

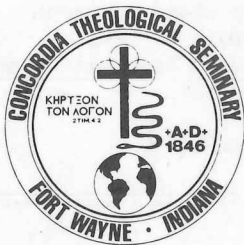
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# The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology

Edwin M. Yamauchi

## I. CRUCIFIXION

We often forget how incongruous a symbol for a religious movement the cross is. It was, after all, the means of capital punishment in the ancient world — the equivalent of the electric chair, the gas chamber, or the gallows. (Cf. the “gibbet” of the NEB at 1 Pet. 2:24.) In spite of the Jewish curse on anyone who was hung upon a “tree” (Deut. 21:22-23), the apostles boldly preached the resurrection of a Messiah who had been killed on a cross (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24).<sup>1</sup> Knowing well that both Greeks and Romans regarded the cross as the humiliating punishment reserved for slaves and rebels, Paul preached Christ crucified and even declared that He who was equal to God had humbled Himself to experience such a shameful death (Phil. 2:6-11).<sup>2</sup>

### A. Archaeological Evidence

The harsh reality of crucifixion's brutality has been brought home to us by the discovery in 1968 of ossuaries at Giv'at ha-Mivtar just north of Jerusalem. Among the bones of thirty-five individuals, there is evidence that nine died from violent causes, including a child who was shot with an arrow, a young man who was burned upon a rack, and an old woman whose skull was bashed in.<sup>3</sup>

Of the greatest interest is one ossuary which provides us for the first time with physical evidence of crucifixion. It is inscribed with the name “Yehohanan” followed by the patronymic “son of HGQWL.”<sup>4</sup> By reinterpreting the *gimel* as an ‘*ayin*, Yadin speculates that the latter enigmatic word means “H'QWL” or “one hanged with his knees apart,” that is, one who was hanged upside down.<sup>5</sup> Yehohanan was a young man between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-eight, who was about five feet and five inches tall. He was crucified at some time early in the first century A.D. After his flesh had rotted away, relatives gathered his bones and those of a young child and redeposited them in a limestone box known as an ossuary.<sup>6</sup>

Yehohanan's *calcanei* (heel bones) were still transfixed by a four and a half inch iron nail, which had been bent as it was pounded into a cross of olive wood.<sup>7</sup> The right *tibia* (shin bone) had been fractured into slivers by a blow, the “coup de grace” which was administered to hasten death (cf. John 19:32). The

crease in the right radial bone indicates that the victim had been pinioned in the forearms rather than in the hands as in the traditional depictions of Christ's crucifixion.<sup>8</sup> The Greek word *cheiras* in Luke 24:39-40 and John 20:20, 25, 27, usually translated "hands," can and should be translated "arms" in these passages.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that both heel bones were transfixed by a single nail has complicated reconstructions of the posture of the victim. Haas suggests that the man was provided with a *sedile* to sit upon, and that his legs were in a bent position when the heels were nailed to the cross.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Moller-Christensen has speculated that a rectangular frame was made for the man's feet so that they were not bent sideways.<sup>11</sup>

### B. Jewish Texts

Because of the Mosaic curse (Deut. 21:22-23) a crucified Messiah was a stumbling-block to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:23). We can sense the acute difficulties of the Jews from the responses of Trypho to Justin Martyr (early second century):

Trypho said, "These and such like scriptures, sir, compel us to wait for Him who, as Son of man, receives from the ancient of days the everlasting kingdom. But this so-called Christ of yours was dishonourable and inglorious, so much so that the last curse contained in the law of God fell on him, for he was crucified."<sup>12</sup>

In addition to references in the rabbinic texts,<sup>13</sup> we have two texts from Qumran which seem to refer to crucifixion. J. M. Allegro first called attention to the *Nahum Commentary* which seems to allude to Alexander Jannaeus, who crucified eight hundred of his enemies.<sup>14</sup> More recently Y. Yadin has brought to light the *Temple Scroll*, which reads as follows (col. 64, lines 6 ff.): "If a man has informed against his people and has delivered his people up to a foreign nation and has done evil to his people, you shall hang him on the tree and he shall die."<sup>15</sup> In spite of the arguments of Baumgarten to the contrary, the verb *tlh*, "hang," in these texts would seem to refer to crucifixion.<sup>16</sup> Fitzmyer points out that this demonstrates that even prior to Christianity, the Jews themselves had applied Deuteronomy 21:22-23 to crucifixion.<sup>17</sup>

The Jewish historian Josephus recounted numerous incidents of crucifixion, perhaps none so poignant as an incident which took place during the siege of Machaerus (*War* VII. 202-203). The Roman commander captured a brave youth named Eleazar.

... he ordered a cross to be erected, as though intending to have Eleazar instantly suspended; at which sight those in the fortress were seized with deeper dismay and with piercing

shrieks exclaimed that the tragedy was intolerable. At this juncture, moreover, Eleazar besought them not to leave him to undergo the most pitiable of deaths . . . .

Heeding his pleas, the other Jews proceeded to surrender the fort.

### C. Classical Texts

Jurgen Moltmann understates the case greatly when he remarks: "To the humanism of antiquity the crucified Christ and the veneration of him were also an embarrassment. . . . In the human search for the good, the true and the beautiful, the crucified Christ was not a valuable aesthetic symbol."<sup>18</sup>

Martin Hengel in his erudite monograph on the subject reports that the Greeks never used the concept of crucifixion in a metaphorical sense.

In ancient thought, e.g. among the (Roman) Stoics, an ethical and symbolic interpretation of the crucifixion was still possible, but to assert that God Himself accepted death in the form of a crucified Jewish manual worker from Galilee in order to break the power of death and bring salvation to all men could only seem folly and madness to men of ancient times.<sup>19</sup>

In a famous passage of his speech defending Rabirius in 63 B.C. Cicero vividly described the horror which crucifixion evoked among Romans:

But the executioner, the veiling of the head and the very word cross (*nomen ipsum crucis*) should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but liability to them, the expectation, indeed the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.<sup>20</sup>

One of the benefits of Roman citizenship was that except in rare cases it protected the citizen from crucifixion.

Among the horrors of crucifixion was the length of the prolonged agony portrayed by Paul's contemporary, Seneca:

Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree (*ad illud infelix lignum*), long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long-drawn-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross.<sup>21</sup>

As crucifixions were intended as deterrents the Romans set up crosses in the most public places, as Quintilian noted: "Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect."<sup>22</sup>

#### D. Christian Texts

In addition to the charges of atheism, immorality, and cannibalism which the pagans lodged against Christians, the idea of worshipping a crucified Savior brought forth jibes such as the one expressed in Minucius Felix's *Octavius* (9:3):

And anyone who says that the objects of their worship are a man who suffered the death penalty for his crime and the deadly wood of the cross, assigns them altars appropriate for incorrigibly wicked men, so that they actually worship what they deserve.<sup>23</sup>

Arnobius reports that the pagans said:

The gods are not hostile to you because you worship the Omnipotent God but because you maintain that a man, born a human being, and one who suffered the penalty of crucifixion, which even to the lowest of men is a disgraceful punishment, was God . . . .<sup>24</sup>

Arnobius was hard put to answer that charge, arguing that the manner of death does not negate a man's words or deeds, citing the deaths of Pythagoras and of Socrates.

Though Christians were not always able to express in words the reasons for their faith, they were soon called upon to be *martyrs*, "witnesses" by death, at times on crosses as in the persecutions of Nero in A.D. 64 (Tacitus, *Annals* XV. 44.6). Eusebius (*H.E.* II. 25.5) reports that in Nero's day "Paul was beheaded at Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified." The apocryphal *Acts of Peter* (37) relates that Peter asked, "I request you therefore, executioners, to crucify me head-downwards — in this way and no other."<sup>25</sup>

A graphic description of the martyrdom of Pionius of Smyrna, who was crucified in the Decian persecution (A.D. 250), has been preserved for us in the *Acta Pionii*:

The condemned men were led by the police-officer . . . to the stake prepared for them in the arena. At his bidding Pionius willingly stripped off his clothes. . . . He then lay down and stretched himself along the stake, and allowed the soldier to drive in the nails. . . . So they raised the stake into an upright position, and lowered it into a hole in the ground, adding greatly to the pain in the sufferer's wound. . . . Fuel

was then brought, heaped round the victims' feet, and set alight. . . . As the flames rose around him, with a joyful face he spoke a last "Amen"; and adding the words: "Lord, receive my soul!" he expired.<sup>26</sup>

## II. DOCETISM

The words "docetism" and "docetic" are derived from the Greek *dokein* "to appear," referring to beliefs in an apparent rather than a real incarnation of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Hippolytus (VIII.3.25) referred to a specific group called the *Docetae*, but the terms are applied more broadly.<sup>28</sup> Docetism was not a separate heresy but was, as J. N. D. Kelly points out: "an attitude which infected a number of heresies, particularly Marcionism and Gnosticism."<sup>29</sup>

As Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* III.11.3) recognized, there was a great variety of views among docetists. The various positions ranged from pure docetism to semi- or quasi-docetic conceptions of Christ. Some following Plato denied the reality of all sensible phenomena. Others denied that Jesus had a real body, or that He actually suffered on the cross. Some admitted that Christ had a body but maintained that this was quite different from the rest of humanity.<sup>30</sup>

Davies identifies four different types of docetisms as to their points of departure: (1) those that derived from ideas of the *Godhead*, such as the impassibility and the immutability of God; (2) those that stressed *cosmology*, holding that matter belonged to the realm of the Demiurge and was not capable of salvation; (3) those that centered on *anthropology*, maintaining that flesh was evil and that the soul was the real man; (4) those that denied the incarnation because of their views of *Christology*, rejecting the crucifixion of the Messiah as this would make the envoy of God inferior to the angels.<sup>31</sup> In actuality many of these themes were combined by any given group of docetists.

