they apply to us. The encouraging of the Scriptures produces perseverance and hope, Ro 5:4-5. V5: Ro 14:lff.: Paul's thought is the unity of the Church, maintained by being clear on what the instruction of the Scripture is. "Minding the same thing": all holding the same convictions in accord with Christ Jesus, 1 Cor 1:30. Christ and His teachings in the Scriptures are the norm. V6: "With one accord": oneness in mind and oneness of mouth, that all may confess the same Gospel truth, thereby glorifying God. There needs to be unity in conviction and unity in witness. "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ": a concentrated Christian confession. According to Jesus' human nature, God is His God; according to His deity, God is His Father. V7: "By receiving one another": welcome each other as brothers. "Even as Christ": He received you; receive one another. "For God's glory": the glory of His truth and mercy (vv 8-9), particularly God's faithfulness to the Jews, His mercy to the Gentiles. V8: "I say": I mean, so as to explain. "To confirm": by fulfillment of the promises. V9: "The Gentiles": those Gentiles who glorify God. The oneness of Jew and Gentile centers in Christ and God the Father. "As it has been written": the Old Testament sees Jews and Gentiles joining in praise to the Lord. The joint praise is the subject of the quotations. The cause of all praise is the "shoot of Jesse." Ps 18:49: "I will confess Thee" because of the victories God gave David. V10: Dt 32:43: "His people": the faithful servants. V11: Ps 117:1: "Be praising" (durative present). V12: "Root": a live root sending up a sprout. "Hope": rest their hope of salvation. V13: "The God of hope": hope, joy, and peace flow from God. "The Holy Ghost": the mediator of these gifts. "Abound": be every abounding.

Introduction: Unity is a fragile blessing — in the world community, in the nation, in the family, in the church. To preserve the blessing of unity is every man's responsibility.

OUR UNITY IN CHRIST

I A Great Blessing

- A. Unity rests on the work of Christ (v12).
 1. He was God from all eternity, Jn1:1.
 2. He became man: the root of Jesse (v12).
 3. The purpose of His coming: to win the blessings of joy, peace, and hope (v13) for all men (v12).
- B. The Holy Spirit gives these blessings to all who believe (13).

1. He works through the Scriptures (v4).
2. He works through preaching.
 - a. To show God's faithfulness, Jesus preached to the Jews (v8), Mt 15:24.
 - b. To show God's mercy, Paul preached to the Gentiles (vv9-12).
3. The Holy Spirit unites Jew and Gentile by one faith under one King (v12), Eph 2:19-22.
4. All who believe have as their own joy and peace and hope (v13), Ga 5:22-23.

Let's praise God for His grace in redeeming and sanctifying us.

II. Our Responsibility

- A. The danger: Christians can put a stumbling block in the path of the weak, cf. Ro 14.
- B. Christians need to work for unity.
 1. By bearing with the infirmities of the weak (v1).
 2. By being like-minded (v5).
 3. So that with one mind and mouth they glorify God (v6) in worship and witness.
- C. The motive: as Christ also received us (v7).

Unity is a fragile blessing. Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Eph 4:3.

HJE

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

James 5:7-10

December 14, 1980

The "waiting" character of Advent seems to escape most Christians. The coming of the Lord, so long awaited by the Old Testament believers, has happened. Repeated celebrations of the Nativity seem to preclude any further waiting and yet, after the most joyous celebration of the Savior's birth, the believer must "come down to earth" in the everyday struggles with burdens, grief, injustice, persecution, etc., that make up life in our sin-alienated world. Thus it is important for the Advent preacher to focus people's attention on that time of fullness of salvation when the Lord comes again. Meanwhile we live in a time that demands patient waiting.

Introduction: There was a poor woman in Atlanta, Georgia, who for years had been supported entirely by charity. During this time she suffered from a disease that brought her great suffering. Now she was at the point of death and every moment was thought to be her last. Knowing her great faith, her friends were almost hoping for the moment of release. One of them said to the woman, "Are you ready to go?" "Yes," she said,

READY TO GO, BUT WILLING TO WAIT!

On the basis of today's text we see that this is a fine Advent motto for us all.

- I. Our confidence is based on the promises of our Advent Lord.
 - A. We know the promises fulfilled in His first coming.
 1. The promised Burden-bearer was described by the prophets. (See esp. Is 53, et. al.)
 2. In His ministry to people Jesus did bring relief to people suffering under sin and its consequences (today's Gospel).

3. Jesus is still touching people with His healing, renewing power today (Mt 11:28. The preacher should give current illustrations of Jesus' activity among the members of the congregation.)

By faith and experience we know the Lord has kept His promises of salvation. But what we have seen is only the beginning.

- B. We confidently await the fullness of glory yet to come when Christ comes again (vv7-8, also the symbolic picture of His kingdom in the O.T. Lesson).
 1. We will see Jesus face to face and be like Him (1 Jn 3:1-2).
 2. We will have the fullness of His eternal presence (Eph 1; Re 21:4; Ps 16:11; Ro 8:18).

Many Christians take God's promises in Christ rather lightly and yet how beautiful, rich, and full they really are!

- II. Knowing the promises works in us the patience needed for waiting through the "delays" before fulfillment (v7, Ro 5:3,5).

- A. Believers are definitely not exempt from burdens.
 1. Persecution and injustice are common and to be expected (context, v10, Mt 5:11).
 2. The Lord disciplines His people as He sees need (He 12).
 3. Impatience under trials only adds to our problems (v9).
- B. We need to learn to "wait on the Lord" (Ps 27:14).
 1. Christian patience is not Stoic resignation, "What will be will be."
 2. It is rather a confident going with the will of the Lord, knowing that He has His purposes at work (Ro 8:28).

Patience is a Christian virtue much more sorely needed in our lives than most of us would admit. It is not easy to have or practice.

- III. Whatever happens we know the presence of the Lord's strength and help.

- A. This is the message of the incarnation we are preparing to celebrate soon.
- B. It continues among us through our faithful use of the Word and Sacraments.

Under the gracious instruction and comfort of the Holy Spirit we who know the Savior who has come and the Lord who is yet to come are able to face the "todays" of life with patience, confidence, and a sure hope.

Edwin H. Dubberke
St. Louis, Missouri

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 1:1-7

December 21, 1980

In this lengthy introduction and address for his letter to the Roman believers the apostle seeks to establish his authority and credibility. He is a privileged slave (*doulos*) of Christ set apart (*aphorismenos*) for the Gospel. As he identifies that Gospel, Paul gives a most excellent summary of what it is, the Good News that God both promised and sent His Son to and for the world. The goal of his apostleship is to bring about obedience of faith (*hupakoē pisteos*) everywhere, in this letter especially to the saints in Rome. His vocation is more than a greeting; it is his sincere desire that his readers truly have grace (*charis*) and peace (*eirene*). The preacher on this Sunday should have this same purpose for his hearers rather than merely a rehearsal of who Paul was.

Introduction: A little boy who was the victim of a slum and a foster parent who abused him found great delight in gazing at the beautiful Christmas toys in store windows. He knew they were not for him because there was always the

glass between. One day he was run over and woke up in a hospital. When Christmas came, he was suddenly showered with gifts by those who cared for him in the hospital. In disbelief he stretched out his hands and said, "Presents for me?" The purpose of Advent and especially the lessons today is to guide people to the center and joy of Christ's birth that, as they look toward it, they too may gasp in amazement:

" A PRESENT FOR ME?"

It is beautifully summarized in the familiar words: v7b.

I. Grace is the very heart of God's great gift to the world. Despite who we are and what we are, God does have a gift for each of us in the celebration that is just ahead of us.

A. This familiar and common word needs closer examination.

1. Two shades of meaning of *charis* are:

- a. That which bestows pleasure, sheer beauty.
- b. Totally undeserved generosity in a gift.

2. God's perfect Christmas gift is grace in the fullest meaning of the word (hymn 646, st. 3).

B. The Gospel is a declaration of pure grace.

1. Grace moved God to give the promise of the "Seed of the woman" proclaimed by the prophets, v2.

2. Grace moved God to send His own Son into our flesh, v3 (He 1:1-3a, Jn 1:14, Mt 1:18f, hymn 94, st. 2).

3. Grace proclaimed Christ's deity and power in the resurrection, v4 (Ro 4:25, hymn 94, st. 3).

Oh, the beauty and wonder of grace as it is revealed in Jesus! God's forgiving love is so undeserved on our part, so generous on His part. But the real wonder is that it is aimed at each one of us — "For me!" "Grace to YOU . . . from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

II. Peace is the blessed companion of the grace God has bestowed on us.

A. In view of the conflict that fills our personal lives as well as the world scene many question whether "Peace on earth" ever came.

B. Christ's peace is not absence of conflict and trouble but security and hope in it.

1. Peace with God and full acceptance with Him is ours through Christ (Ro 5:1).

2. This gives confidence that we are secure with Him no matter what happens (Ro 8:32 and 38-39).

EHD

CHRISTMAS DAY

Titus 2:11-14

December 25, 1980

Introduction: A few years ago a popular song was sung with the words, "Walk in my shoes." Some American Indians thought that the only way really to understand someone is to "walk in their moccasins." To understand another person we must attempt to walk in their circumstances and situation. To understand the poor, we have to become intimately acquainted with their sometimes bleak existence. To understand another person's belief, one must attempt to view life from his or her perspective. Christmas is a time when God appeared in order to walk in our shoes. Jesus was born so He could

WALK IN OUR SHOES

- I. Jesus walking in our shoes was a manifestation of God's grace.
 - A. Jesus, God's Son, was born of a woman.
 1. He came in our flesh to experience our sorrow, frustration, and pain, and the terrible consequences of our sins.
 2. He came in such poverty that He was laid in a manger. He showed God's grace by walking in our shoes. Not only the rich but the poor can feel affinity with Jesus.
 - B. God's grace appeared through Jesus to offer us salvation.
 1. He came to redeem us from lawlessness. We were under the Law, held captive in its condemnation and more ready to transgress the Law than to keep it.
 2. He walked in our shoes and on our behalf went to the cross, taking upon Himself our condemnation. Now by faith we have forgiveness of sins and freedom from the condemnation of the Law.
- II. Jesus walked in our shoes so we could walk in others' shoes. We see what Jesus did, but do not always see what we can do because Christ walked in our shoes.
 - A. He cleansed us so that we can live in a godly and sober manner.
 1. We have strength to live with a sense of moderation, as good stewards of our body and time.
 2. We strive to live in accordance with God's Law, loving others as He loved us.
 - B. Because He walked in our shoes, we walk as His chosen people.
 1. We are zealous for good works and willing to walk with others.

A member of our church is hospitalized. He is fearful, lonely, and anxious and needs someone who cares, someone to be with him. Are we willing to walk with that person by spending a little time with him or her?

2. We have the hope of the appearing again of Jesus to offer others. The glorious appearing of Christ on the last day is comforting to Christians.

Jesus walked in our shoes by becoming one with us in our flesh and in the circumstances of our life. That is God's grace in action. Now we can walk as redeemed people, empowered to do good deeds and so to walk in the shoes of others.

Dale Knutsen
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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Galatians 4:4-7
December 28, 1980

Introduction: Christmas is over for another year. For the unbelieving world, it is certainly over. In fact, it was not really celebrated. Oh, gifts were exchanged and warm feelings were shared, but that is not Christmas. It is just the wrapping of Christmas. What about you? Is Christmas over, not to be thought of again for another year, not making a difference, not changing anything in your life? Our text presents to us *the* Gift of Christmas. It is intended to be received, opened all the way, and used every day. This is a good time to open the Gift, for the world's Christmas of commercialism and Santa Claus and warm fuzzies is done with. Now we can look more carefully at the Gift and

OPEN THE GIFT ALL THE WAY!

- I. The Gift Partially Unwrapped: "Son born of a woman"
 - A. In God's full time it happened.
 1. This was not Caesar's time, not Herod's time.
 2. This was God's time according to God's timing.
 - B. God sent forth His Son.
 1. The miracle happened.
 2. It is a time of awe: "In the beginning was the Word . . ."
 - C. But here is where Christmas is often left in the wrappings.
 1. A manger, shepherds, wise men — a frozen manger scene in a store window, under a Christmas tree, on a church's snow-covered lawn.
 2. The Gift can easily be put away without asking, "Why?"
 - II. Unwrapping the Gift More: "born under the Law"
 - A. This part of the story is not very pretty.
 1. It calls for looking behind ourselves at ourselves.
 2. It calls for seeing the deathly darkness that cripples marriages, ruins families, worships things, and twists governments and nations.
 3. To Karl Menninger's questioning book, *Whatever Became of Sin?*, the answer is apparent: It got sugar-coated with excuses, rationalizations, denials, and worldly Christmases!
 - B. Why did He come?
 1. O. P. Kretzmann in *Hosanna in the Whirlwind*: "It had to happen because we were so bad" (page 37).
 2. The Law of God had to be satisfied, and we cannot do it.
 3. Yet we still cannot stop here, merely lamenting sin, stopped by guilt, restless and filled with undefined but certain dread.
 - III. Unwrapping the Gift More: "To redeem those under the Law"
 - A. The manger is cross-shaped.
 1. Christmas without Good Friday is meaningless and hopeless.
 2. This birth would be just another birth, another statistic.
 - B. Mary's Child is Emmanuel, God with us, all the way to the cross.
 1. In the midst of His life is death.
 2. In the midst of His death there will be life.
 3. Yet we still cannot stop here, for the Gift is still waiting to be unwrapped all the way.
 - IV. Unwrapping the Gift More: "adoption as sons"
 - A. It could have read "slaves" or "robots."
 1. But this is not life in the fullness of God's love.
 2. This is why God did not "shout" His love; He lived it among us into our hearts.
 - B. To be a "son" is to be part of the family of God.
 - C. Happy Birthday, sons and daughters of God! But there is still more.
 - V. Unwrapping the Gift Even More: "sent forth His Spirit crying, 'Abba, Father'"
 - A. This is the first word of God's child.
 - B. This call is simple and childlike. Thank God!
 - VI. We Look Forward to the Final Unwrapping: "an heir"
 - A. We live with the promise of an inheritor.
 - B. Christmas is the beginning of the Gift of eternal life.
- Happy Christmas, child of the Child! God has sent you the Gift of the Christmas. Open the Gift all the way. Your name is on it. It is meant for you. Let the Gift unwrap your life that God may wrap you in Himself!