## III. DOCETISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

As in the larger issue of Gnosticism and the New Testament, some scholars, particularly Bultmannians, believe that they can detect both the influence of and the polemic against docetism in the New Testament. Many scholars believe that Paul's opponents at Corinth espoused a docetic if not a Gnostic view of the resurrection.<sup>32</sup> Not a few believe that the "Carmen Christi" of Philippians 2:5-11 had its origins in a group with docetic leanings.<sup>33</sup> In opposition to this view, which has been advocated by E. Lohmeyer and E. Kasemann, J.A.T. Robinson writes:

Under the "form of a slave", the *morphe doulou* (by which is intended nothing in the least docetic, but the most realistic

description of the condition of fallen humnaity), Christ led a life of complete alignment with the will of God . . . .<sup>34</sup>

Robert Gundry believes that the hymn of 1 Timothy 3:16 is directed against "gnostic docetism."<sup>35</sup>

A few scholars have been able to detect docetic or antidocetic strains in the first two Gospels.<sup>36</sup> C. H. Talbert has argued vigorously that Luke's realism both in his Gospel and in the Acts betrays an anti-docetic concern:

When the Third evangelist says that Jesus was born Son of God, anointed by the Spirit, and that he journeyed to Jerusalem where he died and was raised before ascending bodily into heaven, he is saying "No" to a docetism which claimed that the spiritual redeemer descended upon the man Jesus at the baptism and left him before his passion. At least a major facet of Lucan Christology is a way of saying to docetism that the church's Saviour was really human from first to last.<sup>37</sup>

When after the resurrection Jesus is depicted as eating grilled fish in the presence of His disciples (Luke 24:39-43), according to Benoit, "By this Luke does not mean that glorified bodies need food; only that Jesus accommodates Himself to their understanding and gives His disciples a proof that He can eat and therefore is not a mere phantom but a man."<sup>38</sup> Jeremias notes that "A variant on Luke 24.42 f. has the disciples giving the Risen Lord a piece of honeycomb as well as the fish, the remainder of which the Risen Lord then hands back . . . ."<sup>39</sup>

Many have argued that the Gospel of John is docetic, none so baldly as E. Kasemann, who accuses the evangelist of "naive docetism."<sup>40</sup> Bultmann and his disciples have assumed that the Fourth Gospel was an adaptation of previously Gnostic material.<sup>41</sup> In spite of what he calls its "docetic" look, J. A. T. Robinson notes that the Evangelist is not unconcerned with historicity.<sup>42</sup> Cullmann indeed argues that John's Gospel is firmly anchored in history: "Everything that is said in the Johannine prologue about the beginning of all things is seen from the perspective of the decisive statement, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1.14)."<sup>43</sup> Pollard concludes: "For all his emphasis on the divinity of Christ, Christ for him is *a man* (i. 30; iv.29; viii.40; ix.11, 16; x.33); . . . ."<sup>44</sup>

Of course, the clearest examples of anti-docetic passages are to be found in the Johannine Epistles, where we read the following (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7, NIV):

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the

flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, have gone into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the anti-christ.

The positive emphasis of I John 1:1 strikes the keynote of John's concern: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life."

But how are these verses to be interpreted? Are these to be taken as statements against pure or quasi-docetism? Are they evidence of a developed Gnosticism? I. H. Marshall in his recent commentary presents several alternative interpretations:

According to U. B. Muller, *Die Geschichte der Christologie in der johanneischen Gemeinde*, Stuttgart, 1975, 53-68, John's opponents were Docetists who did not separate Jesus from the Christ (as in Cerinthianism), but rather argued that, although Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God, he did not suffer and die to save men; they regarded Jesus as a glorious figure but not as a savior. Jesus' sufferings were thus merely "apparent" and not real.<sup>45</sup>

Another scholar, K. Weiss, has argued that the error was not so much docetism as "a total denial of the character of Jesus as Christ and Son of God . . . . For them Jesus was simply a man."<sup>46</sup>

Marshall himself favors the widely held view that the error was similar to the docetism of the Gnostic Cerinthus, which held that the Christ indwelt the human Jesus only during the period from the baptism to the crucifixion.<sup>47</sup> At the same time Marshall does not subscribe to the view of the Bultmannians that the Johannine Epistles were directed against a full-fledged Gnosticism:

It remains, however, very doubtful whether Gnosticism in the full sense of the term existed in the first century; and it is important to notice that what John condemns is a Docetic or similar Christology and a lowering of Christian ethical standards rather than the full-blown Gnostic system of teaching.<sup>48</sup>

#### IV. THE APOCRYPHAL NEW TESTAMENT

Both the "Infancy" and the "Gnostic" categories of the Apocryphal New Testament books are pervaded with docetic or quasidocetic features.<sup>49</sup> A *Latin Infancy Gospel* in the Arundel Manuscript has the following report of the midwife who assisted at the Nativity: "And I took courage and bent down and touched



him, . . . . . he had no weight like other children who are born. . . . And while I wondered greatly because he did not cry as new-born babes are accustomed to cry . . . ."50

The *Ascension of Isaiah* 11:7-14 has the following account of the babe's birth:

And after two months, when Joseph was in his house, and his wife Mary, but both alone, it came to pass, while they were alone, that Mary straightway beheld with her eyes and saw a small child, and she was amazed. And when her amazement wore off, her womb was found as it was before she was with child. . . . Some said, "The virgin Mary has given birth before she was married two months," and many said, "She has not given birth: the midwife has not gone up (to her) and we have heard no cries of pain."<sup>51</sup>

The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* relates how Jesus as a young child was not like other children in his miraculous powers. As he grew to manhood, the *Acts of Peter* (20) tells us: "He ate and drank for our sakes, though himself without hunger or thirst . . . ."52

The most striking expressions of docetism are found in relation to the passion of the Lord. Eusebius (*H.E.* VI. 12:2-6) tells us how Serapion, the bishop of Antioch (second half of the second century), at first permitted the reading of the *Gospel of Peter* at the church at Rhossus but then forbade its reading when he learned of its docetic character. According to the *Gospel of Peter* when Christ was crucified "he held his peace, as if he felt no pain," and when He expired, He cried out, "My power, O power, thou hast forsaken me."<sup>53</sup>

The *Acts of John*, which also comes from the late second century, is quite explicit in its advanced docetism.<sup>54</sup> John exclaims of Jesus that "he sometimes appeared to me as a small man with no good looks, and then again as looking up to heaven."<sup>55</sup> He also relates, "sometimes his breast felt to me smooth and soft, but sometimes hard like rock,"<sup>56</sup> and also reports, "sometimes when I meant to touch him I encountered a material, solid body; but at other times again when I felt him, his substance was immaterial and incorporeal, and as if it did not exist at all."<sup>57</sup>

At the time of the crucifixion John flees to a cave, where the true Lord explains to him the mystery of the cross:

"John, for the people below in Jerusalem I am being crucified and pierced with lances and reeds and given vinegar and gall to drink. But to you I am speaking, and listen to what I speak."<sup>58</sup>



"But this is not that wooden Cross which you shall see when you go down from here; nor am I the (man) who is on the Cross, (I) whom now you do not see but only hear (my) voice. I was taken to be what I am not, I who am not what for many others I was; but what they will say of me is mean and unworthy of me."<sup>59</sup>

## V. THE NAG HAMMADI TEXTS

As in the patristic accounts so in the newly published Nag Hammadi texts<sup>60</sup> we encounter a variety of docetic views ranging from the purely docetic, to possibly docetic, and even to anti-docetic expressions.<sup>61</sup>

### A. Clearly Docetic Texts

There are two striking illustrations of the "substitutionary" docetism of Basilides (*Adv. Haer.* I.24.4): the *Second Treatise (Logos) of the Great Seth* (CG VII,2), and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (CG VII,3), in which we have the Savior laughing at the foolishness of the mob which mistakenly believe that they have crucified Him.<sup>62</sup> In the former account (55.9-19, 31-56.19), we have the following passage:

"And I was in the mouths of lions. . . . But I was not afflicted at all. Those who were there punished me. And I did not die in reality but in appearance . . . . For my death which they think happened, (happened) to them in their error and blindness, since they nailed their man unto their death. . . . Yes, they saw me; they punished me. It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over all the wealth of the archons and the offspring of their error, of their empty glory. And I was laughing at their ignorance."<sup>63</sup>

The account of the *Apocalypse of Peter* (81. 15-24; 82.27-83.8) is strikingly similar:

The Savior said to me, "He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute being put to shame, the one who came into being in his likeness."

"But he who stands near him is the living Savior, the first in him, whom they seized and released, who stands joyfully looking at those who did him violence, while they are divided among themselves. Therefore he laughs at their lack of perception, knowing that they are born blind. So then the

one susceptible to suffering shall come, since the body is the substitute. But what they released was my incorporeal body."<sup>64</sup>

In the *First Apocalypse of James* (CG V,3; 31.14-19) we have the following statement: "The Lord said, 'James, do not be concerned for me or for this people. I am he who was within me. Never have I suffered in any way.'"<sup>65</sup> In the *Second Apocalypse of James* (CG V,4) we have some possible docetic passages (e.g. 57.10-20),<sup>66</sup> but we do not have a wholesale denial of the identity of the crucified one with the Savior.<sup>67</sup>

In the *Letter of Peter to Philip* we have the following passage (139.9-22):

And Peter opened his mouth, he said to his disciples, "[Did] our Lord Jesus, when he was in the body, show us everything?" . . . He spoke thus: "Our illuminator, Jesus, [came] down and was crucified. And he bore a crown of thorns. And he put on a purple garment. And he was [crucified] on a tree and he was buried in a tomb. And he rose from the dead. My brothers, Jesus is a stranger to this suffering."<sup>68</sup>

We have a similar denial of the suffering of the Savior in *Zostrianos* (CG VIII, 1; 48.27-29): "He was there again, he who suffers although he is unable to suffer, for he was a power of a power."<sup>69</sup>

In the very important tractate, the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (CG XIII,1) we encounter many parallels to the Prologue of the Gospel of John — so much so that James Robinson and members of the *Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, an East Berlin group which includes the West Berlin scholar Carsten Colpe, have hailed it as the *Vorlage* of the Johannine Prologue.<sup>70</sup> Pitted against this view are the arguments of Y. Janssens<sup>71</sup> and R. McL. Wilson<sup>72</sup> whose analyses lead them to conclude that the *Trimorphic Protennoia* is secondary.

Supporting their position is the study of J. Helderman, who demonstrates that the use of the Greek loanword *skene* as a noun in 47.16, "The third time I revealed myself to them [in] their tents as the Word,"<sup>73</sup> is a transformation of the verb *eskenosen*, "He tabernacled," in John 1:14 in a clearly docetic direction.<sup>74</sup> The Redeemer reveals Himself to the elect in the world of light, rather than tenting with men in the world of matter.

### B. Possibly Docetic Texts

There are a number of Nag Hammadi tractates whose alleged docetism is ambiguous or contested. Among these are the

following:

The *Gospel of Philip* (CG II,3) has the following passage (57.28-58.8), which has been considerably restored:

Jesus took them all by stealth, for he did not reveal himself in the manner [in which] he was, but it was in the manner in which [they would] be able to see him that he revealed himself. . . . He [revealed himself] to the small as small. He [revealed himself to the] angels as an angel and to men as a man. Some indeed saw him, thinking that they were seeing themselves, but when he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount he was not small.<sup>75</sup>

In another passage, which has unfortunately been even more badly damaged, there is a reference to the Redeemer's flesh (68.34-37). As restored it reads: "[He did indeed possess] flesh, but his [flesh] is true flesh. [Our flesh] is not true, but [we possess] only an image of the true."<sup>76</sup>

In the *Gospel of Thomas* (CG II,2) we have in Logion 28 the following statement: "I took My place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh." Gartner comments that it is not necessary to deduce from these words an incarnation in the New Testament sense: "This is supported by the term *ophthen*, as well as the Gnostics' use of the word *sarx*."<sup>77</sup>

Whether or not the Christology of the *Gospel of Truth* (CG I,2) is docetic or not is contested. Grobel comments:

Though the category of history is rarely touched, the history of Jesus' passion is both implicitly and explicitly present. Even whether Jesus on earth is Docetically conceived is at least uncertain; the one expression which might decide the matter (31:6) is ambiguous.<sup>78</sup>

G. W. MacRae translates the key Coptic word *cmāt* as representing the Greek *homoïoma*, "appearance," in a docetic sense.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, a Japanese scholar, Shibata, has argued that there is "no factor which hints the docetic nature of *sarx*" in the *Gospel of Truth*.<sup>80</sup> Another Japanese scholar has argued that the Christology of the tractate is hardly Gnostic and is secondary.<sup>81</sup>

In the *Gospel of Truth* (20.23-27) we have the following reference to the cross: "For this reason Jesus appeared; he put on that book; he was nailed to a tree; he published the edict of the Father on the cross."<sup>82</sup> But according to Menard the Christ on the cross is merely the symbol of men crucified on the cross of matter.<sup>83</sup>

### C. Non-Docetic Texts

The tractate first called *Rheginos*, and now the *Treatise on the*

*Resurrection* (CG I,3), was regarded by its original editors as a Valentinian work with a docetic Christology.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, Malcolm Peel has argued that the references to "flesh" (44.14-15) and to "humanity" (44.24-26) indicate that the Savior used a body of flesh if only for a time: "It is difficult in the light of such passages to see how the editors could conclude that our Letter presents a thorough-going docetic Christology."<sup>85</sup>

One of the most remarkable documents in the collection is the tractate *Melchizedek* (CG IX,1), which launches a vigorous polemic against docetism (5.1-12):

[They] will come in his name, and they will say of him that he is unbegotten though he has been begotten, (that) he does not eat even though he eats, (that) he does not drink even though he drinks, (that) he is uncircumcised though he has been circumcised, (that) he is unfleshly though he has come in flesh, (that) he did not come to suffering though he came to suffering, (that) he did not rise from the dead though he arose from [the] dead.<sup>86</sup>

The very diversity of Christological views in the tractates provides evidence for the nature of the Nag Hammadi collection. Jean Doresse, the earliest investigator, had suggested that this was the library of a Sethian Gnostic sect which lived in the area.<sup>87</sup> But not all the texts are Sethian. Moreover, the researches of John Barns demonstrate that the books were written in a Pachomian monastery.<sup>88</sup> But by whom? James Robinson has suggested that the texts were copied by Christian Gnostic monks before the time when they were considered as heretics and were expelled.<sup>89</sup>

On the other hand, Barns himself felt that the orthodox monks had copied such works as references for their apologetic refutations.<sup>90</sup> This view has also been developed by T. Säv-Söderbergh: "The library can have been brought together for haeresiological purposes, let us say by persons who like Epiphanius wanted to collect a Panarion against the Gnostics."<sup>91</sup> Lending support to the view that the tractates were copied for reference purposes is the scribal note attached to the *Hermetic Prayer of Thanksgiving* (CG VI,7):

I have copied this one discourse of his. Indeed, very many have come to me. I have not copied them because I thought that they had come to you (pl.). Also, I hesitate to copy these for you because perhaps they have (already) come to you, and the matter may burden you, since the discourses of that one, which have come to me, are numerous.<sup>92</sup>

In conclusion, the presence of docetic, quasi-docetic, and anti-docetic tractates supports the view of the Nag Hammadi tractates

as a reference collection rather than the view that they were the library of any single Gnostic sect.

## VI. LATER DEVELOPMENTS

The struggle between the proponents of a docetic Christology such as Simon Magus, Saturninus, Basilides, Cerinthus, Marcion, Valentinus, Bardesanes, etc.<sup>93</sup> and the church fathers, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, and especially Tertullian<sup>94</sup> has been well documented and fully discussed.

One movement upon which new light has been shed deserves comment. Mani (216-276), a Persian born in Mesopotamia, founded the syncretistic and dualistic religion of Manichaeism,<sup>95</sup> which numbered among its adherents Augustine before his conversion. The sensational discovery of the Cologne Codex on the life of Mani and its publication in 1970 confirm Arabic reports that Mani emerged from the Jewish-Christian Elchasaïtes.<sup>96</sup>

According to the Manichaeans Jesus was "an apparent corporeality and not a real person."<sup>97</sup> Mani, who had been influenced by the teachings of Marcion, taught that Jesus was not born of Mary. Faustus, a Manichaean leader against whom Augustine wrote, held that Jesus' death was only apparent.<sup>98</sup> The Manichaean *Epistle of the Foundation* maintained that the Prince of Darkness, who had hoped to have the Savior crucified, was himself nailed to the cross.<sup>99</sup> Koenen comments:

The suffering of the divine Light is the suffering in a body. Jesus, however, was supposed not to have such a body. Therefore, the crucifixion of Jesus lost its theological relevance. Consequently, it played almost no role in Manichaean rites. However, the Manichaeans celebrated the passion of Mani at the *Bema* Feast.<sup>100</sup>

That is, though Mani was not crucified, his sufferings were understood as equivalent to crucifixion.

Augustine reports that the Manichaeans taught peculiar doctrines about *Jesus Patibilis*, "The Suffering Jesus," and *Crux Lucis*, "The Cross of Light." That these concepts were not invented by Augustine has now been confirmed by the Cologne Codex. The Manichaeans taught that particles of the divine Light, which had become captive in plants, were to be liberated by the elect through burping and digestion!