Richard G. Kapfer
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THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

January 4, 1981

Introduction: Christmas is a time for celebration. We celebrate with family reunions as we come together for the holidays to share our unity. We celebrate through the exchanging of gifts as a symbol of our love. We celebrate with parties to generate the feeling of "good will to men." But these are only worldly reflections of that which is our real cause for celebration in this festive season. As we are still in the near shadow of the Feast of the Nativity in which we celebrated our Lord's incarnation, let us continue our festive mood this morning by saying with Paul, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places . . ." (v3).

LET US PRAISE GOD FOR CHRIST'S BIRTH AND OUR ADOPTION

- I. Christ's birth and our adoption have their roots in the past.
 - A. The Father in eternity chose His Son to be the Savior (4 — "He chose us *in Him*"; v5 — "He destined us . . . to be His sons *through Jesus Christ*.").
 1. The Father foresaw that Adam and Eve would plunge the world into sin and that man would be helpless to save himself.
 2. The Father proclaimed the remedy, first to Adam and Eve (Gn 3:15 and Ps 22; Is 53).
 - B. The Father in eternity chose us to be His children (vv 4-6; Ro 8:28-30).
 1. Our election took place before the foundation of the world was laid (v4); before we were born (Ro 9:11).
 2. Our election was motivated by love (v5; Jn 3:16).
 3. Our election was effected by grace (v6; 2 Tm 1:9; Eph 2:8,9).
- II. Christ's birth and our adoption became realities in time.
 - A. At God's appointed time, the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14; Ga 4:4-5).

Illustration (Kierkegaard): A prince, after visiting a village in his kingdom, found a maiden he wanted for his wife. Should he take her by force or impress her with his royalty? No, he decided, the girl would be his but she might never love him. Rather, disguised as a common laborer, he went and worked in that village and won the girl's love.

 1. Christ came into the world an infant, born of the Virgin Mary. Irenaeus: "He (Christ) came to save all persons by Himself; all, I mean, who by Him are regenerated (baptized) into God; infants and little ones, and children, and youths and elder persons. Therefore He went through the several ages: for infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants, to little ones He was made a little one, sanctifying those of that age, and also giving them an example of godliness, justice, and dutifulness; to youth He was a youth," etc.
 2. He grew to manhood to keep the Law perfectly in our stead (He 7:26).
 3. He suffered, died, and rose again for our salvation.
 - B. In God's appointed time, we became flesh so that we might receive adoption as sons (v5).
 1. We came into the world as sinners, deserving eternal death (Jn 3:5-6; Ro 5:12; Ro 6:23; Jas 1:15).
 2. By grace, through baptism, we became the adopted children of our heavenly Father (vv3-4, Phillips; Ro 8:14-15; 1 Cor 6:17-18).

Illustration: As a judge declares an infant the child and heir of his adoptive parents (without any merit or conscious acknowledgement

on the infant's part), in like manner we are declared God's adopted children through baptism.

III. Christ's birth and our adoption should be celebrated now and through eternity (vv15-18).

- A. We celebrate the birthday of Christ with praise and thanksgiving.
 - 1. With festive voices we remember His birth in our yearly celebration of Christmas.
 - 2. With grateful hearts we proclaim the love of God through Christ to others and pray for their salvation and other needs (vv16-17).
- B. We celebrate our adoption through confession and service.
 - 1. Through eyes of faith we confess the hope that is in us (v18a).
 - 2. Through hands of faith we serve our fellowman (v15).
 Luther: "This life, therefore, is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it. The process is not yet finished, but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified."
- C. There, we wait for the ultimate celebration in eternity when we will know "what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (v18b).

Ronald Irsch
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THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

Ephesians 3:2-12

January 6, 1981

This text is a parenthetical thought included in Paul's prayer to the Gentiles (3:1-21). Here the Apostle "dwells on the grace bestowed on him as apostle to the Gentiles, the high privilege of proclaiming to them their inclusion in the new people of God now realized in Christ Jesus" (Franzmann). V3: "mystery" — "To make known a mystery is to reveal it . . . Paul is speaking of the Gospel, the will of grace, the mystery hid from the ages during all these generations but now preached and published in all the world by Christ's messengers and fully manifest (Col 1:25,26). Paul is not speaking of some secret decree of God" (Lenski). V10: . . . "through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places." ". . . here the apostle stresses the fact that the holy angels praise God for being permitted to see how God gathers and builds His Church on earth. At the creation of the world they praised Him and shouted for joy. Here they sing a new song, praising His new creation. What an honor for the poor, despised Church on earth to have the angels look with pleasure upon the members of the Christian Church and for their sake to fill the heavens with songs of praise to God!" (Stoeckhardt).

Introduction: The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord brings to mind the title of a television program that was popular some years ago. As a contestant, armed with a piece of mysterious information, proclaimed to a panel of celebrities, so Paul comes to us today to proclaim:

"I'VE GOT A SECRET"

- I. The Nature of Paul's Secret
 - A. Paul's secret is unlike the secrets of men.
 - 1. The secrets of men are sometimes purposely hidden. Illustration: The

majority of crimes are attempted or committed at night in an attempt to hide them.

2. The secrets of men are often those things of which we are ashamed — secret thoughts, words, and deeds.

B. Paul's secret is a God-ordained secret.

1. The secrets of God are such because they are beyond the understanding of man. Man's knowledge is limited (I Cor 1:18ff.) while God's is unlimited (I Cor 2:9-11).
2. The secrets of God are for revelation, in time (vv5,8) or in eternity (I Cor 13:12).

II The Content of Paul's Secret

A. It is the good news that Christ is the Savior (v11).

B. It is the good news that Christ is the Savior *of all* (vv6,8).

1. In Christ Jesus, Jew and Gentile alike have the same inheritance (Col 1:27).
2. In Christ Jesus, Jew and Gentile alike are members of the same body (Eph 4:5; I Cor 12:13).
3. In Christ Jesus, Jew and Gentile alike are partakers of the same promise (Ro 1:16-17).

III. The Proclaimers of Paul's Secret

A. The proclamation of the Gospel began already in the Old Testament.

1. God first chose Israel to be His spokesmen (Ex 19:3-7) even though their knowledge of the Gospel was limited (vv4,5,9).
2. When Israel fell away, the Lord appointed prophets to foretell the Savior's coming to the remnant of the faithful.

B. The proclamation of the Gospel reached a climax when the Savior was born.

1. The shepherds heard the good news through angel messengers.
2. The wise men were guided to the Savior by a star.

C. The proclamation of the Gospel continued in the apostolic age.

1. Paul was a specially chosen vessel of God to proclaim the good news to the Gentiles (vv2,3,4,7,8).
2. The apostles and prophets were also appointed as proclaimers of Paul's secret (v10).

D. The proclamation of Paul's secret continues today.

1. The good news that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior is the old, old story that is ever new.
2. The proclamation of the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of all is our responsibility and privilege today. Illustration: According to an old legend, when Christ returned to heaven the angels asked Him how He intended to keep the message of the Gospel alive. "That task I have given to the Church," was the Lord's reply. "But what if it fails?" the angels asked, "What is your alternate plan?" "I have no other plan," said the Lord.

Conclusion: Paul's secret, then, is no secret at all. It is the good news that God was made manifest in Christ Jesus so that we might receive the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (v8) — forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Let us not keep this secret to ourselves, but let us openly and boldly share it with others.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Acts 10:34-38

January 11, 1981

Vv34-35 focus on God's impartiality, which implies that His love is the same for all people and that all people are to be treated with uniform care and concern (Dt 10:17-19; Eph 6:9; Ac 10). V35 echoes Jas 2, which stresses good works as inevitably resulting from faith. "Fears" in v35 refers to the profound respect and awe shown to God by the person who realizes his absolute dependence on God's grace. Vv36-38 mark the beginning of an account of the earthly ministry of Jesus that Peter concludes in v41. God's impartiality of grace is rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, who made peace between God and people. Anyone can be acceptable to God through faith in the good news of peace.

Introduction: Our treatment of others is often influenced by such things as power, wealth, education, and outward appearance. It is hard for us to be absolutely impartial. This text helps us to be less partial and more fair by reminding us that

GOD IS IMPARTIAL

- I. God treats everyone the same.
 - A. Outward circumstances do not determine how God treats people.
 1. Nationality is not significant. Peter had to learn this (Ac10).
 2. A person's being on the membership role of a church does not make him or her acceptable to God.
 3. Education, wealth, success do not determine a person's acceptability before God.
 - B. Anyone can have a saving relationship with God.
 1. Anyone who fears God is acceptable.
 - a. He stands in awe of God's power and deeds.
 - b. He realizes his absolute dependence on God's grace.
 2. Anyone who believes the good news of peace is acceptable to God.
 - a. Peace with God through Christ's life and death and resurrection.
 - b. Peace which flows from the forgiveness Christ earned.
- II. Since God treats everyone the same, we will try to treat people impartially.
 - A. Peter had difficulty doing this.
 1. He saw the vision three times.
 2. He still showed partiality (Ga 2:11ff.).
 - B. What a challenge it is to show impartiality!
 1. In the church to show that each brother and sister is equally important.
 2. In the world to show that each human being is the object of our sincere love and concern.

Conclusion: To say that God is impartial is to state a truth of great significance for our lives. We draw our life and purpose from God's impartial love. Our lives can then mirror the impartial love of God to those around us.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

I Corinthians 1:1-9

January 18, 1981

The salutation (vv1-3) and thanksgiving (vv4-9) are directed toward God. The

passive tenses (given, v4; enriched, v5; confirmed, v6; called, v9) and Paul's thanksgiving to "my" God emphasize what God has accomplished. "Paul is not complimenting the church; he is thanking God." "All speech" (v5) refers to the truth preached (Luther: "all doctrine"), while "all knowledge" is the truth apprehended. "The testimony to Christ" (v6) refers to Paul's own testimony concerning Jesus during his stay in Corinth (Ac 18:5). "Gift (v7) refers to blessings bestowed on all Christians and not to the "charismatic" gifts. In v8 "who shall confirm" can be taken as referring either to God or Christ. Both views have their difficulties. If Christ is referred to, then the following phrase, "our Lord Jesus Christ," seems unnecessary. If God is the antecedent of "who," He is nowhere mentioned in the immediate context. The opinion of this writer is that the phrase refers to God. "Blameless" (KJV) is used by Paul of our status before God in terms of justification (I Th 5:23; cf. Php 1:6) as well as of the quality of life a Christian can come to exhibit (Php 1:10; I Th 3:13). It seems best to understand blamelessness here in terms of both justification ("you were called into fellowship," v9) and sanctification ("not lacking in any gift," v7). The credit for both goes to God alone, who works them for us.

Introduction: It is easy to be worried or dissatisfied with the way things are. It takes real spiritual vision to see what God has done, and is doing. Even in the divided, troubled Corinthian church, Paul could see what God had done and give Him praise for it. We need that kind of perspective.

THANK GOD FOR HIS WORK IN US

- I. He has made us saints.
 - A. The testimony of Christ was confirmed in us.
 1. The apostolic word of Corinth.
 2. The same apostolic New Testament word to us today.
 - B. We are among those who call upon the name of the Lord.
 1. We know our spiritual helplessness.
 2. We call upon the only name given by which we shall be saved (Ac 4:12).
He has given us gifts.
 - A. All speech — the wonderful, pure proclamation of the unchanging truth of God's Word.
 - B. All understanding — the gift of grasping and believing the Word.
 - C. Living in the expectation of Christ's final revelation — all these are gifts of God and evidences of His grace.
- III. He will keep us until the end.
 - A. We can remain calm and restful in Him, for He will sustain us.
 - B. On the Judgment Day we can stand before Him without reproach, for He cleansed us by His grace and enables us to serve Him.

Conclusion: Paul told the Philippians God was working in them both to will and to work His good pleasure (Php 2:13). It was the same for the Corinthians, and it is the same for us. Keep that perspective. Thank God for His work in us!

JAG

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

I Corinthians 1:10-17

January 25, 1981

Introduction: After its annual Evangelism Sunday in which the guest minister encouraged the members to invite their neighbors and friends to church, one disturbed member spoke to the guest minister during the coffee-fellowship time.

"You don't invite your neighbors when you have a family quarrel." He was implying that the congregation was having some differences of opinion and were quarreling about them. Quarrels detract from the joy of the faith and hinder the church's outreach to others. How does a congregation deal with them? Paul gives us a pattern to follow.

HOW TO SETTLE DIFFERENCES IN THE CHURCH

I. Identify the differences.

A. In Corinth there were factions.

1. Paul had received the news from members of the household of Chloe who had visited Corinth (v11).
2. Paul calls them *schismata* (v10), translated variously as "divisions, dissensions, schisms." *Schismata* was the word used for rents in a garment. The congregation was torn by splits. *Erides* (v11) is translated "strifes" or "quarrels."

B. Each faction identified itself with a person.

1. *Paul*. Some Gentiles especially may have stretched Paul's emphasis on freedom, turning "liberty into license," forgetting that they were saved, not to be free to sin, but to be free not to sin.
2. *Apollos*, who was a Jew from Alexandria, "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures" (Ac 18:24). Alexandria was the center of Greek intellectual activity. There men made a science of allegorizing the Scriptures. Here is an example of what they did from the Epistle of Barnabas, which came from Alexandria. From comparing Gn 14:14 with 18:23 the conclusion is reached that Abraham circumcised 318 members of his household. In the Greek language letters are used for numbers. So the Greek for 18 is *iota* and *eta* which are the first two letters of the name Jesus. The Greek for 300 is the letter *tau*, which is the shape of the cross. Therefore, the incident from the life of Abraham is seen as a foretelling of the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross.
3. *Cephas* is the Jewish form of the Greek word "Peter." Those who called themselves his followers were probably mostly Jews who sought to keep the Jewish laws, Judaizers or legalists.
4. *Christ*. Those who called themselves his followers may have been self-righteous Christians who claimed that they were the best Christians in the whole congregation — intolerant, self-righteous.

C. Identify the differences in our congregation.

1. Some differences of opinion concern maintenance matters.
2. Are there differences in more serious matters — doctrine, practice, mission?
3. There is the temptation to act like the factions in Corinth:
 - a. To seek freedom without responsibility.
 - b. To intellectualize the faith.
 - c. To be legalistic.
 - d. To be intolerant, self-righteous.