Christ dies daily, suffers daily and is born daily in pumpkins, leeks, purslane, and other plants. Cutting, cooking, chewing, and digestion cause pain to the divine substance, to the limbs of God. Such suffering was symbolized by the cross . . . .<sup>101</sup>

In the seventh century Muhammad may have revived a substitutionary docetism, similar to that held by Basilides, for we read in the Qur'an 4:157: "And because of their saying: 'We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger' — They slew him not nor crucified, but *it appeared so unto them* [Arabic: *shubbiha lahum*]; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain."<sup>102</sup> Most Christian interpreters (e.g. F. F. Bruce<sup>103</sup>) and Muslim commentators interpret the verse as a docetic understanding of the crucifixion. On the other hand, G. Parrinder argues that the key Arabic words "*it appeared so unto them*" may originally have meant that the bystanders misunderstood the crucifixion.<sup>104</sup>

Be that as it may, the presence of Christians who held docetic views of Christ among pre-Islamic Arabs is attested.<sup>105</sup> The docetic interpretation of Christ's crucifixion is now standard dogma among Muslims. The missionary-minded Ahmadiyya sect, founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), teaches that Jesus survived the crucifixion and wandered off to Srinagar in Kashmir, where he finally died.<sup>106</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

By the fourth century, with the exception of the Manichaeans, the advocates of a docetic Christology had been almost completely refuted by the incarnational Christology of Irenaeus and of Tertullian. In the fifth century a minor movement did emerge, the "aphthartodocetists" who held that Christ was so glorified that His body was insensible to suffering.<sup>107</sup>

For most of the church the four ecumenical councils at Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon have clarified and defined the human nature and the divine nature of Jesus Christ.<sup>108</sup> In our day the major attacks upon orthodoxy come from those who would question the Lord's divinity rather than His humanity. But the following citation from a modern religious movement demonstrates that the tendency to docetism is always possible:

The invisible Christ was incorporeal, whereas Jesus was a corporeal or bodily existence. The dual personality, of the seen and the unseen, the spiritual and material, the Christ and Jesus, continued until the Master's ascension, when the human, the corporeal concept, or Jesus, disappeared, while his invisible self, or Christ, continued to exist in the eternal order of Divine Science.<sup>109</sup>

This survey of docetism has sought to remind believers of the reality of the cross and of Christ's humanity by noting to what lengths people have gone who have denied both.

## FOOTNOTES

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5. Y. Yadin, "Epigraphy and Crucifixion," *IEJ*, 23 (1973), pp. 18-22.
6. Cf. E.M. Meyers, *Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971).
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13. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (London: SCM, 1974), pp. 84-85.
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18. J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1974), p. 33.
19. Hengel, p. 89.
20. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 42. As to the "weals" mentioned here, the head of a Roman scourging whip was found for the first time at Heshban; see *AUSS*, 14 (1976), p. 216.
21. Cited in Hengel, pp. 30-31.
22. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 50, n. 14.



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29. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (5th ed.; N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 141.
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34. J.A.T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM, 1952), p. 39.
35. R.H. Gundry, "The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in I Timothy 3:16," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W.W. Gasque and R.P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 222.
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50. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha I* [hereafter *NTA I*] (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), p. 414.
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57. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
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66. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
67. W.-P. Funk, *Die zweite Apokalypse des Jakobus aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex V* (TU 119; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), pp. 107, 206.
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# Justification: Basic Linguistic Aspects and the Art of Communicating It

Theodore Mueller

Can the topic of justification ever be exhausted? The approach in this study stresses an aspect neglected in our circles, the linguistic component and the peculiarities of language. Linguistics has exerted a significant influence on recent Bible translators and modern theologians of the Calvinistic-Arminian persuasion and is used to promote their particular point of view and interpretation. Like any tool, however, it is useful not only to combat erroneous interpretations, but also to gain an ever deeper understanding of the truths of Scripture. Sound doctrine is linked to sound linguistic knowledge, a knowledge of how language serves as the tool of communication. (This approach is not to be confused with "Structural Exegesis.")

The pastor, as God's ambassador, is charged with communicating the central event of man's justification to God's people as well as to the world around him. His day-to-day activities are thus directly derived from this central doctrine; the practical aspects of the ministry, both the public and the private administration of the office, are intimately tied to this cardinal truth.

## I. Basic Linguistic Aspects of Justification

Justification by grace through faith is central to both the Old and the New Testament, and the key to understanding all of Scripture. It is assailed often today with phraseology echoing the Lutheran position, yet expressing the same synergistic spirit as Arminianism. Faith is seen as a quality or attribute which influences God in His decision, and thus a factor contributing to man's salvation. Therefore, the concept with its linguistic ramifications needs to be examined first.

### The Definition of Justification

Scripture deals with justification primarily through three word groups — those words meaning justification or righteousness *per se*, those denoting reconciliation, and those expressing forgiveness.

1. The Hebrew verb *sadaq* in the Qal means "to be just or righteous" (Is. 43:9); its Hiphil signifies "to pronounce 'not guilty,' vindicate, declare to be right, declare righteous." It is used in a secular sense in Deuteronomy 25:1, and theologically as God's vindication in Isaiah 50:8. The Hiphil, the causative verb-form, lends its peculiar color: God is the cause of my being righteous, causes to to be righteous, thus suggesting the forensic feature inherent in justification. The corresponding adjective, meaning "righteous," expresses the imputed righteousness (Is. 60:22). Psalm 33:1 applies it to people. The corresponding noun implies vindication, justification, and salvation (Ps. 24:5; Is. 54:8; 51:6).

God's righteousness is viewed in the testamentary relationship with Israel. The Israelites are God's chosen people, belong to Him; He defends and vindicates them (Jer. 23:6); He imparts His righteousness to them (Is. 46:12-13; 45:24); He is the source of righteousness for His people (Is. 41:10). Even when all else fails His righteousness will never fail (Is. 51:6).

The imagery brings out the concept of imputed righteousness as only the Old Testament and its poetry can do it. Righteousness is intimately linked to salvation and the redemption of His people (Is. 45:8; 45:21; 51:5-6; 62:1; etc.). The robe of righteousness (Is. 61:10), with which He adorns and clothes His own, illustrates beautifully the forensic aspect and refutes the notion of an inherent quality on the part of man. Righteousness comes down from the heavens (Is. 45:8); and the Old Testament ends with the picture of the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2) which rises upon us and brings healing, again an outside source of righteousness.

The Old Testament clearly teaches the forensic aspect, the fact that our God declares His people righteous and is favorably disposed towards them: His righteous servant will justify many (Is. 53:11). Righteousness is imputed to Abraham (Gen. 15:6). Legal language is used: God pleads my case (Mic. 7:9); He has vindicated us (Jer. 51:10). And we can take comfort in the fact that our righteousness will soon be revealed (Is. 56:1). There is, therefore, no condemnation (Is. 50:9), and, consequently, all God's people will be righteous (Is. 60:21). How can God's favorable disposition towards His people be more forcefully declared and asserted?

The Greek word family based on *dikaioo* reiterates what the Old Testament teaches. The verb means "to justify," that is, "vindicate, treat as just, declare righteous." It is used in this sense with a secular meaning in Luke 10:29, with its usual theological

meaning as a forensic act in "God justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5). In the passive, it has the same meaning: "be acquitted, be pronounced righteous" (Matt. 12:37), "be freed from guilt" (Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:28). Two nouns are based on this stem: *dikaiosyne*, meaning "justification, vindication, acquittal." The first (Rom. 5:17) is associated with the notion of a gift from God, while the second is linked to Christ's resurrection as the proof of our acquittal (Rom. 4:25). The adjective *dikaios* is used to characterize the one who does what is right (1 John 3:7) or keeps the law (Rom. 2:13); it then refers to the one who is just (1 Pet. 3:12); finally, it indicates the one who is blameless, the one to whom God's righteousness has been imputed (Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4) and who, therefore, will live eternally. Romans 5:19 names as righteous those who through Christ's obedience have been "made righteous."

The New Testament systematically presents justification as a forensic act, a declaration of the righteous God upon sinful human beings. God's righteousness comes from God (Rom. 3:21). The context demands this interpretation when Paul calls it a gift (Rom. 3:24; 5:16-19) and insists that such justification is without works (Rom. 3:21) of the law (Rom. 3:28). Paul presents the argumentation for the forensic meaning in Romans 3:21-28 and sums it up succinctly in Romans 4:5. Finally, the resurrection of Christ is adduced as the proof of man's acquittal in God's court (Rom. 4:25).

2. The word group denoting reconciliation also supports the forensic aspect of justification. In order to declare man righteous God must have laid aside His anger against sinners and thus be reconciled and favorably disposed toward man. The two concepts go hand in hand and complement each other. The Hebrew verb *kipper* and its derived nouns refer to the covering up of something, from which the meaning "to appease, placate, pacify" is derived. Jacob sends Esau gifts to placate him (Gen. 32:20). God has instituted the day of atonement when "atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you" (Lev. 16:30). The sacrifices of the Old Testament are meant to propitiate God, that is, to accomplish a reconciliation between God and man, to avert God's wrath. Propitiation rather than expiation is stressed, meaning that God's attitude is changed from one of wrath to one of loving-kindness. For this purpose man's offense must be wiped out, as God Himself promises (Is. 43:25); He, the offended party, provides the atonement with which to blot out our transgressions (Ps. 78:38). Likewise, Moses through his prayer effected a change

of heart in God, so that He repented and did not carry out His threatened disaster (Ex. 32:14). The concept of reconciliation is symbolized in the *kapporeth* or *hilasterion*, the cover for sin located in the Holy of Holies.

In Greek *hilaskomai* and particularly *katallasso* express the thought of reconciliation. In Romans 5:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 Paul argues the fact that God has been reconciled, laid aside His wrath, changed His attitude towards sinful man because of Christ's atonement. It is presented as a completed act which precedes all human action. The noun *katallage* is the expression of the changed relationship, a transformation from enmity to an attitude of grace, mercy, good will. It is God's unilateral act in Christ and is not conditioned by anything in man. Reconciliation thus is the equivalent of justification; negatively stated, our trespasses are no longer counted against us, and, positively stated, "we become the righteousness of God." Therefore, because God's enmity has ceased, we have peace (Rom. 5:1), the fruit of reconciliation.

Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5 must be interpreted as God's unilateral act and in no way related to man's attitude or response. Buchsel argues that reconciliation is a two-way street and can only be accomplished if both parties are engaged in the process. In his view, man actively participates in the reconciliation. He interprets the verbal phrase *en katallasson* as a progressive tense indicating the ongoing process and rejects the interpretation that God was in Christ to reconcile the world.<sup>1</sup> Our English language furthermore tends to support his exegesis, since in our culture a unilateral reconciliation is unthinkable. Thayer, however, citing Xenophon and Josephus, suggests the translation "to receive someone into one's favor" and for the passive "to be restored to God's favor, to recover God's favor."<sup>2</sup> Neither Robertson nor Blass-DeBrunner list the verbal phrase as a periphrastic use of the verb;<sup>3</sup> the word order with *en Christo* would make it very awkward. Furthermore, the context, involving the reconciling of the world, militates against such a use. It would require a loose interpretation of "world," meaning only some of the people in this world.

3. God's declaration of "not guilty" is also predicated on His unconditional forgiveness of our offenses. And again the Old and the New Testaments teach the same message. The Hebrew verb *nasa'* means basically "to lift up," and when a sovereign lifts up his countenance on someone, he pardons and is favorably disposed. When God lifts up His countenance on us, He forgives us our



trespasses (Num. 6:26), pardons takes away our sins (Is. 33:24; Ps. 25:18; 32:1) The verb *salah* means "to practice forbearance, to forgive." When the Lord forgives, He no longer remembers sins (Jer. 31:34), He forgives freely (Is. 55:7). And when sin has been removed and forgotten, He has only an immeasurable love for His people, as He tells us in Isaiah 40-44. Therefore, the Psalmists pray confidently, imploring God's mercy to forgive, blot out, remit sins, transgressions, offenses, iniquity (Ps. 51).

In Greek the verb *aphiemi* and its noun *aphesis* express forgiveness of sins, trespasses, debts. God forgives and thereby restores His relationship with man. The basic idea is cancellation, remission, letting go, putting away, resulting in sins not being remembered by God. When sins are forgiven, we are restored to God's grace and favor (Luke 1: 77-78) as illustrated in the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:20ff.) or in Romans 8:31-35. The forgiveness of sins is a unilateral act on God's part and is not conditioned by anything in man. In His mercy He cancels our debt (Matt. 18:27). He is faithful, that is, faithful to His promise and to His name, and thus forgives (1 John 2:12). Because of Christ His justice demands it (1 John 1:9).

Christ's atonement and our faith have purposely been left out of the discussion thus far. The concepts of righteousness, reconciliation, and forgiveness have been presented primarily from a semantic point of view to establish clearly that justification is a forensic act, that is, a decree from God as judge pronouncing the "not guilty" on sinners and declaring the godless righteous. It is a unilateral act on God's part, not conditioned by anything man is or does, not dependent in any way, shape, or form on man: "While we were God's enemies, we were restored to God's favor" (Rom. 5:10). Christ's atonement as the cause and our trust in God as the instrument will be discussed subsequently.

One problem has arisen when the verb "to justify" is translated into informal English. Beck, in particular, uses the expression "make righteous" in Romans 4:5 as an analogy to Luther's translation "der die Gottlosen gerecht macht."<sup>4</sup> For English-speakers the question arises: Does God's verdict of being righteous transform the very nature of the individual, change his sinful human nature? No doubt, in conversion, with the first flicker of faith, a new life is created, a new beginning is made and man is a new creature. It is also true that the announcement and the preaching of God's justification brings about this intrinsic change, since by preaching man is brought to faith. Yet justification and conversion and subsequent sanctification are not the

same and must be treated as different topics (Apology IV:252). For our justification occurred two thousand years ago, when Christ was raised from the dead (Rom. 4:25), and we were justified while we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). The problem resides in the assumption that the German and the English expressions convey the identical meaning. There is an essential difference in the two languages. In German, for instance, one can say, "Er hat den Teufel ganz schwarz gemacht," which must be translated into English as "He made the devil *appear* all black." In English the verb "to make" expresses an intrinsic change, a feature which is not necessarily expressed by the German equivalent. Beck's translation was influenced by the German language, and he failed to realize that the feature of intrinsic change is always present in the English verb.

Justification is the sentence of "not guilty" and the foundation of the entire Christian faith. For it reveals God's attitude (*Gottes Gesinnung*) towards us who have so grievously offended Him. Forgiveness of our sins and God's favor restored to us are its underpinning.

### The Cause of Justification

Justification is by grace for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. There is a causal relationship; the vicarious atonement of Christ has changed God's attitude towards mankind. God's grace is the cause of justification. The Old Testament glorifies God's grace with a number of words: *hesedh* is His goodness, kindness, loving-kindness (Gen. 19:19; Jer. 31:3). *Hen* describes His favor, inclination, benevolence. It is the strong coming to the help of the weak (Gen. 39:21; Ex. 3:21). *Ratson* is God's favor, goodwill, acceptance (Is. 60:10; 61:2). It is linked to His faithfulness, fidelity, lasting-kindness (*'emeth*) (Gen. 24:27; Mic. 7:20). His grace is described as abundant and great (Num. 14:18-19) and everlasting (Jer. 31:11). It is not possible to give in a few lines the scope of this concept, which is the foundation of the entire Old Testament. It culminates in the history of how He deals with His people individually and collectively, and that despite their rebellion and stubbornness.

While the Old Testament is an object lesson of God's grace, the New Testament presents it systematically. Many words shade the concept: *charis* is God's gracious attitude, His favor, kindness, goodwill, affection (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2); *eleos* and *oiktirmoi* express His compassion, mercy, charity (Tit. 3:5; Rom. 12:1); *chrestotes* and *philanthropia* (Tit. 3:4) refer to His goodness,

kindness, generosity; *eirene* is God's attitude of peace and goodwill towards us (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3); His grace is synonymous with *agape* (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), His love, the theme of the Apostle John.

Grace is God's favorable attitude toward mankind, an emotion in His heart, anthropomorphically speaking (John 1:14-17). It is universal (Tit. 2:11; John 3:16; 1 John 2:2), which is emphasized in that God does not want a single soul to be lost (2 Pet. 3:19; Ezek. 33:11). It is a fervent and efficacious attitude, not a complacent feeling; God earnestly desires the salvation of all men (Matt. 23:37). It is linked to Christ, apart from whom there is no grace.

God's gracious attitude must also be seen in relation to man's rebellion and opposition, that is, his sin. While an animal knows who feeds him and is therefore grateful, Israel does not know God and His grace (Is. 1). And yet, His grace persists towards them. The Old Testament characterizes man's attitude as stubborn and stiff-necked, unwilling to bow to God's wishes. The New Testament repeats this colorful description of man's condition in Romans 3:10-18, summed up in the words: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Yet, in spite of such rebellious opposition, God's attitude does not change — that is, grace, and undeserved loving-kindness, remains.

God's grace is inextricably linked to Christ and His atonement (1 Cor. 2:2). In the Old Testament the sacrificial cult as well as the priesthood pointed to Christ (Heb. 10), the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Isaiah 53 explicitly describes the suffering servant of God on whom God has laid the iniquity of all. God promises to blot out our transgressions "for His own sake" (Is. 43:25), which, according to Delitzsch, refers to God's absolute grace.<sup>5</sup> Again and again God is called the Redeemer (Is. 41:14; 47:4; etc.), who pays a ransom for His people, namely, Christ. In the New Testament God's grace is linked to Christ's redemption (*apolytrosis*) (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30). He has redeemed us, purchased us, paid a price for us, as one paid money to free a slave. Peter stresses the precious price with which we were bought (1 Pet. 1:18-19) and on which God's favorable disposition is based (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Atonement is a theological term summarizing Christ's satisfaction for our sins. God's wrath rests on mankind because of sin (Gal. 3:10), that is, the curse, which the Law has set on all who do not meticulously keep it. God's justice demands satisfaction and Christ made satisfaction; He is the *hilasterion* by His blood for the sins of all people (Rom. 3:25-26). He placed Himself under the

Law (Gal. 4:4-5), became a curse in our place (Gal. 3:13-14), and paid the penalty required by that Law (1 Pet. 3:18). He also kept the commands of the Law when He placed Himself under it and lived the holy life demanded by the Law.

Christ's work of atonement is a vicarious atonement, the English terminology being a pale translation of *Stellvertretende Genugtung*. Christ fulfilled the Law in the stead and in the place of everyone. The idea of substitution is basic and taught clearly (Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 5:14). Christ is the mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). In our society the substitution of one human being for another is a rare occurrence. Yet it can be expressed. Compare the following sentences:

I work for my children.

I worked for George, who is sick.

In the first sentence my children benefit from my work, a beneficiary relationship expressed by the prepositional phrase. The second sentence states that I worked in the place of George, who could not come because of illness; this is a substitutionary relationship expressed by the same preposition *for*. Thus when Scripture states that Christ died for all, the preposition *hyper* must be clarified; Christ died in the place of the ungodly (Rom. 5:6). This substitution is the reason for God's love (v.8). God's grace in Christ is the cause of His declaring man righteous and is summarized by the phrase "justification by grace." The causal relationship expressed by the prepositional phrase needs to be stressed, since the English preposition "by" and the Latin ablative (*sola gratia*) do not necessarily imply it. It would be more precise to say "because of," or "in consequence of God's grace," which are, however, cumbersome expressions.