II. Understand the reason for the differences.

A. Human nature.

1. Basic selfishness, self-centeredness.
2. Pride — refusal to submit.
3. Envy and jealousy.

B. The influence of the devil. "The old evil foe now means deadly woe."

1. He causes misunderstanding.
 2. He confuses our loyalties.
- III. Deal positively with the differences.
- A. Approach with a loving spirit. Consider the example of Paul, who calls the Corinthians "brothers" (vv10-11) and beseeches, does not command (v10). See also Php 2:2.
 - B. Point to Jesus Christ.
 1. We are called to faith (vv2,9,26) by the grace given in Christ Jesus (v4).
 2. Christ is not divided (v13). Luther did not want to be called a Lutheran. He said in his earthy way: "Who am I, a miserable, stinking, foul bag of maggots, that the Church of Jesus Christ should be called by my miserable name. I am and will be no one's master. Enough for me is the sweet name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him I will always sing my song. If anyone will not sing with me, let him howl if he likes by himself."
 - C. Point to the unity of the church.
 1. We are joined together in fellowship (v10). The word "knit," *katērtismenoi*, is a medical term used of bones knitting together after a fracture. Note "same mind" and "same opinion."
 2. In this way God is glorified, Ro 15:5-6; Gn 13:11.
 - D. Point to the mission of the church.
 1. The church is sent to *euangelizesthai*, "evangelize" (v17). Paul is not belittling baptism. He baptized special converts. Stephanas was probably the first convert (1Cor 16:15). Crispus was one the ruler of the Jewish synagogue in Corinth (ac 18:8). Gaius had probably been Paul's host (Ro 16:23). Paul was glad the Corinthians could not use his baptism of them in fostering their factions, because he wanted only to point them to Christ.
 2. The church needs unity to accomplish its mission, Ph 1:27.

Conclusion: Instead of "in the name of Paul" they were baptized "in the name of Jesus." As a soldier swore loyalty "into the name of Caesar" so a Christian by his baptism was giving his loyalty unconditionally to Jesus Christ. It is His cross which has the power to change and unite His church (vv17,18,24,30).

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

February 1, 1981

Introduction: "Boast" is usually a negative word — something we do not want to be accused of. The dictionary gives the definition: "to brag; to speak of one's self or belongings in assertive and bombastic terms." Popular proverbs associate boasting with ignorance, pride, and lying: "A boaster and a liar are cousins"; "He that boasts of his own knowledge proclaims his ignorance." Kipling in *Mary's Son* penned these words: "If you stop to consider the work you have done and to boast what your labour is worth, dear, Angels may come for you, Willie, my son, but you'll never be wanted on earth, dear!" Yet our text today closes with an encouragement to boast, but then suggests that we learn how to boast properly. "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."

LEARN TO BOAST

I. The Encouragement of Boasting

- A. "Boast" (*kauchasthō*) is imperative. Paul quotes Jr 9:23-24 according to the LXX. The KJV translates the word "glory," as the RSV does, e.g. in 2 Cor 10-12, where Paul uses the word *kauchaomai* 20 times.
- B. The boasting must be done "in the Lord" (*en kuriō*). V31 is the climax of chapter 1, pointing to the power of the cross rather than man's wisdom. This theme is consistent with other passages of Scripture — Ps 44:8; 34:2; Ga 6:14.

II. The Basis of Boasting

- A. Not human wisdom. "God made foolish the wisdom of the world" (v20).
 1. The wisdom of the Jews. "The cross is a stumbling block to the Jews" (v23). The cross was a sign of accursedness (Dt 21:23).
 2. The wisdom of the Greeks — v23, "folly"; v22, "wisdom" (*sophia*). The Greek "wise man" was a "sophist," a word which came to mean a man "with a clever mind and cunning tongue, a mental acrobat, a man who with glittering tongue and persuasive rhetoric could make the worse appear the better reason." He spent endless hours in hair-splitting trifles. The Greeks were intoxicated with fine words. To them the Christian preacher with his blunt message seemed a crude and uncultured figure, to be laughed at and ridiculed rather than to be listened to and respected. But Paul disavowed "eloquent wisdom" (v17) and relied upon the cross alone.
- B. Not human accomplishments. V26: Most of the Christians in Corinth were not, according to human standards, "wise," "powerful," or "of noble birth." Jesus was a friend of sinners and publicans. Not many "rulers" believed (John 7:48). The Sanhedrin considered the apostles "unlearned and ignorant" (Ac 4:13). One of the reasons for which the early church was ridiculed was that it consisted largely of slaves and common people. Celsus in 178 A.D. wrote a bitter attack against Christianity: "workers, cobblers, leather-dressers, the most illiterate and clownish of men were zealous preachers of the Gospel . . ." Augustine said, "God caught orators by fishermen and not fisherman by orators." But there were some Christians of the wealthier and educated class. In the New Testament there was Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus of the Council, Sergius Paulus, governor of Crete (Ac 13:6-12), and Dionysius of Athens (Ac 17:34). But God chose what is foolish to the world to shame the wise (v27). "God chose what is low and despised . . . that no human being might boast" (vv27-28). There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. A slave was a "living tool" to be treated like a hoe or a spade — tortured, abused, killed, discarded at will. Christianity treated the slaves as people and brought respect to women and children.

III. Boasting in Jesus Christ (v30).

- A. He is our wisdom (*sophia*). God made him our "wisdom." "This *sophia* consists of all the gracious, heavenly, and efficacious thoughts of God that are embodied in Christ Jesus." He is the Way, the Truth, the Life (John 14:6). *Illustration*: Diogenes used to complain that men flocked to the occultist and to the dentist but never to the man (he meant the philosopher) who could cure their souls. Is it any different today? People seek meaning in life, satisfaction, and fulfillment in the wisdom of the world rather than in the One who can cure and heal.
- B. He is our righteousness (*dikaiosunē*). "Righteousness" speaks of our being in a right relationship with God, because of the forensic act of God (2 Cor 5:21).

- C. He is our sanctification (*hagiasmos*). Sanctification in the narrow sense is meant here since it is subsequent to righteousness. Epicurus used to tell his disciples: "Live as if Epicurus always saw you." There is no "as if" for the Christian disciple. His Master walks with him every step. "The Gospel makes us not clever but clean, not ritualistic but righteous, not sanctimonious but sanctified, not revered but redeemed."
- D. He is our redemption (*apolutrōsis*). Christ paid the price by His death on the cross. We are delivered from bondage, set free. Ti 2:14; Ro 8:21-23; 1 Pe 1:18.

Conclusion: Cliff had lost his kidney as a result of diabetes. His brother donated one of his for a transplant. Then the disease took Cliff's eyesight. "Other than that I am in good health," he says, and he is headed for a school for the blind. On the plane he carried with him a small electronic device the size of a portable tape-recorder. "It's an optican," he explained. "With this machine I am free. I can read. I move this little lens across a page while I hold my finger on this slide in the side of the opticon. The lens and the electronic gear translates the shape of each letter into small harmless pin-like pricks on my finger. Thus, I can feel the shape of each letter. It's like braille, but instant and electronic. However, it is slow reading since you must go letter by letter." What does Cliff boast about? What is the cause of his freedom? What do we boast about? Who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption?

EJK

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

February 8, 1981

Corinth, from all descriptions, was a highly cosmopolitan city. Yet, according to 1 Cor 1:26, the Christians there were not noble, wise or mighty by the world's standards. They had a different kind of wisdom — Jesus Christ (1:30). Paul urges them not to be swayed by the diversions which Corinth offered. It was his extreme confidence in the facts put forth in 1:27-28 which led him to preach Christ and Him crucified rather than human wisdom. Lenski's assertion that the genitive, "testimony of God" (v1), may be subjective, referring to God's testimony to man, but may not be objective, "the testimony about God" (seen by Lenski as too general to mean the Gospel), is without proof. Whatever genitive it is, the testimony has "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (v2) as its central tenet.

In v4 Paul offers a contrast between the persuasive words of wisdom and the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The contrast stresses the difference between learned rhetoric and the Holy Spirit. Language devices may be used to give a message power and appeal, but to rely solely on such devices is dangerous for preaching and disastrous for the Gospel. V4 may also be seen as irony or sarcasm on Paul's part. He refused to come and preach to the Corinthians with "persuasive words of wisdom." Paul could well have come and impressed the Corinthians. He chose, however, to come and impress their hearts with the power of the cross.

The central thought of the text is that through the power of God — through the preaching of Jesus and the cross — comes faith that endures. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer will rest his faith in the power of God rather than the wisdom of man.

Introduction: A power struggle involves two or more people attempting to exert their power on each other. The outcome is predictable. The person or group with the most power or influence always emerges on top. The power of

one group gives way to the power of the other. Because we Christians face trials and other situations in which the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh seek to overpower us, it is necessary that our faith be based on a power that will not give way to another. We need God's power as the basis for our faith.

IS OUR FAITH BASED ON GOD'S POWER?

- I. It is not if it is based solely on "superior" speech and wisdom.
 - A. There are many who offer such a basis.
 1. In Corinth there was much pseudo-intellectual pride. Fine words could tempt the Christians to follow a new way.
 2. We often look more at the form in which the message comes to us than at the message itself. Not just rock music or suave politicians catch our ear. Often we are captivated by "good preachers" who nevertheless fail to preach Christ and Him crucified.
 - B. Such a basis for faith is shaky at best.
 1. God has made the world's wisdom foolish (1:26ff).
 2. Faith founded on the wisdom of man cannot endure the tests of life. Such a faith has no guarantee that it will endure even until another persuader comes along.
- II. It is, if it is based on Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.
 - A. This is the central tenet of Christianity.
 1. Although Paul could have come with persuasive words of human wisdom to this group of people, he came instead with the message of Christ and the cross. He determined to know nothing but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (v2).
 2. The message of Christ's death and resurrection is God's way of coming to us, of telling us that we matter to Him, and of bringing us to Himself.
 - B. With this message come the Spirit and power of God.
 1. Paul's preaching found its power here (cf. Ro 10:17; 1Cor 12:3).
 2. Such a power will not falter nor fail. The message of God's redemption of the world through Christ's death on the cross is all that is needed to bring us to God. A faith based on that message is faith based on God's power which can and will shore up a weak faith.

Conclusion: We do face power struggles in our lives. When your faith rests on God's power, you can be assured of strength in time of weakness. God's power is being offered to you now through the cross of Christ. It is a power that will not let you down.

David L. Bahn
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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 2:6-13

February 15, 1981

The proper understanding of this text hinges on how one understands the words "those who are mature" (v6 NASB). Some commentators suggest that this expression refers to those Christians among the Corinthians and especially in other congregations who were more mature in their faith and knowledge of God. The majority of commentators, however, understand Paul to be referring to all those who are Christians, which appears to be the most plausible interpretation. Accordingly, "wisdom" (v6) is not higher knowledge of God and deeper

understanding of His ways, but simply Christ and Him crucified (note 1:24).

The *de* of v6 ties the text to the immediately preceding thoughts expressed by Paul, in which he distinguishes between the wisdom of man and the power of God. Now he assures the Corinthians that he does indeed speak wisdom to them, the wisdom of God, predestined for their glory (as shown by the final clause of v7).

V8 presents a paradox. God's wisdom was to have Jesus crucified for the sins of the world. Yet had those who crucified Jesus known what they were doing, they would not have crucified Him. Here we see the humiliation and the exaltation of Jesus side by side: the Lord of glory crucified.

V9: "But just as it is written . . ." is to be combined with the "we speak" of v6. Thus v9 describes the wisdom Paul and the other apostles speak of (the most likely meaning of the plural "we" in vv6,7, and especially 10 and 12, where it is emphatic, being "the apostles").

V10: The Spirit who has revealed the mysteries of God — His wisdom in the cross — can be trusted. He who "searches all things, even the depths of God" has revealed these things to the apostles. No one can know the things of God ("thoughts," NASB) except the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the only One who can reveal God's nature. And the apostles have received no other spirit than the "Spirit who is from God" (v12).

The central thought of the text is that the mystery of God's wisdom taught by Paul and the other apostles is not understood by human wisdom but by the Holy Spirit. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer will recognize the uniqueness of God's wisdom in the cross of Christ and not in the events of the world.

Introduction: Most of us like to consider ourselves mature. We strive to grow and learn in our daily lives so that we can meet each new challenge in a mature way. We want others to consider us mature. In our text Paul uses the term mature to describe Christians. He goes on to tell us that

GOD'S WISDOM IS FOR MATURE PEOPLE

- I. God's wisdom is not grasped by the immature of this age.
 - A. It is hidden from them.
 1. We cannot see God's nature on our own. We do not know what God is like without God's revelation. Our natural knowledge is limited. This limitation manifests itself in self-righteous attitudes and in despal of God and His way.
 2. Those whose thoughts are entirely centered in this age will not see this wisdom.
 - B. Even when God's wisdom is seen, it is not always recognized.
 1. Those who crucified the Lord of glory did not recognize God's wisdom. They did not know what they did. Had they known, they would not have crucified Him.
 2. We did not crucify Christ, we were not there. Yet our sins were laid upon Him, making His death even more painful. Still we wonder why Jesus had to be crucified. We doubt the wisdom of God in the face of adversity.

Transition: If you are looking to the world for confirmation of God's wisdom in Christ and the cross, then you are looking in the wrong place. Often we find ourselves doing this. That is why it is important to hear God's wisdom — Christ and His cross — again and again so that we would grow in this wisdom.

II. God's wisdom is embraced by His mature people.

A. God's wisdom is predestined for our glory.

1. God's purpose in this wisdom is not to confuse and confound us. He has not predestined this wisdom merely to impress us with His greatness.
2. His wisdom is for our glory. God's wisdom is not just an inwardly turned contemplation but an outwardly turned love.

B. God reveals His wisdom to us.

1. No one knows God as God's Spirit does. He searches even the depths of God's nature. Then He tells us about God through the Scriptures. He can be trusted. His knowledge is trustworthy.
2. Paul and the apostles received this Spirit. Through them we too may know God. We may possess this wisdom. We may enjoy the blessings it brings. God wants us to embrace this wisdom by faith and to enjoy its blessings.