Whom has God declared righteous, justified? This question still divides the various Lutheran bodies today. Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is so designated already in the Old Testament, where the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Is. 53:6). Christ's death is the atonement for the sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2). Therefore, justification, that is, God's change of heart, also must extend toward the entire world. Otherwise, there is something in human beings which causes God to feel kindly towards some and remain wrathful towards others. Therefore, when Christ died on Good Friday saying, "It is finished," reconciliation and justification were accomplished. We were restored to God's favor "while we were God's enemies" (Rom. 5:10). Justification is a completed event (*un fait accompli*) and occurred two thousand years ago.

Scripture specifically names the world as the object of God's reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19) and adds that "He did not count men's sins against them." The men mentioned here is the world named in the same sentence. Nowhere is faith mentioned in the entire passage.

Likewise, Christ's resurrection is the public manifestation of a reconciliation which extends to all human beings. The fact that God raised Christ is emphasized; our trust is in God who raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 4:24; 10:9). This resurrection is associated with our justification (Rom. 4:25); the preposition *dia* indicates the reason for raising Christ, namely, our justification (*dikaiosis*). The resurrection is God's public absolution of the entire world: "Your sins are forgiven, all sins of all human beings; and there is no exception." This is the meaning of the technical term "objective justification." The objective justification is central to the doctrine of salvation and derives logically from the facts that God's reconciliation, forgiveness, and declaration of "not guilty" in no wise depend on the attitude or behavior of human beings. If objective justification is denied, then it must follow that those who are declared righteous in some way have contributed to God's change of heart; justification is then no longer solely the result of God's grace.

### The Instrument of Justification

"It is by grace that you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Faith, the last element in the concept of justification, is the instrument by which the grace of God is appropriated to the individual and through which he is justified and saved. The Hebrew verb *batah*, meaning "to feel safe, to trust" (Ps. 9:10) and the Hiphil of *'aman*, meaning "to view as reliable" (Is. 28:16), "to trust, to rely on," are associated with man's salvation, as Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). In Greek the verb *pisteuo*, meaning "to be convinced of, to believe in, to trust," and its related noun *pistis*, "trust, faith," relate faith to justification.

But since God commands faith, is it an activity or action which man performs? Likewise, we confess, "I believe." Does not this assertion imply that *I* do something? An affirmative answer opens the floodgates of synergism. Actually, a linguistic analysis of phrases involving "believe" is needed to respond properly to these question. Verbs can be classified into two groups — action verbs and stative verbs. An action verb denotes an activity (e.g., walk, run, write) for which there is an agent, that is, one who instigates and performs the activity on his own initiative and power. The

agent is usually the subject if the verb is active. A stative verb (e.g., doubt, know, feel, like) expresses a state of being or a psychological state of mind, or a certain disposition or condition. Its subject is not an agent, but names the person who is in that state; may be called an experiencer, for lack of a better term; and characterizes the one undergoing the sensation, emotion, or cognition. This distinction is essential for the understanding of faith.

Both the Greek and the Hebrew verbs for "believe" are stative verbs and express a psychological state and not an action, as is evident from the previous analysis of these verbs. Trust in God originates and increases as a result of or reaction to His word and promises, and not in function of one's decision, effort, or activity. Therefore, the subject of these verbs is not an agent but an experiencer undergoing the psychological state. Trust in secular literature is described as an involuntary attitude or a state of mind towards someone. This fact needs to be stressed, since in the popular mindset faith is either a feeling or mood which the individual must develop or a decision one must make. Both Old and New Testaments, however, mention faith in the sense described above. Paul, in particular, contrasts faith with activity, deeds of the Law, good works (Rom. 3:28).

The New Testament specifies the relation between justification and faith. God justifies *dia* or *ek pisteos*, usually translated "by" or "through faith." The noun *dikaiosisynē* is used with these two prepositions and also with *epi* and *kata* to refer to a righteousness existing on the basis of faith. The relationship is also stated negatively as not involving works of the Law (Gal. 3:11). God's favorable disposition to sinners is appropriated by the individual by or through faith, trust, confidence in Christ, not by or through works.

Grammatical relationships and their technical terminology are useful tools to elucidate meaning, here the relationship between faith and justification. Therefore, the "case relationship," as it is called, may be adduced here. In the following sentences the prepositional phrases express the relationship under question:

He broke the window *with a hammer*.

He acquired his wealth *by fraud*.

He succeeded *through her help*.

The prepositional phrases express the instrument through which something is done, what is called the "instrumental relationship." Similarly, faith is the instrument by which justification is appropriated. In this sense Pieper states: "Der Glaube ist lediglich



instrumental.”<sup>6</sup> Quenstedt calls it *Werkzeug* — a tool. The Apology (IV:56) cites faith as a means of appropriation: “For faith does not justify or save because it is a good work in itself, but only because it accepts [better, appropriates] the promised mercy.” And according to the Formula of Concord (III:13), faith lays hold of and receives the merit of Christ. How is this relation best expressed in English? When both grace and faith are mentioned, translators usually use the formula “by grace through faith.” When a reference to grace is lacking, translators vary between “by faith” and “through faith.” Both prepositions express the instrumental case in English. It might be helpful to use “by means of faith.” The difficulty lies in the fact that faith is an abstract noun and there are few occasions where the instrumental case occurs with an abstract noun (e.g., “His case was aggravated by his grief,” or “through his grief”).

Protestant theology has changed faith from an instrument apprehending God’s grace to a good work for which man is responsible, whether it be a decision, an acceptance, or a feeling which man must produce and thus make himself worthy or acceptable to God. Such an understanding of faith is the result of an emphasis and insistence on faith out of its context. When faith is made the center-piece of God’s justification, when it is presented as a condition to be fulfilled, or when it is demanded from the pulpit, a misconception of faith is created or strengthened. One word in particular, “accept,” is used indiscriminately by our own publications as well as translations of the Confessions. *Webster’s Dictionary of Synonyms* specifies: “*receive* implies passiveness . . . *accept*, in contrast with receive, always implies a measure of mental consent, even approval.”<sup>7</sup> Faith is properly presented only in a context where it is pitted against works, the Law, good behavior, or the like.

The verb “to trust” has an object, that is, trust or confidence extends to someone or something; we trust in God or someone else. In Scripture, trust is directed towards Christ through the word (John 17:20). It is trust which relies on the promises which announce the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation. Thus, Christ is the object of a faith which is mediated through the words of Scripture. The Apology names the promised mercy of God as the object of faith (IV:56). Thus, faith clings to the promises of Scripture and through them relies on Christ in person. Scripture mentions faith in Christ (John 17:20) and faith in Scripture itself (John 2:22).

Faith appropriates to the individual what Christ has merited, that is, God’s favor, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. Thus,

through faith the individual is justified (Rom. 5:1), declared righteous (Rom. 4:5; 5:1). This is subjective justification. "We are accounted righteous for Christ's sake when we believe that God is reconciled to us because of Him" (Apology IV:97). The objective justification is God's unilateral declaration that on account of Christ's atonement He has laid aside His wrath towards mankind, that mankind has been restored to His favor and that all sins have been forgiven in God's forum. Subjective justification appropriates this forensic declaration to the individual by means of faith. The individual who trusts the Lord is justified, that is, declared righteous in God's court. Christ is righteous and holy (Acts 3:14; John 3:7). The same adjective *dikaïos* designates Cornelius (Acts 10:22) and all who believe in Christ. Such a righteous one shall live forever (Rom. 1:17). The adjective *hagios* indeed, designates the saints in Rome (Rom. 1:7) and at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2) and all who likewise trust in their Lord. Justification is God's unilateral verdict upon sinful man, pronouncing him not guilty, but righteous on account of Christ's atonement. Christ's righteousness is imputed to him. Sainthood is his through faith, that is, by trusting in the promises of Scripture.

## II. The Communication of Justification

God received the world into His favor, established the message of His love among us, and has commissioned His ambassadors to let it be known. The pastoral office fulfills this commission. Justification holds the central place in it and is its very foundation. Through the message of reconciliation Christ's ambassador builds and strengthens saving faith and thus leads His sheep to eternal life. The commonly used German term *Predigtamt* is a title which clearly delineates the function of the pastoral office — to preach and to administer the means of grace. There is no other purpose of the public ministry; this purpose must be kept quite distinct from all social purposes threatening to obscure the function of the office.

### The Public Communication of Justification

Under this head will be treated those functions which the pastor performs in a worship service or other public setting. The "private communication of justification" will deal with those activities in which the pastor deals with an individual in a non-public setting. This is an arbitrary distinction, since both functions proceed from the same divine authority and are complementary aspects of the *public ministry* of the Word and Sacrament.



1. Preaching is the most obvious function of the pastor and, together with teaching, his most important activity. It has as objectives faith and sanctification. Augustana V states of saving faith: "To obtain such faith God instituted the Office of the Ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the Sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith." This quotation might be expanded to say: "to obtain and to maintain faith." For contrary to Calvinistic teaching, faith can be lost and is lost by many. Therefore, the Lord has appointed shepherds to provide the spiritual food so that the sheep will remain His sheep. For our own flesh, the lure of the world, and the darts of Satan contrive to take faith away from His children.