Conclusion: When we look to the world we will not see or enjoy the blessings of God's wisdom. God has revealed to us a different and better kind of wisdom. That wisdom which centers in the cross of Christ makes and keeps us spiritually mature.

DLB

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

February 22, 1981

As the Church encounters the evil forces of the world, conflict results. Church workers begin fighting one another instead of their common enemy. This same tendency shows itself when the morale of a team collapses when it gets behind in a contest. St. Paul wants us to transcend this human tendency. He draws attention to the functions of the persons of the Holy Trinity in the task of empowering, sustaining, and encouraging us in our part in the process of

BUILDING UP THE CHURCH

I. God commissions us to build up the Church.

A. God commissions the architectural plans.

B. God commissions the contract for the building process.

1. A skilled master builder is in charge of each task.
2. He provides instructive guidelines on how one is to build.

II. Jesus Christ provides the foundation for building up the Church.

A. All other foundations are excluded.

1. Exclusion of personality cults.
2. Exclusion of perishable foundations.

B. Jesus Christ provides an imperishable foundation.

III. The Holy Spirit dwells in those who build the Church.

A. He excludes the destroyers of God's temple who will themselves be destroyed.

1. Getting rid of futile worldly wisdom.
2. Getting rid of short-sighted craftiness.

B. The Holy Spirit builds up the church builders.

1. He relates us to our work in an encouraging way saying, "All things are yours . . .": (a) world, (b) life, (c) death, (d) present, (e) future.
2. He puts us into the possession of Christ.
 - a. As Christ is God's and the Father and Son are one, so we are

Christ's.

- b. Our Spirit-given relationship to Christ sustains us through all of the process of building up the Church.

Harold H. Zietlow

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

2 Peter 1:16-19 (20-21)

March 1, 1981

We need the assurance of God's helpful presence in Jesus Christ for forgiveness, providential protection, healing, comfort, and faith in His coming again in majestic glory to fulfill our salvation. The methodical references to the acts of the three persons of the Triune God in 2 Peter 1:16-21 observed by eye-witnesses provide the needed assurance now as it did for those whom Peter addressed. Christ's transfiguration foreshadows His majestic glory when He shall come again. The voice of the Father ascertaining Jesus' majesty adds sound to the picture track of the moving documentary cinema of Christ's authority to forgive, help, and save us. The Holy Spirit, like a mighty, rushing wind moving a ship, moves the holy writers to record the story with all of the details of the

WITNESSES TO CHRIST'S MAJESTY

- I. Eye-witnesses testify of Christ's majestic power and coming.
 - A. The "power" of our Lord Jesus Christ witnesses to His majesty.
 1. The eye-witnesses did not follow cleverly devised myths.
 2. The eye-witnesses testified of what they had seen.
 - B. The manner of Christ's "coming" witnesses to His majesty.
 1. The birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. The coming of Christ into the lives of people today.
- II. Ear-witnesses of the voice of God the Father testify of Christ's majesty.
 - A. The voice borne from heaven gives authority to the witnesses of Christ's majesty.
 - B. Those with Jesus on the holy mountain of transfiguration witnessed His majesty.
- III. Heart-witnesses of the Holy Spirit's prophetic message testify of Christ's majesty.
 - A. We pay attention to the prophetic word.
 1. It is like a lamp shining in a dark place (our culture too).
 2. The prophetic word given by the Holy Spirit sustains us until the day dawns in the transformation of our situation.
 - B. The Holy Spirit witnesses to our hearts, deepening our understanding of His inspiration of the prophetic writers.
 1. No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.
 2. No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man.
 3. Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God, and their message of promise sustains us until the return of the majestic Savior.

HHZ

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 5:12, 17-19

March 8, 1981

Much of what is called "religion" in America today is really only human opinion and speculation. As people consider the great questions surrounding

their status before God and their eternal destiny they are concerned to know the *facts* of religion and not theories which can never engender spiritual confidence. This text affords the pastor the golden opportunity to present the two essential facts of true religion: (1.) All people are sinners by nature and under God's wrath; (2.) All people have been justified by God through the person and work of Christ (i.e., objective justification).

Textual notes: V12: *dī henos anthrōpou* certainly assumes and requires the historicity of Adam and Eve and the Fall account in Gn 3, as does the aorist verb *eiselthen. ho thanatos*: While people may deny or explain away sin, they cannot deny sin's curse since everyone experiences it sooner or later (since infants also die it must follow that infants are sinners and accountable for their inherited sin). *pantas anthrōpous . . . hemarton*: These words leave no person uncondemned before God; the *fact* of original sin must be emphasized in our contemporary milieu of religious pietism and moralism, which always seems to underestimate the seriousness of original sin, which ". . . is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again" (A.C.L. II). Luther reminds us that "this hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that no reason can understand it, but it must be believed from the revelation of Scripture . . . and recognized as the chief sin which is a root and fountainhead of all actual sin" (S.A.; F.C.). Vv17-19 — while we would concur with Lenski that the present participle *lambanontes* refers to "subjective justification," we would take exception to Lenski's bold denial of objective justification (p.382): "This logical future is stressed especially by those who take Paul's words to mean that all men were justified, pardoned, forgiven more than 1900 years ago . . . we have shown the untenableness of this opinion." Vv18 and 19 clearly teach that, while through Adam there is universal culpability, through Christ there is universal justification (cf. Kretzmann's discussion of v18ff); *tēs dōreas* in v17 clearly excludes all works and self-righteousness.

Introduction: So much that is passed off as "religion" today is pure human speculation. In matters as important as our eternal destiny and salvation we want and need the facts.

LET'S HAVE THE FACTS ABOUT RELIGION!

There are two facts we must know:

- I Every human being by nature is a sinner under God's wrath.
 - A. God condemned the entire human race when Adam fell into sin (vv12a, 18a, 19a).
 - B. Our own experience shows that we have inherited Adam's sin since we have obviously inherited the curse on his sin (vv12b, 17a).

Transition: This fact condemns and terrifies us all. But there is another glorious fact we must know which can give us the peace of mind and eternal hope we need.

- II. Every human being has been declared "not guilty" by God.
 - A. Having taken the place for fallen humanity Jesus Christ has earned this "not guilty" verdict from God for the entire human race (vv18b, 19b).
 - B. Through faith in Jesus and His work we can be confident that we will live and rule as kings before God (v17b).
 - C. It is through God's Word and Sacraments that we receive the salvation which Christ earned for the world (v17b, "*hoi . . . lambanontes*").

Conclusion: Our hope for salvation is not based on any human speculation. It is a fact that we are all sinners as the Scriptures tell us only too clearly and as our own experience shows us. But it is also a glorious fact that God

has declared us all not guilty through Christ. Let facts be facts! Live in the certain confidence and joy that you are God's forgiven child as He has told you in His Word and Sacraments.

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SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

March 15, 1981

Synergism has always been a bane for the Christian church. The Christian is always tempted to believe that he can cooperate with God in some small way for his salvation. In the face of all synergism the Christian pastor must cry out with our Lutheran fathers: *Sola Fide!*, "Faith alone!" But even here the pastor must be cautious lest he give the impression that the relative strength of one's faith is a contributing cause to the sinner's justification before God as do many of the fundamentalistic sects in America today. It is the object of faith which justifies — Christ Jesus and His objective atonement for the world! The believer must always be encouraged to look outside himself to God's promises in Word and Sacrament.

Textual notes: V3: *hē graphē*: This is Paul's court of appeal and must always be ours too. *tō theō*: Abraham was not justified merely because he believed, but because he believed *in God*; the forensic nature of *dikaio*s and its cognates must be emphasized — a sinner does not become righteous intrinsically through gifts of grace as Romanism teaches, but is declared innocent by God's gracious verdict for Christ's sake. V5: Paul places side by side the two words *ergazomeno*' and *pisteuonti* to highlight the contrast between the two. *epi ton dikaionta ton asebe*: Again, it is the *object* of faith which Paul emphasizes; furthermore, the forensic nature of justification is clearly taught in this phrase. V13: Note the vivid contrast between works and faith emphasized in the two phrases *ou gar dia nomou* and *alla* (strong adversative) *dia . . . pisteos*. V14: This is a general principle, that the Law always works wrath ("*katargazetai*" is present tense; the word is not *thumos*, an anger which boils up quickly, but *orgē*, a settled, purposeful anger), as our Lutheran Confessions say, "*Lex semper accusans*". V 16: "*bebaian*" — One's salvation and status before a holy God can only be certain if based upon the certain foundation of God's grace alone, for, as Melancthon points out in Apology III, "If the remission of sins depends upon the condition of our works, it is altogether uncertain. For we can never be certain whether we do enough works, or whether our works are sufficiently holy and pure."

Introduction: "*Sola Fide*," "Faith Alone!" This was the battlecry in the Lutheran Reformation. That is, God accepts us sinners to Himself solely and entirely upon the basis of our trust in His promise of forgiveness which Christ has earned for the world. However, people are always tempted to believe that they must do something for God to be His children. But in response to this St. Paul reminds us

WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN BY FAITH ALONE!

- I. God has always accepted people into His family or church on the basis of faith alone.
 - A. Even Abraham, the great Old Testament patriarch, was considered God's child simply because he trusted God's promise (vv3, 13, 17).
 - B. It is a general principle that no one can earn God's promises (vv4, 16).
- Transition:* God has always accepted people into His family upon the basis of faith in His promises alone because —

II. There is no other way in which we sinners could hope to stand before a holy God.

- A. Because we are imperfect sinners, God's perfect Law only intensifies our hopelessness and terror before God's consuming anger (v15).
- B. Our only spiritual hope is found in God, who through the work and merits of Christ declares the sinner "not guilty" (v5).
- C. Trusting in the certain promise of God's forgiveness given us in Word and Sacrament, we can have absolute confidence in God's favor and in our status as God's own children (v16, *bebaian*).

Conclusion: May we never base our hope of salvation in ourselves nor permit anyone to put any conditions upon our forgiveness. We are God's children by faith in God's promise alone. May we live and die with this confession on our lips — "Faith Alone!"

SCB

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Ephesians 5:8-14

March 22, 1981

It is often remarked that the Bible, though written centuries ago, still speaks powerfully to our present age. The proof of the Scriptures' timelessness is seen in our text. These words of Paul present to us the admonition to be what we are — the children of light — and to live as such. The conflict we, God's children, have with the darkness is an ever-present problem. We must know who we are and what we are to be doing. Furthermore, we need to be cognizant of what darkness is and where it leads us. In an age when there is such complacency and confusion about Christian living, Paul presents a very clear and timely message. Much is said in both Old and New Testaments about light and darkness. Of special interest are the use of the terms in John's Gospel and letters. The goal of the sermon is to show the urgency with which we are to pursue a life of obedience to the will of God.

Introduction: We need light for survival. We are not equipped to function in the dark. It is no wonder that light is used to signify that which is good and life-sustaining and darkness used to indicate all that is evil. The Apostle Paul uses these terms to teach important truths about the way in which we should live as God's people.

LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

- I. Living in darkness leads to death.
 - A. The darkness is sin and its power.
 - 1. Sin is the transgression of the Law.
 - 2. The source and power of sin is found in Satan.
 - B. Darkness produces unfruitful works (v11a).
 - 1. Paul speaks of the Ephesians' unfruitful works (Eph 2:2).
 - 2. The media are filled with stories of the unfruitful works of our time.
 - 3. We also produce unfruitful works (See Eph 2:3).
 - C. The consequence of darkness is God's punishment.
 - 1. By God's authority the government recognizes evil and punishes it.
 - 2. The wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23).
 - 3. Jesus, the all-knowing Judge, will punish unrepentant sinners eternally.
- II. Living in the light leads to life.
 - A. Living in the light means we have the light of Christ (Jn 1:4).

1. Christ is the light of the world (Jn 8:12).
2. He did not sin.
3. He paid for sin.
4. He was victorious over sin and death.
- B. Living in the light means that we let our light shine (Mt 5:16).
 1. We seek out goodness, righteousness, and truth (v9).
 2. We examine our behavior so that we may be certain that it pleases God (v10).
- C. Living in the light means that we must react against darkness.
 1. We are to avoid its evil works (v11a).
 2. We are to reprove its shameful deeds (v11b).

Conclusion. Darkness is still very much present in our world. Its end is death. Our only hope is in Christ, the light of the world. He has brought us into His light. Let us, therefore, obey the admonition of the Apostle here and live as children of light!

Gerhard Bode
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FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 8:1-10

March 29, 1981

From the "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" of chapter seven, we come to the beautiful exclamation, "There is now therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus!" The entire eighth chapter of Romans speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit and the new life which He brings to us. It is a beautiful chapter of comfort. "No condemnation!" What an exhilarating statement! What joy it brings to us! And how great a response of thanksgiving it calls forth from us, poor miserable sinners that we are! Paul in these verses brings into sharp focus the difference between life in the Spirit and life after the flesh. We also see here a beautiful and clear description of how God justifies the sinner (vv3-4). The goal of the sermon is to lead the hearers to understand more fully the life which the Holy Spirit brings to us as forgiven sinners.

Introduction: Nothing is impossible with God. He can do anything. We are impressed by His ability to create a vast universe and our marvelous earth. But His greatest work is to take us sinners who are deserving only of eternal punishment and declare us "not guilty" because of the work of His Son. Now, as believers, the old life after the flesh is to be put aside. Now we have life after the Spirit. Yes, thanks be to God, we have life in the Spirit!

THANKS BE TO GOD — WE HAVE LIFE IN THE SPIRIT!

- I. Life in the Spirit means no condemnation (v1).
 - A. We have freedom from sin and death (v2).
 1. Sin and death are our greatest enemies.
 2. By ourselves we are incapable of conquering them.
 - B. God sent His son in the likeness of human flesh to become sin for us (v3).
 1. God did what the Law could not do (v3).
 2. In Christ the just requirement of the Law has been satisfied (v4).
- II. Life in the Spirit means transformation.
 - A. We no longer live after the flesh (v4).
 1. Those who live after the flesh seek the flesh (v5).
 2. They are hostile toward God (v7).

3. They do not submit to God's Law (v7).
4. They cannot please God (v8).
5. They end in death (v6).
- B. Now we live after the Spirit.
 1. We set our minds on the Spirit (v5).
 2. We have peace and life (v6).

Conclusion: Let us give thanks to a loving and merciful God who has done what no one else could do — save sinners. Let us give thanks by living for Him — by celebrating the life we have in the Spirit!