The Gospel is the means by which faith is kindled and maintained. The "Gospel" is the account of Christ's suffering and death as atonement, as opposed to an emotional tale of one man's suffering and martyrdom. As such it is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Through it the Holy Spirit is active in man's heart, brings him to faith, and maintains him in it. It is the only means through which God works in this way (Acts 4:12). Therefore, the message of justification is and must be the heart of every sermon; otherwise the preacher has nothing to say but pious prattle or even worse. The sermon is an exposition of the text, but an exposition with Christ and His atonement as its main content. For Christ is the heart of all Scripture (John 5:39). If a given text does not mention this Gospel specifically, it must be brought in from the context. "Toward forgiveness is directed everything that is to be preached concerning the sacraments and in short the entire Gospel and all the duties of Christianity" (Large Catechism, 417:54). The Gospel must not be encumbered by presenting faith as if it were a command to be fulfilled or a condition for which man is responsible. Faith is the result of the proclamation of God's love. Even in human relations trust is not achieved by commanding or demanding it, but is a natural response to kindness, love, and concern. Likewise, the ultimate aim, the assurance of God's love, is achieved by announcing the love of God.

The Gospel is the means of grace whether it is preached or whether it takes the form of the Sacraments. The Sacraments have the same purpose as the Word of the Gospel and, like the Word, mediate the Good News of God's atonement. "They are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith" (AC XIII). They confirm and seal to the individual through a visible sign the Gospel proclaimed in the word.

The Good News is summed up in the absolution: "Absolution is the voice of the Gospel forgiving sins" (Apology XII:105). Our worship service begins with a confession and absolution which set the tone for the entire service. A word needs to be said about absolution because of the newer liturgies which have flooded our churches. It seems that people begin to have itching ears and are no longer happy with the old, tried, and true. Thus new verbiage is introduced, and usually it vitiates the Gospel by denying objective justification. In the *Worship Supplement* one such wording reads: "There is forgiveness for all who turn to Christ."<sup>8</sup> The relative clause restricts the forgiveness and makes it conditional on something in man. Any absolution which introduces a relative clause to modify the announcement of forgiveness of sins is out of place, because it denies objective justification. Pieper reproves such conditional statements: The absolution cannot be based on one's contrition, repentance or confession. It is based solely on the objective justification and on God's command to announce forgiveness in the name of Christ.<sup>9</sup> The fine balance between objective and subjective justification is to be noted in the traditional absolution on page 16 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. The first sentence announces God's unconditional justification; the second adds the promise that every one who trusts these words is God's child. It is a promise, not a condition.

In order to place the Gospel properly at the heart of the sermon, Law and Gospel must be divided properly. Gospel proclaimed without ever mentioning the Law loses its flavor.<sup>10</sup> For the sinner must know his lost condition in order to see the need of a Savior. Today's sermons are probably most deficient in this respect. We have lost the true concept of sin, or, if not lost, we hesitate to bring it to bear on our parishioners for whatever reason. The Gospel, however, must predominate in the preaching and teaching of the pastor.<sup>11</sup>

The Christian has been redeemed to be Christ's own, "and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,"<sup>12</sup> an objective which does not point primarily to eternity, but begins here at the moment of conversion. We are "a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that we may declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Therefore the Augsburg Confession points out that sanctification is required: "such faith should produce fruits and good works and we must do all such good works as God has commanded" (AC VI). Sanctification follows as naturally as fruit grows on a healthy

tree. The good works are the fruits of faith which we produce because we are the branches ingrafted into Christ. Thus, the intimate relation between faith and good works is apparent. The Gospel is the power of sanctification, the energy which produces the fruits. It provides not only the desire but also the drive and the ability to lead the Christian life. "The Gospel offers counsel and help against sin" (Smalcald Articles IV). Therefore, again, the message of justification must be the heart of the sermon.

To preach the Gospel means more than mentioning Christ or His suffering and death. To proclaim this message means to place it into a central position so that all applications flow from it. The "therefore" sequence is crucial: God has redeemed you at such a costly price; therefore, live accordingly. It can be summed up in this way: God has made you His children, His own, His heirs, His saints; therefore live such a life to glorify His name. Such an objective affects the manner of presentation. While the Law lays out God's will for us, it is not its commands which produce good works. Paul and the other apostles urge, beg, entreat, implore, beseech, plead, appeal because of and through the mercy of our God (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:1; Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 13:19; etc.). Sanctification should be commanded neither in words nor by tone of voice, but should be urged on the audience on the basis of God's mercy in a gentle tone of voice. This is evangelical preaching: The urging of God's will based on the message of justification, as summed up in Walther's twenty-third thesis on Law and Gospel.<sup>13</sup>

2. Teaching is the other major function of the pastoral office: instruction in the catechism for the children and new converts, Bible classes for everyone. The objectives of teaching are the very same as those of preaching: faith and sanctification. Therefore, the pastor dare not teach anything but that which Scripture teaches. His other insights must be left outside the classroom door. From secular knowledge only those things which help clarify the Scriptures can be adduced.

The setting of teaching differs from that of preaching. The pastor as teacher does not hold the same authority which the pulpit gives him. In the mind of the people he is not in the same position of speaking the oracles of God as when he is clothed with his alb or surplice. Furthermore, the teacher in today's society has lost his former authority as the one person who knows; he is challenged by inquisitive and skeptical minds. Such is the setting of any modern classroom; the good teacher succeeds through his skill and knowledge, and the poor teacher fails miserably. The

most effective procedures of pastoral teaching, therefore, will be some of the same ones used in secular teaching, when the methods of discovery and discussion are preferred over lecturing. This sort of instruction is an opportunity to teach people "to search the Scriptures." There is perhaps a greater intellectual emphasis in teaching as compared to preaching. People want to be shown intellectually what the Word of God says. However, ultimately, the same objectives prevail: a cognitive objective, the knowledge of what Scripture says; an affective objective, faith; and a skill objective, sanctification.

The pastor has one advantage over secular teachers; his authority rests on the Word. The secular teacher must convince his students rationally, by a process of deductions and reasoned arguments. The pastor relies on the authority of God's inerrant Word. Therefore the proof of any objection is borne by the objector. The pastor needs the skill of communication to show what the Bible says. His role is that of an interpreter; his skill is hermeneutics.

The content of each and every class is no different than the ultimate content of any sermon — justification and sanctification. Whether the lessons are dealing with a book of Scripture, the Confessions, or a topic of current interest, God's grace must always occupy the center of the class activity. The same balance between Law and Gospel must be observed as in preaching. The same care must be taken not to make faith a work, a condition, an attitude to be achieved by man. This latter point needs special attention, since faith is so widely misunderstood today.

The Bible class provides a unique opportunity to the pastor. If he teaches small groups, he can give each participant personal attention to his or her problems. Homogeneous groups permit a uniform intellectual level for communication. Such classes would seem to be the most efficient way of achieving the objectives of fostering faith and sanctification. Note that I do not intend to say that the Holy Spirit needs my help and teaching skill. But I can hinder His work by poor teaching and preaching, by less than favorable learning circumstances. The Bible class has certain features which are more advantageous than the worship setting to the attainment of certain goals.

### **The Private Communication of Justification**

This aspect of the ministry includes all the calls the pastor makes and the counseling done in his office. As the shepherd of God's people it is his duty and privilege to minister to the

individual in special times of need. The pastor calls on troubled souls, on the sick and the dying. His objective is the same in all these cases — to foster joyful trust in the Lord and patience in suffering — faith and sanctification. The pastor's message is the objective justification: "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven; you are God's child and heir. He has loved you so much that He did not spare His only Son but gave Him for you into death." Word and Sacrament, the means of grace, are the tools which the pastor uses to achieve his objective.

Guiding individuals with particular problems in a God-pleasing life is also a function of the ministry. Counseling people in their difficulties is perhaps the most challenging aspect of the office. The pastor must recognize the limits of his ability and let professionals take over where he is not trained. However, there is a place for his service together with the professional counselor. The objective is to promote faith and sanctification. While the pastor may not be able to resolve a conflict or a particular problem of his parishioner, he is the only one who can provide the motivating force and power to do God's will while the counselor helps resolve the problem with his skills. The same message of objective justification is the means to this end. It is only God's love which heals the wounds and provides the energy needed for sanctification.

### Conclusion

Justification is the message that God has received the world back into His favor, is reconciled to all human beings because of Christ's atonement (objective justification). This message is transmitted through Word and Sacrament and produces and maintains faith (subjective justification), which in turn leads to sanctification. This message is the tool which God has placed in the pastor's hands to accomplish his mission of feeding the Lord's sheep. It is his only tool, but a very powerful tool. The pastor is the ambassador of his Lord and, as such, merely communicates God's Word. Through it he leads people to faith, sanctification, and eternal life.