GB

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 8:11-19

April 5, 1981

V11: "If": the if of reality. "The Spirit dwells in you," Jn 14:16-18, 23. "Quicken your mortal bodies": see 1 Cor 15:53ff. We are wholly redeemed, body and soul; cf. Jn 6:39-40, 44-45. "By the Spirit": because of the Spirit. Note that the three persons of the Trinity are mentioned. V12: "Debtors": people under obligation. "Flesh": the flesh viewed as a power. We are debtors to the Spirit, Ga 3:26. V13: "To die": to die forever. "Through the spirit": through the new spiritual nature. "Mortify": if you keep up this killing, you will continue to live, Ga 5:24; 1 Cor 9:27. V14: "Spirit of God": the efficient cause. "Sons": sons by adoption. V15: "Fear": the slavish dread of punishment. "Spirit of adoption": our spirit, Ga 4:6, the new spiritual nature. "Cry": exclaim, like a boy in distress who cries, "Father." "Abba": Aramaic for father. V16: "The Spirit testifies" through the written Word. "Children of God" are born in regeneration. V17: "Heirs": cf. Ga 4:7. Our inheritance is what God has promised, eternal life. "Joint heirs": co-heirs. Christ is the supreme heir who has entered His inheritance, cf. 1 Cor 15:23. "Suffer with Him": suffer for His sake, Mt 10:38; 16:24; Ga 6:12. To evade the suffering is to refuse to bear the cross, Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23. V18: "Which shall be revealed": which is about to be revealed. "Sufferings of this present time": suffering in general, He 12:4-12. "Not worthy": the idea is that of weight. The glory outweighs the suffering, 1 Jn 3:2. V19: "For the creation's watching with outstretched head is waiting it out for the revelation of the sons of God." "With outstretched head": intently. "The creation": the creature world.

Introduction: Plastic surgery is a modern wonder. It can recreate a face marred in an automobile accident. We have been recreated spiritually.

YOU ARE A NEW PERSON

- I. We are children of God.
 - A. We have received the spirit of adoption (v15).
 1. By nature we could only be afraid (v15) because we were sinful and deserved punishment.
 2. The Holy Spirit regenerated us through the Word, Tt 3:5; Jn 3:1-15; Ro 1:16-17.
 - B. Now we have a new spiritual life.
 1. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (v16), Ro 5:5.
 2. He pours into our hearts holy desires, like prayer (v15), Ro 7:22.
 - C. Now we have the call to live like children.
 1. We are not debtors to the flesh (v12).
 - a. Our sinful nature tempts us, Ro 7:18.

b. To live to the flesh brings death (v13).

2. We are to mortify the deeds of the body (v13), Ga 5:24; 1 Cor 9:27.

Application: Rejoice in being a child. Live like a child.

II. We are heirs.

A. Now we may have to endure suffering (vv17-18).

1. Much of our suffering is self-inflicted.

2. The Lord chastens whom He loves, He 12:6.

3. We suffer at times also for His sake and the Gospel's, Mt 10:10ff.

B. Yet we have the hope of glory (v18).

1. All creation looks forward to it (v19).

2. We shall receive it.

a. Our souls will be with Christ.

b. On the last day our bodies will be raised and glorified (v11), 1 Cor 15.

c. The glory shall outweigh the suffering of this life. We shall be forever with the Lord, 1 Th 4:17.

Application: "Fight on, my soul, till death shall bring thee to thy God."

Conclusion: Remade, indeed. Thanks to the Spirit we are children and heirs.

HJE

PALM SUNDAY

Philippians 2:5-11

April 12, 1981

V5: "Let this mind": keep minding the one thing, namely, lowly-mindedness. "In": in the case of. V6: "Christ Jesus": His office and person. He is subject of all that follows in vv6-11. "He who existed in God's form," Jn 1:1. "Not robbery": not a thing of snatching, a thing for self-glorification, a prize for display, Col 2:9. V7: "Made Himself of no reputation": Himself He emptied, 2 Cor 8:9, namely, in that He took a slave's form when He came to be in men's likeness. "Likeness": In the incarnation Christ did not cease to be God. Even in the midst of death He had to be the mighty God. "Slave's form" refers to the humiliation. V8: "In fashion": Christ was truly human, except for sin, Jn 8:46; He 7:26; 4:15. "Humbled": abased. "Obedient" refers to voluntary obedience. "Death of the cross": death of one accursed of God, Dt 21:23; Ga 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21. Luther: "If I permit myself to be persuaded that only the human nature has suffered for me, then Christ is to me a poor Savior, then He Himself indeed needs a Savior." V9: "Exalted Him": Only the human nature could experience the exaltation. The full use of the divine attributes communicated to the human nature at the incarnation constitute the exaltation, Mt 23:12; Jn 17:5. "A name, the one above every name": see Eph 1:9-10; 20-24. "Name" equals revelation, that by which God and Christ alone can be known. V10: "Every knee": heavenly ones, earthly ones, subterranean ones. The devils and unbelievers shall bow, not with joy, but with dismay; cf. Col 2:15; 1Pe 3:18-20. V11. "Confess": acknowledge. Glory to God the Father": the glory of His grace, Eph 1:6.12.14.

Introduction: The world does not rate humility very high. It says, "Blessed are the strong who can hold their own." Jesus says: "Blessed are the meek" (Mt 5). "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Jas 4:6).

A TIME FOR HUMILITY

I. Christ humbled Himself.

A. He was in the form of God (Jn 1:1-14).

1. He claimed to be God (Jn 10:30; Jn 1:1).

2. He demonstrated by His miracles that He was God; He predicted His passion.
3. He confessed His deity before Caiaphas (Mt 26:64) and Pilate (Mt 27: 11).
- B. Yet He served (cf. O.T. lesson).
 1. He did not always use the divine qualities He had.
 2. He became obedient unto death.
 - a. He willingly suffered (Jn 10:11; Is 53:7).
 - b. He suffered for us (1 Pe 3:18; Is 53:4-5).
- C. "Let this mind be in you."
 1. Greatness in the kingdom comes through humble service.
 - a. By regarding others above self (v3).
 - b. By serving one another (Mt 20:26-28).
 2. Arenas for humble service are manifold.
 - a. Home (Eph 5:24 — 6:4).
 - b. The congregation (2 Cor 13:11).
 - c. Society (Ro 13:1ff).
 3. The greatest service we can render to anyone is to share the Gospel (Ac 1:8; Mt 28:18-20).
- II. Christ was exalted.
 - A. God raised up Christ.
 1. To show His acceptance as a sacrifice (Ro 4:25).
 2. To declare Christ to be the Son of God (Ro 1:4).
 - B. God set Christ at His own right hand (Eph 1:20-23; 4:10).
 1. He has a name above every name: King of kings and Lord of lords, (1 Tm 6:15; Re 17:14; 19:16; Is 9:6-7).
 - a. The God-man is exalted.
 - b. He is head of all things for the sake of the church (Eph 1:22).
 2. Before Him every knee shall bow.
 - a. The devil and all who were enemies of the cross in this life shall do so reluctantly.
 - b. Christians shall do so joyfully throughout eternity (Re 7:9-14).
 - i. Christians are exalted already in this life (1 Pe 2:9).
 - ii. In heaven we shall be glorified (2 Tm 4:8).
 3. "And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."
 - a. We do that now already in worship and witness (Mt 21:1-9).
 - b. In heaven we shall join the angels in singing: "Worthy is the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne" (Re 5:11).
 - C. We shall be exalted.
 1. Our exaltation to eternal life is God's gift to us, Mt 25:34.
 2. This hope should encourage us to live lives of humble service, Mt 25:14ff.; 1 Jn 3:3.

Conclusion: How great our hope is in Christ. What an incentive for us to be humble servants of our Lord by sharing with others the good news of Christ, our King, who once came in meekness but now reigns as King of Kings.

HJE

MAUNDY THURSDAY

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

April 16, 1981

The Lord's Supper is a feast and not a sacrifice, a feast in which the offering is eaten. At this supper the Lord is the host. Nor is the Lord's Supper merely a

commemoration, but a feast of union with the Lord and a communion with the other participants (1 Cor 10:17). Jesus gave thanks for the bread and the wine as vehicles for the nourishment and strengthening of the spiritual life. With this blessing He consecrated the bread and the wine for a new and holy purpose in the Sacrament; they were to be the bearers of the body and blood of the Lord. Jesus' words in the text are His last will and testament. It is the duty of a testator to use plain and simple words, avoiding terms that are misleading. The beneficiary has the right and also the duty to abide by the literal interpretation. Accordingly, we believe that when we receive and eat the bread we receive and eat Christ's body, and when we receive and drink the wine we receive and drink Christ's blood. Both bread and wine and body and blood are present. This is a deep mystery.

Introduction: When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper He called it a "new covenant." A covenant is ordinarily a contract or agreement between two parties. The Lord's Supper, however, is a unilateral contract in the sense that Christ instituted it for no other reason than that He loved us. Tonight let us look more closely at

THE NEW COVENANT OF JESUS CHRIST

- I. It is a clear covenant.
 - A. There is no indication that Christ intended His words (vv24-25) to be understood in any but a plain literal sense.
 1. He did not say that the bread and the wine represent His body and blood.
 2. He did not say that the bread and the wine change into His body and blood.
 - B. We believe what Christ said even if we do not understand how it is possible for His body and blood to be present.
 1. We do not fully understand what electricity is, how the body transforms food into energy, how a seed produces a plant.
 2. It should not surprise us to find things beyond our understanding in God's ways with us.
- II. It is a gracious covenant.
 - A. Jesus offers us Himself.
 1. Since we receive His body given for us on the cross and His blood shed for our sins, we can be sure that we are also receiving forgiveness and salvation.
 2. Christ's real presence is a powerful assurance of His grace.
 - B. Jesus offers us fellowship with God.
 1. The barrier of sin between us and God has been removed.
 2. No sin need disrupt our relationship to God.
 - C. Jesus offers us fellowship with one another (1 Cor 10:17).
 1. We are one body in Christ.
 2. Our participation in this covenant testifies to a unity of faith.
- III. It is a responsible covenant.
 - A. We are to partake as believing people.
 1. Believing that Christ is really present.
 2. Believing that we receive in and with the bread and wine His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.
 - B. We are to proclaim His death until He comes (v26).
 1. By living as forgiven people.
 2. By being His instruments through which He carries out His work in the world.

Conclusion: In His new covenant Christ is saying to us, "I am your Lord. I gave myself for you. Now I give myself to you." Let us respond by saying, "We are your people. We believe in you. We want to live for you."

GA

GOOD FRIDAY

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

April 17, 1981

After exhorting and warning in vv11-13, the author takes up the main argument of the epistle, already alluded to in 1:3, 2:17f., and 3:1, namely, the priestly work of Jesus as superior to that of the Levitical line (4:4-12:3). V14: Jesus has passed through the spheres of the created heavens (perfect active participle of *dierchomai* indicating a state of completion) into heaven itself; that is, He is before the face of God (9:24). Unlike the Levitical high priest who passed through the veil to the earthly symbol of eternal glory, the "great high priest" passed through the heavens to the eternal glory itself. Since they have such a high priest, the readers are exhorted to "hold fast" both their inward faith and their confession of it before men. The present active subjunctive (*kratōmen*) means to keep on clinging to tenaciously. V15: Even though Jesus is such a great high priest, He can still sympathize with our weaknesses and understand our trials. Even though Jesus did not sin, it does not follow that He could not in His human nature have personal experience of temptation. Jesus felt the power of the tempter to seduce. V16: We can keep on coming to our high priest, confident that we will receive mercy and well-timed help.

According to the opening verse of chapter five, Jesus has the necessary qualities of a high priest, for He was chosen from among men and appointed by God. V2: The Levitical priests were able to show compassion to the erring because they themselves experienced weakness, infirmity (*astheneian*). V3: Their sin offering for themselves, first of all, was a prominent part of the ceremonial of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). V6: The quotation from Ps 110:4 shows that Christ's entry into His kingly priesthood, a priesthood that would never end, was prefigured by Melchizedek, who prior to the Aaronic priesthood united in himself the office of priest and king. Vv7-8: Christ was prepared and consecrated for the eternal priesthood which He entered after the human experience of suffering. V9: Having been made perfect (*teleiōtheis*, aorist passive participle), having completed the process of training, He became forever after the author, not of a mere ceremonial cleansing or temporary remission of guilt, but of eternal salvation. His one oblation of Himself upon the cross "at once consummated His consecration to the priesthood and effected the atonement." He offered one sacrifice for sins forever (10:12) and after His resurrection entered His eternal office of mediation on the basis of that one sacrifice.

The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would experience Christ's involvement as the great high priest in their daily lives. The problem is that Christ as the great high priest is often viewed more intellectually than experientially. The means to the goal is Christ's sympathy for us in a life marred by sin and His sacrifice for our sins.

Introduction: Good Friday impresses upon us Christ's intimate involvement with our existence. His death as well as the suffering that preceded it testify that He is what the text calls Him, a priest.

JESUS IS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

I. He sympathizes with us as no other can.

- A. With our weaknesses (v15).
 - 1. The Old Testament priest was able to sympathize with people in their weakness because he himself was beset with weaknesses (v2).
 - 2. Although Jesus had no sin, He felt the power of temptation to seduce as it worked through His human fear, desire, indignation, hope and joy.
 - 3. He knows how severe temptation can be for us.
- B. With our sufferings.
 - 1. In Gethsemane and on Calvary He endured suffering far greater than that endured by any Old Testament priest or anyone before or since (v7; Mt 26:39; Lk 22:44f).
 - 2. He pleaded with God to help Him and then was obedient to His Father's will.
 - 3. No matter what kind of suffering we go through, spiritual, mental, or physical, we can be sure that He sympathizes with us and will help us before it is too late (v16).

Transition: The temptations Christ faced and the suffering He endured culminated in the cross.

II. He offered a sacrifice no other could.

- A. A sacrifice to end all sacrifices.
 - 1. The Old Testament priest had to offer sacrifices continually for his own sins and for those of the people (v3).
 - 2. Christ offered the sacrifice of Himself, not for His own sins, but for ours (7:26-27). His resurrection and ascension proved the completeness of His sacrifice (v14).
 - 3. There is no need for us to do anything to make up for our sins. Christ took care of sin once and for all on the cross.
- B. A sacrifice that is the source of eternal salvation.
 - 1. God Himself designated Christ to be a priest whose sacrifice is eternally valid.
 - 2. He is the source of salvation for us as long as we obey Him, that is, believe in Him as our great high priest (v9).

Conclusion: God may sometimes seem far removed from us in our sin and temptation and suffering. Yet we know that Jesus is our great high priest whose sympathy sustains us and whose sacrifice renews us.

GA

EASTER SUNDAY

Colossians 3:1-4

April 19, 1981

Paul has shown in the preceding chapter that when his readers were baptized they died with Christ (2:20), were buried, and then were raised and made alive with Him (2:11-13). In this way they were restored to favor with God (1:21-23; 2:13), severed from their old life of sin (2:11), and set in the path of holiness (1:22). Now he reminds them (v1) that they can master the flesh by rising above it instead of fighting it on its own ground by ceremonial rites and ascetic rules. "The things that are above" (*ta anō*), the upward things (Php 3:14), are not abstract, transcendental conceptions, for they are where Christ is. His presence gives distinctness to our view of heaven and concentrates our interests there. "Seated" is placed with emphasis at the end of the clause in Greek to indicate the completeness of Christ's work and the dignity of His position. We are to "set" our mind on (*phroneite*), keep on thinking about the things above so that things

on earth, though we think about them too, do not become our master. The source of and power for such heavenly-mindedness spring from the life which came about through having died with Christ (v3). The aorist *apethanete* denotes the past act and the perfect *kekruptai* ("has been and is hid") the permanent effects. The Christian's life centers in Christ. As Christ is hidden, withdrawn from the world of sense, yet always with us in His Spirit, so is our life with Him. And if it is with Christ, then it is in God, for "Christ is God's" (1 Cor 3:23). "No hellish burglar can break that combination." The term "hid" points to the mystery of Christ dwelling in believing hearts. Our life is not only with Christ, but it is Christ (v4), for He is its source and means and end. Since His ascension He has been hidden from physical sight; but when Christ appears, that is, whenever He is manifested (*hotan . . . phanerōthē*, a reference to the second coming), we will see Him in His glory (1 Jn 3:2), and we will be like Him. Our spiritual life will find organic expression also in a perfect and heavenly body.

The central thought of the text is that life in Christ makes for heavenly-minded living. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers will live on a higher level than the earthly. The problem is that the world is too much with us. The means to the goal is our life in the resurrected and ascended Christ.

Introduction: The Gospel for today assures us that Jesus lives. "Because I live," Jesus promises, "you will live also" (Jn 14:19) — not just in a physical, earthly way, but in a higher heavenly way. Christ's resurrection reminds us that

WE CAN LIVE ON A HIGHER LEVEL

- I. Because we have died to sin (v3a).
 - A. Our sinful nature was buried with Christ in baptism (Col 2:12a); Ro 6:3-4).
 1. Since we are not yet rid of sin in our bodies, we continue to feel its effects.
 - a. We may become preoccupied with things earthly — making money, acquiring things, getting ahead.
 - b. Our minds may dwell on evil rather than on good, envying and lusting and coveting.
 - c. We sometimes forget that evil thoughts, as the ancient collect for the second Sunday in Lent puts it, do "assault and hurt the soul."
 2. Yet we can consider ourselves dead to sin (Ro 6:11a).
 - a. When Christ rose He destroyed sin's control over us (Col 2:11).
 - b. Our baptism enables us to crucify the sinful flesh (Ro 6:6).
 - B. Christ's power is available to us to put down sin in our bodies.
 1. The same power He displayed in His resurrection He now used fully at God's right hand (v3b). As the living, ascended Lord, He gives us power to live on a higher level. We do not have to set our minds "on things that are on earth" (v2). Nor do we have to occupy our minds with what is sensual and mean. Rather we can think on those things that are good and right and noble and true. Our thoughts are important. "As a man thinks within himself, so he is" (Prov. 23:7, NAS).
- II. Because we have been raised with Christ.
 - A. We were made spiritually alive in our baptism.
 1. Through faith in the forgiveness that Christ's resurrection guarantees us (Col 2:12-13).
 2. So that we are now sensitive to God's thoughts toward us.
 - B. Our life is hid with Christ (v3).
 1. Christ is withdrawn from the world of sense, yet with us always.

2. It is a mystery how we can be in Christ and He in us.
3. Christ in us (Ga 2:20), draws us to Himself, and enables us to think His own thoughts (2 Cor 5:14-15; Ro 12:2; 1 Cor 2:16).
- C. Our life will be manifested when Christ appears (v4).
 1. Our living Lord will come again, and then we shall be like Him in glory (v4; 1 Jn 3:2).
 2. Our life in Christ will have perfect bodily expression (1 Cor 15:35-49; 2 Cor 5:1-5).

Conclusion: Living on the earth, we cannot avoid thinking about earthly things. Yet neither earthliness nor earthiness sets the tone for our living. We Christians can live on a higher level because we have died to sin and because we have been raised with Christ.

GA

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 Peter 1:3-9

April 26, 1981

This pericope lends itself very well to the continuing celebration of Easter. While our joy in the resurrected Christ is tied ultimately to our own resurrection from the dead and eternal life, our celebration of new life takes place in the world now. We have learned with believers of all ages that we do not have smooth sailing. Our faith is put to the test regularly. This lesson leads us to recognize trials as a part of our lives until the end comes. It offers an explanation as to the purpose of these unpleasant events but, above all, power in the risen Christ to stand the tests.

Introduction: The resurrection of Jesus from the dead brought to an end the power of our common enemies, sin, death and Satan. A reasonable conclusion might be drawn that life for the people of God should be pleasant, a mere step away from heaven. It is true that the victory is complete and it is ours. But the battles continue to rage in the form of tests which God permits to come our way. Our Father did not limit the power of the resurrection to an empty tomb. That power is dramatically shown in every believer's life as it comes to aid them in time of trial. We must not feel cheated that trials come to us, easy as that might be; but we can be comforted, strengthened, purified, and even downright delighted with them because through Christ we stand the tests. These are the things Peter leads us to consider today because

YOUR LIFE IN THE RISEN CHRIST IS BEING TESTED

- I. Life in the risen Christ is a gift of God.
 - A. He raised Him from the dead.
 1. The Gospel for today continues to proclaim the joyous, astounding resurrection of Jesus.
 2. God has established through this act that our enemies have been defeated for us by Christ (Ro 4:25, Jn 14:19).
 - B. He gives us a new life of hope.
 1. God mercifully connects us to Christ by giving us a new birth (v3).
 2. This new birth qualifies us for an indestructible, undefiled, unfading inheritance in heaven (v4).
 3. This fact fills us with unspeakable joy through believing (v8). We get what by faith we are looking for (v9).
- II. The tests in this new life can be severe.
 - A. Every Christian has them.

1. The people to whom Peter wrote were scattered because of persecution. They suffered the burdens of refugees along with continued attacks on their faith (v6).
2. Today, Christians suffer the same age-old trials; only the details are different. (Here the preacher may elaborate on conditions which currently try to pull people away from Christ.)
- B. The purpose of these tests is to strengthen and purify (v7).
 1. We do, to be sure, deserve punishment for the sins which are always present and for which we should and do repent. But forgiven people are not punished to "pay for sin."
 2. Tests strengthen our spiritual muscles as we exercise our faith during them.
 3. Tests also burn away impurities. In times of stress we learn what is valuable and what is not (v7).
- C. These tests are temporary (v6).
 1. Very few people can claim to have had a particular trial all their lives.
 2. God mercifully sets boundaries of time and severity for trials (cf. Job).
- III. The new life in the resurrected Christ stands the test.
 - A. We are protected by God's power.
 1. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead protects believers.
 2. This protection is given during the fight to guard us from losing our grip on Christ. We are not kept out of the trial; we are in it — yet safe. To be beaten by adversity means that we have deliberately decided to be overcome (cf. a soldier who takes off his helmet during combat).
 - B. We will receive commendation when Christ comes again (v7b).
 1. Christ will praise and honor us on the last day because we endured through His gifts. That is His will.
 2. We will accept His praise because He wants us to have it. His praise of us compliments His mercy toward us.
 - C. Until then, our lives are filled with joy in spite of tests.
 1. So many feel there can be no joy until they die and go to heaven.
 2. We have joy now. It is that quality of mind and heart which is certain of victory, no matter how dark the days.
 3. We do not strive for joy. We are filled with it by God as He gives us life in the risen Christ.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 Peter 1:17-21

May 3, 1981

Introduction: The First Epistle of Peter was written to Christians who had been scattered around the world by persecution, driven from their home towns and countries and forced to take up residence in a strange land. Thus, their situation of being in a strange land was easily likened by Peter to being a stranger, or a visitor in the world as a whole. In the same way, we who are living today are in the world temporarily. We shall be living somewhere else someday, and so we are strangers here — people on a visit — staying here just to work under God for a while. We continue to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus as children of God living a worthwhile life now. It is seldom easy. In fact, conditions around us often prompt the question,

CAN A CHILD OF GOD LIVE A WORTHWHILE LIFE IN A STRANGE LAND?

- I. Yes! God is your Father (v17).
 - A. He is not your Father because He preferred you to someone else (17b).
 1. Some think that they are responsible for being God's children — that all they have to do is call Him "Father" without any true regard for Him in the heart (Mt 15:8).
 2. God gives preferential treatment to no one. He judges them all with the same standard. He loves all with the same intensity.
 - B. He is your Father because He bought your freedom with a great price (v18-19).
 1. Silver and gold could not pay for our sins.
 2. It took the precious blood of Jesus, the Lamb without a fault or spot (v19).
 3. Your freedom was complete when God raised Him from the dead (v21).
- Transition:* The worthwhile life of a Christian begins with believing that God is his Father through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a child of God can live a worthwhile life because
- II. The worthwhile life has been revealed to you.
 - A. It is not the worthless life which you inherited from your natural fathers. You were freed from the worthless life you inherited (v18).
 1. For the Jews it was the man-made traditions that had been appended to the laws of God.
 2. For the Gentiles it was pagan gods and superstitions.
 3. For us, who have such diverse backgrounds, it is any unchristian peculiarity that our folk had, which we still practice or hold as an attitude which governs our lives.
 - B. The worthwhile life is one that is attached to God by faith in Jesus.
 1. Faith is important. Your faith and hope rest in God (v21b).
 2. We must remember that without faith in Christ, everything we do has no value before God and only temporary value to men.
 3. Faith in Christ makes all that our hands touch possibly works that will last eternally. God notes them.
 - C. The worthwhile life is lived reverently.
 1. This is a two-pronged reverence or "fear": fear of sin and its consequences; fear of offending our loving Father. Both are avoided by *loving*.
 2. We who have accepted the Gospel are purified so that we can love one another.
 3. The life that is worthwhile is the one that copies the love of God. There is no better tribute that can be paid to a Christian than this: He loved his fellowman (1 Jn 3,4).

LFT

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 Peter 2:19-25

May 10, 1981

In St. Peter's world it was not unusual for Christians to suffer unjustly at the hands of those in authority over them. According to 1 Pe 1:6, Christians were already suffering, and Peter indicates in 1 Pe 4:12 that they could expect more of the same. Although our world differs from the world of St. Peter in many ways,

Christians can still expect to suffer unjustly. At school, home, and work those who have authority over us sometimes use their authority to make life difficult for us. Although we may not be brought to a martyr's death, life can be made very unpleasant for us. What is a Christian supposed to do? Follow the example of Christ!

In vv22-25 Peter draws on the picture of Christ's suffering as recorded in Is 53. Four times he refers to the way Christ endured suffering as foretold by the prophet. However, he makes it clear that our Lord has given us much more than a mere example to follow. Jesus suffered the consequences we deserve for our own sin (v24). His suffering means that we are restored to the fold of God (v25). Remembering this truth gives us the motivation to follow in His steps (v21). When we follow in His steps we can be certain that we are doing the right thing (vv19-20).

The central thought of the text is that the Christ who endured suffering for us shows us the way to endure suffering even when we are in the right. The goal is that the hearers would follow the example of Christ and patiently endure unjust suffering.

Introduction: The world has a way of dealing with those who cause unjust suffering. As one bumper sticker says: "I don't get mad — I just get even." Jesus has a different approach to the whole issue of unjust suffering. We do well to follow His example.

SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCES

- I. We are rescued from suffering the consequences we deserve as sinners.
 - A. We deserve to suffer because of our sin.
 1. We are all guilty of sin (Ro 3:10-12, 23).
 - a. We are like straying sheep who have wandered away (v25; Is 53:6).
 - b. God is offended by our wandering ways (Eze 36:22,23).
 2. Those who are guilty deserve punishment (Mal 4:1; Is 13:11).
 - a. It does not always work that way in human courts.
 - b. It always works that way with God (Ro 2:6, 12; 6:23).
 - B. Jesus suffered the consequences we deserve.
 1. He did nothing to suffer the fate of a sinner (Is 53:8,9).
 - a. He was no straying sheep (v22).
 - b. He was the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11).
 2. He suffered so we could be restored to the fold of God (I Pe 3:18).
 - a. His suffering for us opened the way back to God (v24; Ro 5:2).
 - b. His wounds heal the wounds suffered by straying sheep (v24; 1 Jn 1:7).
 - c. Instead of wandering like lost sheep, we can follow the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (v25; Jn 10:27-28).
- II. We suffer as a consequence of following Christ.
 - A. All followers of Christ face the prospect of unjust suffering.
 1. This is not the suffering we bring upon ourselves when we do wrong (v20; I Pe 4:15).
 2. This suffering comes when we do right (vv19-20).
 - a. Some Christians expect a life free of suffering (Mt 13:20,21).
 - b. Jesus never promised a life without suffering (Mt 10:17-18; 16:24).
 - i. His disciples suffered unjustly (Mt 24:9; 2 Cor 11:24-26).
 - ii. We can expect the same (Ac 14:22; I Pe 4:12).
 - B. We are called to patient endurance.
 1. We are tempted to fight back.

- a. We are tempted to condemn those who make us suffer (Lk 12:13).
- b. We are tempted to seek revenge (2 Tm 4:14).
2. We have the example of Christ to guide us (v21).
 - a. He did not condemn those who made Him suffer and neither should we (v23; Mt 26:62-63).
 - b. He trusted God and so should we (v23; 1 Pe 4:19).
 - c. He was approved by God and we will be also (vv19-20; Mt 5:10-12).

Conclusion: It is never easy to endure suffering when we have done what is right; however, we are not called to do what is easy. We are called to follow Christ. Because Christ suffered for our sins, we can bear up under the suffering that comes to us as Christ's followers.

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 Peter 2:4-10

May 17, 1981

The Scriptures contain many different pictures of the Christian Church — the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the flock of Christ. Perhaps the most well-known picture is found in this text in which St. Peter describes the Church as a "spiritual house" (see also Eph 2:9-22). This spiritual house is made up of "living stones" which are built upon a living "cornerstone" (vv5-6). It is most fitting that Peter describes the Christian Church in this way. The name Peter symbolizes the intention of Jesus to use living stones to build a living Church wherever men and women share Peter's confession, "You are the Christ" (Mt 16:15-18).

This text carries a powerful message to an age in which people are tempted to dismantle the living Church and reconstruct a more modern version. For some people the reconstruction means replacing the living Cornerstone — Jesus Christ. However, no matter what new cornerstones are substituted the results will always be disastrous (vv7-8). The same disastrous results await those who would keep Christ as the living Cornerstone but replace the other living stones with lifeless ones. This spiritual house is not built of lifeless stones. Either people serve as a "royal priesthood" or they have no part in the living Church (vv5, 9).

The central thought of the text is that the Church is no lifeless institution; rather, it is a living community of believers in Christ who live as a holy priesthood continually offering spiritual sacrifices to God. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would fulfill their roles as living stones in the temple of God.

Introduction: A church is constructed of many different materials; and yet, those materials do not make the Church. The true Church is constructed of very unusual materials — materials that are not cold and lifeless. They cannot be sawed, hammered, or welded. These materials are living. They are

LIVING STONES FOR THE LIVING CHURCH

- I. Jesus is the living Cornerstone of the Church.
 - A. Some have tried to replace Jesus as the living Cornerstone (v4).
 1. Other stones may appear more precious.
 - a. The Jewish leaders preferred rules and regulations (Mt 23:4).
 - b. The cults offer new teachings (Ac 17:21; 2 Tm 4:3-4).
 2. Other stones are deceptive.
 - a. Those who build on the cornerstone of the Law are condemned (Ga 2:16; 3:10).
 - b. Those who build on the speculation of cults are disappointed (Ac 4:12).

3. When other stones are laid as a cornerstone, men will stumble over Jesus to their own eternal ruin (vv7-8; Ro 1:18).
- B. Only Jesus is chosen and precious as the Cornerstone (v4; I Cor 3:11).
 1. God has established Him as the Cornerstone (v6).
 - a. God spoke His approval (Mt 3:17; 17:5).
 - b. God confirmed Him by the resurrection (Ro 1:4).
 2. Those who come to this living Cornerstone find Him precious (v7).
 - a. They experience a marvelous change (v10).
 - i. They become part of the people of God (Eph 2:11-13; 19-22).
 - ii. They receive mercy (Is 1:18).
 - b. They will never be disappointed (v6).
- II. Believers in Christ are living stones built upon the living Cornerstone.
 - A. To be living stones means that we serve God in a holy priesthood (v5).
 1. In the Old Testament only a few were able to serve as priests and offer sacrifices.
 2. Today all Christians have the privilege of serving as priests and offering sacrifices (v9).
 - a. God does not want bloody sacrifices (He 9:12).
 - b. God wants spiritual sacrifices (v5; Ro 12:1).
 - i. He wants the sacrifice of personal devotion (He 13:15).
 - ii. He wants the sacrifice of service to others (He 13:16).
 - B. Some want to be stones in God's temple, but they do not want to be living stones that serve in a holy priesthood.
 1. Some are content to let others serve as priests.
 2. Some think they can retire from this priesthood.
 - C. God will not tolerate lifeless stones in His temple (Re 3:15,16).
 1. He built us into His temple at great cost (I Pe 1:18-19).
 2. He wants us to serve continually (2 Cor 5:15).

Conclusion: What a privilege it is for us to be living stones in the living Church! May God enable us to fulfill our calling.

LWM

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 Peter 3:15-18

May 24, 1981

V15: The divinity of Christ is expressed in *hagiazō*, used also of the Father in the Lord's Prayer ("hallowed be Thy name," Mt 6:9). Cf. also Is 8:13. We are to be prepared to make a defense of our hope, and our hope is Christ. Lenski says that *apologia* is "the regular term for the defense which a defendant makes before a judge." The idea here is that Christ and the Christian are on trial before the world; the world is watching us to see if being a Christian makes any difference. The "defense" of Christ is our testimony of Him, given by our words and life style. We should bear this testimony with *prautes* (cf. 1 Cor 4:21; Ga 6:1; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; and especially Ga 5:23, where it is one of the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit). Our defense is also made with *phobou*. What does this mean? 1 Pe 3:14 says, "have no fear of them." But here *phobos* means proper respect (cf. 1 Pe 1:17; 2:18; 3:2). The RSV translation "reverence" is misleading. The TEV is better: "Do it with gentleness and respect." V16: Evil spoken against the Christian will be silenced by the Christian's good conduct more than by his words. The juxtaposition of *katalaleisthe* and *kataischunthōsin* emphasizes the boomerang effect of speaking evil against the Christian. Those who revile "good behavior in Christ" will be put to shame (cf. Zch 2:8-9). V17: 1 Pe 2:20b expresses

the same thought. The Christian will be persecuted for doing the right thing. Cf. 2 Tm 3:12. This is our cross, which we bear for Jesus. V18: Here is a *sedes doctrinae* for the Gospel: "Christ died for our sins once for all." Christ cannot be re-sacrificed in the canon of the mass. He died *once*. Christ was our substitute upon the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous. The consequence of this fact is expressed in the *hina* clause, "that he might bring us to God." We cannot approach God, much less live with Him in heaven forever, until our problem of sinfulness is settled. The datives in *sarki* and *pneumati* are datives of respect. Christ died in the flesh, i.e., in the state of humiliation, and He was made alive in the spirit, i.e., in the state of glorification. 1 Pe 3:18b should not be interpreted to mean that Christ died "according to His human nature" and was raised "according to His divine nature."

Introduction: If you had a dear friend who was on trial, and you were asked to be a character witness for him, you would certainly consent. Christ is "on trial" before the world, and you have been subpoenaed by the Holy Spirit to testify for Him.

SUBPOENAED TO TESTIFY FOR CHRIST

- I. Testify for Jesus by your style of speaking (v15).
 - A. God wants gentleness in our witnessing.
 1. The news of Jesus is sweet.
 2. Therefore, our manner of speaking should be sweet.
 - B. God wants respect for others in our witnessing.
 1. Know the personal needs of others to whom you speak.
 2. Speak when they will listen.
- II. Testify for Jesus by your life-style (v16-17).
 - A. Live with a clear conscience.
 1. We are continually forgiven because of Christ.
 2. We have joy in not having to "wear a mask."
 - B. You may have to suffer for doing the right thing (cf. 2 Tm 3:12).
- III. Testify for Jesus by telling what He did (v18).
 - A. The righteous one died for all the unrighteous.
 1. He died once — salvation is finished.
 2. He died for all.
 - B. He has risen from the dead.

Conclusion: Georgi Vins and many Soviet Christians have suffered for their faith in Jesus. Their godly life-style and bold speech have had a great impact on the world. What about you?

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THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Ephesians 1:16-23

May 28, 1981

V16: This verse looks back to v15. Paul thanks God because he has heard good things about the Ephesian Christians — their faith in Jesus and their love towards one another. But the verse also looks forward and gives us the clue to what the rest of the text is. Both the Greek text and the RSV punctuate verses 15-23 as one sentence. The central thought is really Paul's intercessory prayer for the church at Corinth, which could well be a pastor's prayer for his congregation. The NEB punctuation is helpful for making an outline of the text.

V17: The knowledge of God is the key thought in this verse. Lenski comments

on *epignōsis* and says it is "the knowledge which really apprehends God, true realization in the heart and not merely that of the intellect." It should be a knowledge of God like that of Abraham, who "was called the friend of God" (Jas 2:23). We only know God personally through God the Son, Jesus (Jn 14:7).

V18-19: Paul moves on from a prayer for personal knowledge of God to knowledge of the hope which belongs to the Christian. NEB: "I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you." The hope is in the "inheritance" and the "power." This same inheritance is portrayed in 1 Pe 1:4, and power is granted to the Christian now in this age. Cf. 2 Tm 1:7. We must be careful not to forget the power that God gives us and let our Christianity deteriorate into mere religiosity. Cf. 2 Tm 3:5. The living God is with us!

V20-21: The two complementary aorist participles state how God wrought His power: *egeiras* and *kathisas*. Christ was raised once and for all from the dead and He was exalted once and for all above everything. His exaltation is also expressed in Php 2:9-11. The phrase, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion," expresses Christ's dominion over the angelic hierarchy, be it of angels in heaven or of fallen angels. His rule is permanent and extends into the age "which is to come." Vv22-23: "He has put all things under his feet" alludes to the messianic prophecy of Ps 110:1-2, the Old Testament passage most frequently quoted in the New Testament.

Introduction: On Ascension Day Christ left His disciples visibly. If a pastor knew he would soon be leaving his congregation, we can imagine what his intercessory prayer would be for his congregation. It might well be the same as Paul's intercessory prayer for the church at Ephesus.

A PASTOR'S PRAYER FOR HIS CONGREGATION

- I. Know God personally (v17).
 - A. He is a God of glory.
 1. He is holy (Is 6:3).
 2. He is love; He sent His Son, Jesus (Lk 2:14).
 - B. He reveals Himself in His Son.
 1. There is no other way to know God personally.
 2. Knowing God is the highest wisdom of all (1 Cor 1:21).
 - C. Our friendship with God grows deeper.
 1. Listen to Him through His Word.
 2. Speak to Him through prayer.
- II. Know the hope to which God calls you (v18-21).
 - A. You have a glorious inheritance.
 1. It is imperishable.
 2. It is kept for you in heaven.
 - B. God's power in the Christian is great.
 1. He raised Christ from the dead.
 2. He made Christ King of kings.
 3. Christ dwells within you (2 Cor 13:5).
- III. Know that God's plan for this world is in the hands of the church (vv22-23).
 - A. The church is the body of Christ.
 1. Christ as head of the body is Lord of the church.
 2. Christ has commissioned us to do His work.
 - B. His desire is to make the whole world the body of Christ.
 1. Christ died for all.
 2. God wants all to know it.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 Peter 4:13-19

May 31, 1981

This text continues a theme developed earlier in the letter, namely, that it is the Christian vocation to imitate Christ in His suffering (2:21). Speaking to people who have apparently experienced first-hand the pressures of seeking to imitate Christ in a not so Christ-like world, Peter points his readers to a recurring Gospel theme, the joy of living *for* Christ right now related to the glory of living *with* Christ later (see Mt 5:11; Lk 4:32). The present thrust of v14 should be noted as Peter asserts the “here and now” blessing for those who are insulted on account of their relationship with Christ (“are blessed” — RSV). The verb “insult” or “reproach” in v14 (*oneidizein*) is frequently associated in the Gospels with the indignities endured by the suffering Christ (Mt 27:44). Peter’s reference to the Spirit of glory and of God as the cause of the present blessing (v14) is surely to be taken as the Holy Spirit, who is, in fact, linked on several occasions in the New Testament with the suffering and persecution of God’s people (see Mt 10:19f.; Ac 7:55).

The point is clear: the trials of God’s people are ground for positive joy, since those who suffer for Christ have a present share of the glory of the End. The contrast of v15 is plain. Those who practice the wrongdoings listed deserve suffering, but those who suffer simply because of their standing as a Christian (“under that name,” RSV) have no need to be ashamed. Significantly this suffering is part of the glory mentioned above. The ultimate reason for the tribulation of God’s people (v17) rests with the unfolding of God’s plan for the End. As preparation for the close of history, the people of God will be purified by tribulation (see Mk 13:8-13). This is not a pleasant picture, but the courage and determination of God’s people should be strengthened by the knowledge of what awaits those who do not “obey the Gospel of God” (v17). The quote from Pr 11:31 (LXX) is sobering (v18). If God uses trials and suffering to strengthen us and finally spare us, we can, as Peter concludes, continue our “active well-doing” (*agathopoiia*) and entrust ourselves to the One who is in complete control, the faithful Creator.

The central thought of the text is that the suffering of God’s people has both a present blessing and a future glory as the Lord uses tribulation to keep pointing us to His faithfulness. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would recognize that suffering because of their standing as Christians is not pointless. The problem is that we can often recognize no logical value in Christian hardship. The means to the goal is that our faithful Creator gives us unmistakable glory as evidence that our trials have both a present and final purifying value.

Introduction: It is a natural tendency to view hardship and difficulties as valueless. They signal lost opportunities and wasted time as people are forced, when they occur, to focus attention on them rather than on positive growth. Proper Christian thinking, however, would dispute the logic of worldly people who view tribulation as something of no value. The Lord uses suffering to prepare and purify His people for the End as well as to give them blessing and glory right now. This is hardly nonsense, even though Christians may ask as they experience hardship and trials,

HOW CAN YOU CALL THIS GLORY?

- I. Because hardship is an imitation of Christ’s suffering.
 - A. We count it a privilege to suffer at the hands of the world, even as He did.

1. The world may not kill us, but it despises our trust and love.
2. The world cannot understand how we can rejoice when we are condemned, because the world cannot understand our willingness by grace to imitate our Savior.
- B. We remember the victory of One who suffered with a purpose.
- II. Because hardship is an indication of Christ's blessing.
 - A. We know that the Lord will be at our side when we are insulted on account of our relationship with Him.
 1. This presence is a great blessing.
 2. This presence brings us glory.
 - B. We acknowledge that even though we may experience pain and hardship, our place in the "household of God" (v17) will lead us to endure and rejoice.
- III. Because hardship is a proclamation of Christ's salvation.
 - A. We confess that the trials of this life are part of God's plan of salvation, by which He seeks to outfit His people for the life to come.
 - B. We rejoice to receive the judgment of our faithful Creator as He prepares us for the End.
 1. This judgment strengthens us, so that we can by His grace endure.
 2. This judgment spares us, so that we are graciously "scarcely saved" (v18 RSV).

Conclusion: It is natural to view hardship in only a negative way, but we have the Christian assurance from our faithful Creator that suffering for Jesus' sake is our blessing, glory, and preparation for the End. The world may ask how we can call hardship "glory," but by faith we are convinced that the Lord's special presence and purpose in suffering can lead us to call suffering exactly that — GLORY!

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PENTECOST
Acts 2:1-21
June 7, 1981

Luke is careful to develop the contrast between the believing community ("they were all gathered in one place," RSV) and the devout Jerusalem Jews (v5). The coming of the Spirit had the effect of bringing these groups together with positive results (see v41). The exact nature of the miracle of the Spirit's arrival is hard to describe. Luke uses comparisons: like the sound (noise) of wind and like flames which resembled tongues. The speech of those who received the Spirit was quite intelligible, yet foreign to them. It was a meaningful language, readily understood by those who were from that part of the world which used it. The word Luke uses for speaking has, according to both Septuagintal and classical references, the meaning of solemn and inspired speech but not ecstatic utterance.

The miracle of Pentecost should properly be identified as one of both speaking (v4) and hearing (v6). Words were the vehicle of the Spirit, both as attention-getters (v7) and substance-providers (v14f.), as Peter with the disciples used the occasion of an attentive audience to explain the unfolding of God's plan of salvation. The quotation from Joel 2 (28-32) concerning the Day of the Lord is shown to have at least partial fulfillment in the events occurring before the crowd's eyes. It is a day of salvation (v21); that is the key to Pentecost. The many-faceted dimension of the phrase "being saved" is important as it implies (1) being in an undesirable state (moral or physical), (2) relief from this condition by the

action of another, and (3) a positive change and restoration, enabling one truly to live.

The central thought of the text is that the miraculous arrival of the Holy Spirit, in all its detail, shows the power of Spirit-directed words in gaining the attention of people, leading them to hear, and helping them to call upon the Lord who can save them. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers remember that salvation is a Spirit-wrought miracle of both speaking and hearing, using words and the Word. The problem is that we have too much difficulty both listening and speaking, and that even when we hear the Spirit-inspired Word, we forget to pass the message along. This means to the goal is that the Spirit continues to come to us in the spoken and heard Word to assure us of our salvation and encourage us to speak of our salvation.

Introduction: Parents often admonish their children for not listening. They have to tell them repeatedly to complete their chores, to eat correctly, to develop good personal habits. Many mistakes on the job are also made because workers have not listened to directions. Too often we abuse words by not listening to them carefully or treating them too casually. This attitude is spiritually risky, because, as the miracle of Pentecost announces, the careful speaking and hearing of the Word means salvation. Indeed, in the Christian context,

HEARING IS BELIEVING

- I. Spirit-directed words are for hearing.
 - A. The Spirit came in a miraculous way to get people to listen.
 1. The crowds were attracted by men speaking in their own tongues.
 2. Though some mocked, most listened as the disciples spoke the Spirit's words.
 - B. The Spirit continues to enter the hearts of people through the ears of people.
 1. God's Word is a spoken and heard Word which has effect only in the Spirit-directed context of a speaker and a listener.
 2. It is the Spirit who opens both mouths and ears. People can never speak or listen without His power.
- II. Spirit-directed words are for saving.
 - A. The message of the Spirit announces salvation.
 1. His words through Peter proclaim the day of the Lord as God comes to people.
 2. Those who have heard and then call upon the Lord by His power will be saved (v21).
 - B. The work of the Spirit assures salvation.
 1. As He continues to come to people through the Word, the Spirit brings comfort and hope that salvation is sure.
 2. Those who have heard and been saved will joyfully speak the Word and share the Spirit's work of saving.

Conclusion: God's plan of salvation, which has come to us through the Spirit-directed hearing of His Word, includes using us, who have heard, as His mouthpieces to speak, that others by hearing may also believe.

Book Reviews

I. Systematic — Historical Studies

THE BOOK OF WISDOM. By Ibn 'Ata' illah Iskandari. Translation and Introduction by Victor Danner. Preface by Annemarie Schimmel.

INTIMATE CONVERSATIONS. By Kwaja Abdullah Ansari. Translation and Introduction by Wheeler M. Thackston, Paulist Press, New York, 1978. Paper. 233 Pages. \$6.95.

As a major world religion, Islam is a complex institution with many components. Among them are a highly developed body of theology (evident in the Scholasticism of an al-Ghazzali), an intricate and all-encompassing code of law (the *Shariah* as expounded by several schools of jurisprudence), and a form of spirituality, often called simply "the Path," which occupied the attention of a great variety of mystical orders. For decades Orientalists have debated which element — Truth, Justice, or Mercy — or which faculty — Mind, Will, or Emotion — or which tradition — Rationalism, Legalism, or Mysticism — has been most important for Islam. Undoubtedly the discussion will continue. It will be better informed, however, because of the appearance of this "double volume" which contains two classics of Muslim mysticism from the Middle Ages.

The first of these is *The Book of Wisdom* by Ibn 'Ata' illah Iskandari, a Sufi sage and saint of thirteenth century Egypt (Muslim mystics were called Sufis, apparently because of their habit of wearing garments of wool, *suf* in Arabic). Living in an age of physical distress for Islam (Mongol invasions from the East, Crusader assault from the West), Ibn 'Ata' illah saw it as a time of spiritual success, as Mysticism provided "a Second Revelation" for the Muslim world. His major work, *The Book of Wisdom*, is known in Arabic as *Kitab al-Hikam*, literally, "The Book of Aphorisms." *Hikam*, the plural of *hikmah* can mean "wisdom," or "aphorism," or "maxim," or "gnome" and refers to a teaching method of the Sufi masters. These aphorisms, such as this one on worship,

Do not abandon the Invocation because you do not feel the Presence of God therein. For your forgetfulness of the Invocation of Him is worse than your forgetfulness in the Invocation of Him,

originated in oral recitations by the teacher to his students. Dr. Victor Danner, Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at Indiana University, has done a good job translating, introducing, and annotating this material. Because of his labors we have a much better understanding of the thought of a major Egyptian Sufi master of the thirteenth century whose influence is still very much alive.

The second of these writings is *Intimate Conversations* by Kwaja Abdullah Ansari (1006-1089), the Pir of Herat, a major Persian mystic. His *Munajat*, or "Intimate Conversations (with God)" is one of the foundational pieces of Persian literature. Because of the Sufi's mastery of intricate forms of Persian formal expression (as the rhetorical device called *tarsi*, where the sequence of vowels in two or more parallel lines is the same), this is a particularly difficult work to translate. Wheeler McIntosh Thackston, Jr., Assistant Professor of Iranian

Languages and Literatures at Harvard, is to be commended for his translation, as well as his introduction and annotation of this crucial contribution to Persian Muslim Mysticism.

Dr. Annemarie Schimmel, with doctorates from Berlin and Marburg, now of Harvard, has introduced these two classics of Muslim spirituality. Reading these writings reinforces recent opinion that Sufism was not necessarily a reaction against Muslim Scholasticism, for often (though not always) the most articulate mystics were also the most ardently orthodox in theology.

This volume is but one in a projected series of sixty to be published by the Paulist Press. Though called "The Classics of Western Spirituality," it is obvious from this contribution that it will include non-Western religious literature as well.

I recommend this "double volume" to the student of Islam as a good introduction to some primary source material from Medieval Sufism. Certainly reading this text balances out one's picture of Islam as a Way of Law or a School of Theology, revealing it to also be a Path of Contemplation.

C. George Fry

CLASSIC PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS. Edited by James A. Gould. Third edition. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio, 1978. 671 pages. Paper. \$8.30.

In this volume Professor James A. Gould of the University of South Florida has prepared a very fine reader for classes in philosophy on the academy, college, and seminary level.

This book consists of some thirty perennial questions of philosophy which are posed under eight main categories — Value of Philosophy, Methodology, Ethics, Knowledge, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Political Philosophy, and Aesthetics. Each of these sections raises certain issues, posing the problems in a positive-negative dichotomy. Each position is illustrated with an excerpt from a representative thinker. For instance, under the heading "Philosophy of Religion," one can find such questions as: "How Can God Be Proven to Exist?" (with St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, and William Paley providing respectively the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments, while Blaise Pascal wagers that "The Existence of God is a Good Bet" and Soren Kierkegaard contends that "God Can't Be Proven to Exist"), "Does the Idea of a Good God Exclude Evil?" (Fyodor Dostoevsky replies "Yes," John Hick "No"), and "Are Religious Ethics Adequate?" (with excerpts from the Bible — as Exodus 20, Psalm 15, Isaiah 33, Matthew 5:22,25 and I Cor. 13 — arguing the affirmative, Bertrand Russell the negative). Similar issues are treated in the other seven sections of the book, on topics ranging from "Why Do We Laugh?" and "Why Do We Enjoy the Tragic?" to "What is Freedom?" "Are Women Free?" and "Are Ethics Relative?" Answers are provided by such sages as Plato, Charles Peirce, William James, Jeremy Bentham, Immanuel Kant, Rene Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, Alfred Whitehead, Leo Tolstoy, and Aristotle — among others.

Teachers of philosophy will find this an especially helpful volume not only because of the variety of problems and philosophies represented, but also because the editor has provided a brief biographical sketch of each contributor, study questions for each citation (suitable for either classroom discussion or as topics for term papers), as well as "thought questions" at the conclusion of each section, along with suggested readers. Cross references to the standard secondary texts in philosophy are also very helpful.

Charles E. Merrill is to be commended for compacting so much significant material into such a useful and attractive volume (a brilliant silver color). A teacher's manual for this anthology is also available. I recommend this work to all those concerned with the recurring issues of philosophy — both as teachers and learners, professionals and amateurs.

C. George Fry

II. Practical Studies

APOSTLES TO THE CITY. By Roger S. Greenway. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978. Paper. 96 pages, \$3.95.

Originally delivered as a series of Baker Mission Lectures at Reformed Bible College, the author makes application to the ministry of the church to the city from the ministries of Jonah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Barnabas, and Paul.

His underlying assumptions are: 1) a Biblical urban apostolate is vitally needed today; 2) the church must move quickly to make its impact on the city; 3) we must take a wholistic approach to urban mission; 4) the world at the feet of Jesus is the ultimate goal of apostolate.

Challenging Christians to be "city saints," the author says: 1) live in the city; 2) support programs designed to help inner-city people; 3) get involved in city mission work; 4) become acquainted with inner-city people of a minority race; 5) encourage open housing; 6) urge your church to show Christian concern for inner-city people 7) support adult education, literacy programs, and social services offered by the community; 8) pray for the city (pp. 41f.).

Encouraging Christians not to confuse contemporary needs with eternal priorities (p. 76), Greenway says, "If the church loses touch with Paul's doctrine of reconciliation, then it has lost its message for the world, and whatever it may say about social and communal relationships will amount to nothing. When the Christian mission stops talking about God; when it stops talking about Christ, His death, and His resurrection; when it stops calling men to repent from their sins and be reconciled to their Maker, then everything else it says will be valueless" (p. 74).

This volume is both a sobering and a Christian approach of the church to the city.

Henry J. Eggold

THE LITERATURE OF THEOLOGY: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND PASTORS. By John A. Bollier. The Westminster Press, 1979. 208 pages. \$5.95. Paper.

John A. Bollier, Acting Divinity Librarian, Yale Divinity School has compiled a valuable time-saver for persons engaged in academic study or the practice of the ministry. No serious student of theology will want to be without it, once knowing of its availability. It is estimated that each year in the United States and Great Britain the number of books published is in the neighborhood of 120,000. Add to this huge quantity journal articles, reports and proceedings of learned societies and other serial literature and most students will despair as to what to read in this ocean of literary production.

Bollier states the purpose of this guide to be the following (p. 17):

The purpose of this work is to help the reader become independent in finding books, the journal articles, or the information needed in the pursuit of either academic study or professional ministry. It lists and annotates over 540 reference tools, such as bibliographies, encyclopedias, dictionaries,

indexes, abstracts, handbooks, guides, manuals, catalogs, and commentaries, all of which provide the information or literature citations for any subject required. There are also extensive sections on English-language Bible versions and translations.

The author believes that he has furnished pastors and professors tools by means of which they will be able to gain what librarians call "bibliographic control" of the literature dealing with any topic. Drawing on eighteen years of parish experience and seven years as theological librarian, Bollier believes that he has gathered together a bibliographical help which will meet both the pastor's and the professional theologians' needs. Very few foreign works are included in this help. For those interested in German books Bollier recommends Gerhard Schwinge, *Bibliographische Nachschlagewerk zur Theologie und ihren Grenzgebieten*. Other compilers might have selected other books, but the author believes he has chosen important and significant works. The descriptions of the books chosen are not critically evaluated but objective statements are given concerning contents, purpose, scope and arrangement, depth, and perspective of each work, which ought to provide the reader with enough information for making a judgment about the book's usefulness to him. The four divisions of the theological curriculum (Biblical studies, systematic theology, historical studies, and practical theology) are covered.

This will prove to be a valuable reference volume for students and pastors for years to come!

Raymond F. Surburg

Books Received

- CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS. By Frank Colquhoun. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1979. 93 pages. Paper. \$2.50
- THE SPIRIT WITHIN YOU. By A. M. Stibbs and J. I. Packer. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1979. 93 pages. Paper. \$2.50.
- INTERLUDES. By Frederick W. Kemper. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1979. 95 pages. Paper. No Price.
- COMMUNICATION IN THE CHURCH. Edited by Gregory Baum and Andrew Greeley. The Seabury Press, New York, 1978. 112 pages. Paper. \$4.95.
- LITURGY AND HUMAN PASSAGE. Edited by David Power and Luis Maldonado. The Seabury Press, New York, 1979. 128 pages. Paper. \$4.95.
- EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD TODAY. Edited by Norbert Greinacher and Alois Muller. The Seabury Press, New York, 1979. 123 pages. Paper. \$4.95.
- DOING THEOLOGY IN NEW PLACES. Edited by Jean-Pierre Jossua and Johann Baptist Metz. The Seabury Press, New York, 1979. 114 pages. Paper. \$4.95.
- BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY. Edited by Claude Geffre and Mariasusai Dhavamony. The Seabury Press, New York, 1979. 126 pages. Paper. \$4.95.
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