## FOOTNOTES

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3. A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1936), pp. 374-376; F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 179, 180.
4. Martin Luther, trans., *Deutsche Bibel*, *ad loc.*
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12. Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 10.
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# Theological Observer

## AN UNCELEBRATED ANNIVERSARY

The Lutheran Church is just about finished celebrating its confessional anniversaries. It was 450 years for the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther in 1979, for Philipp Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession in 1980, and for his Apology in 1981; and we can repeat that ritual for Luther's Smalkald Articles and Melanchthon's Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope in 1987. For the Formula of Concord in 1977 and for the Book of Concord in 1980 it was the quadricentennial. The semi-milennium of Luther's birth in 1983 should be celebrated with great fanfare all the way from the officially atheistic birthplace of Luther in the German Democratic Republic to the most traditionally conservative Lutherans in the United States. One anniversary has slipped by unnoticed — the 1600th anniversary of the Constantinopolitan Creed! The Nicaeno - Constantinopolitanum, its official name since the seventeenth century, is more readily recognizable as the Nicene Creed which our congregations are directed to find on page twenty-two in the hymnal. Even in English the solemnity of its cadences echoes the majesty of God. How tragic that homologiphobic Protestants are so averse to creeds in the worship service.

It is too late to arrange any festive solemnities for the creed in our congregations. This is regrettable because it is this creed more than any other statement of faith that symbolizes the true ecumenical and catholic dimension of Christendom. If the sixteenth century confessions bring us back to Luther, the Constantinopolitan Creed takes us back to that time when the nature of God was a matter of dispute in the church. It is the one creed accepted in the East and West, by Roman Catholic and Protestant, by Reformed and Lutheran. No other statement so universally reflects the commonly held faith as the creed formulated at Constantinople in 381 A.D.

The problems connected with the later addition of the *filioque*, the procession from the Son and not the Father alone, cannot be aired here or solved. Compared to the difficulties overcome by churches in recent centuries, this hardly seems insurmountable. What must rather be emphasized is that for sixteen centuries through the disruptions of the eleventh century when West separated from East, the upheavals of sixteenth century readjustment, and the onslaughts of atheism since the eighteenth century Enlightenment — Christians throughout the world have been reciting their faith in essentially the same words formed by the clerics gathered at Constantinople in 381 A.D.

It may be argued that the real date of commemoration should be in the succession of centennials following the year 325 A.D., the date for the Council of Nicea. It was, however, Constantinople that found and resurrected Nicea's unequivocal statement that the Son shared an equal deity with the Father. Constantinople expanded the first two articles by adding "Maker of heaven and earth"; "before all worlds" to "begotten of His Father"; "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary"; "and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate"; "was buried"; "according to the Scriptures"; "sits on the right hand of the Father"; and "of whose kingdom there shall be no end."

The most readily recognizable contribution of Constantinople was, of course, the Third Article, as Nicea simply had a statement of faith in the Holy Ghost. Here in the Third Article is the great statement that the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Baptism is acknowledged as God's activity in the church for forgiveness. More important is the person of the Holy Ghost Himself. Here



He is confessed as absolute Lord, the Yahweh of the Old Testament. It hardly does to Him or the fathers of Constantinople to run the words together as is done in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, to say that He is "The Lord and Giver of life." Another definite article is needed or the conjunction should be dropped to get at the proper sense. He is to be sure, the Source of all spiritual life, but prior to that He is Lord in the absolute sense. He shares in the deity with the Father and the Son and is entitled to share with them all honor and glory.

The Lutheran Reformation asked the anthropocentric question of individual salvation and answered it with a reiteration of the Pauline doctrine of grace as God's active attitude and of faith as mere passivity in man. This was not so much an advance over the fourth century's doctrine of the deity of the Son and the Spirit as it was an application of that doctrine to the specific question of individual salvation.

We may have been a little hasty in putting all our eggs into the sixteenth-century basket during these years of confessional multicentennial celebration. We missed the equally important fourth century. Yet the celebration of the origin of our sixteenth-century confessions will make a less lasting impression on the religious consciousness of our people than the constant reiteration of these words: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and (the) Giver of life, . . ." Perhaps nothing is still more alive in our churches today than what happened in Constantinople in 381 A.D.

David P. Scaer

#### THE RISE AND FALL OF CLARK H. PINNOCK

The Controversy in the 1970's over Biblical inerrancy was not confined to the Missouri Synod but had its parallels in other Protestant groups. At this date the same matter is a draw among the Southern Baptists. An armistice but not a final peace describes the current situation. Such disputes point in a negative way to the catholicity of the church, since similar problems afflict dissimilar denominations almost simultaneously. Roman Catholics at the other end of the scale have their problems here also. During the inerrancy conflict in the Missouri Synod, support in the sense of scholarly research was provided by a group generally referred to as the "Evangelicals," even though the use of such nomenclature may ignite a semantic debate over the proper use of that term. Because of the Missouri Synod's concept of fellowship and the strongly anti-Reformed formulation of its understanding of the sacraments, real personal contact between the Synod and the Evangelicals has been minimal. Nevertheless, Synodical scholars continue to make use of the research of Evangelical scholars. Edward Young, Carl Henry, Harold Lindsell, Gleason Archer, Robert Gundry, and Kenneth Kantzer are just a sampling of the luminaries in the Evangelical galaxy whose light has shown into the Missouri Synod through their literary productions. The name of Clark H. Pinnock also belongs to this stellar collection as a luminary of the highest magnitude for his past defence of inerrancy. It could safely be argued that among the Evangelicals Pinnock ranks as class valedictorian.

The problem is that, according to many Evangelicals, the star has fallen. Writing in the June 1981 issue of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Rex A. Koivisto, an instructor of the Multnomah School of the Bible in

Portland, Oregon (an unlikely name for a theology school), graphically outlines the rise and fall of Pinnock as a defender of Biblical inerrancy. The *Journal's* approach is intriguing, since Pinnock's response immediately follows Koivisto's critique and basically agrees with it. The inerrancy matter has been churning in Evangelical circles for several years, but here is a good chance to see the opposing views side by side, or rather face to face. It is hard to imagine what Evangelicals think about the defection (and this word is used only with the greatest hesitancy), but it must be similar to what Lutherans may still think of Melancthon's change of heart. Or was it a change of heart after all? Like Melancthon, Pinnock may have felt *essentially* this way all the time. This is what Koivisto has discovered, and Pinnock in his follow-up article hardly disagrees.

Pinnock's fall is placed after 1974. Before that he was generally recognized as a staunch defender of Biblical inerrancy, especially in his 1971 books *A Defense of Biblical Inerrancy* (Presbyterian and Reformed) and *Biblical Revelation* (Moody). As Pinnock is not only one of the most intellectually gifted of the Evangelicals, but one of the most prolific with books and essays, his positions are easy to trace. Now, according to Koivisto, Pinnock criticizes inerrancy for being devisive, being a recent innovation, neglecting the phenomena, misplacing the emphasis, being only an inference, requiring qualification, and neglecting the Bible's human side. While not denying that he has undergone changes in his thinking, Pinnock claims that he has always held to a "nuanced inerrancy." By this he means an inerrancy conditioned by the Bible's salvific purposes. As already mentioned, Pinnock's response is really a grateful endorsement of Koivisto's critique. He does, however, add three points to the discussion: (1) inerrantists (i.e., those critical of his position), following in the steps of Benjamin Warfield, put all Scripture on the level of *prophetic* inspiration; (2) their solutions to an "uncomfortable feature" is solved by an "implausible theory," e.g., the cock crowed six times instead of three; and (3) a greater emphasis should be placed on the present working of the Spirit. It is hard to believe that Pinnock could offer these as serious arguments for his theory of "nuanced inerrancy".

With respect to the first point Pinnock states that he cannot see how such Old Testament books as Job, Song, Proverbs, and Chronicles have a "thus saith the Lord" before them. He could have easily added other sections from the Bible to prove his point. But is not Pinnock making the fundamental confusion between inspiration, which refers to God's total and ultimate responsibility for the Biblical texts, and revelation, which refers to God's giving the prophets and apostles their unique knowledge of the way of salvation? Does anyone really believe that God prophetically *inspired* Job's despair? The recording of that despair took place, of course, under God's direct guidance. Pinnock mentions the crowing of the cock six times to handle what he calls an "uncomfortable feature" for the inerrantists. It may be granted that some may have come up with blatantly ridiculous and hence intellectually offensive solutions in a well meaning attempts to defend the Scriptures as God's word. Their sin was, however, not a false principle, but a misapplication of a true principle. Contemporary serious Evangelical and conservative scholars would hardly endorse such quick solutions to truly difficult problems. Pinnock must be aware that most criticisms of Scriptural veracity since the beginning of the Age of Reason have dissolved without any attention from those committed to Biblical inerrancy.

Pinnock's trust in the current working of the Spirit as opposed His past inspiration of the Bible is not unlike some views afloat ten years ago in the

Missouri Synod that equated the Spirit's inspiration of the Bible with his converting and regenerating power. Pinnock, in criticizing the inerrantists for not paying more attention to the Spirit's current working, says he does not want to sound like Karl Barth. That theologian did not really qualitatively distinguish between these two different workings of the Spirit. Of course, here an explanation of our position must be added. The Spirit who gave the Scriptures works through the same Scriptures to convert. Conversion is dependent on inspiration. They are distinguished but still interdependent and interrelated in a specific way.

The real reason for Pinnock's change is still not given, though the date is almost exactly known. He is at center state in Evangelical circles, and lines are being drawn. Without denying that some of his complaints have validity in some way, the more fundamental (pardon the pun) problem in Pinnock's thinking has not been uncovered. It seems doubtful that he will be debated out of his present position, as he himself may have been one of the best defenders of Biblical inerrancy. It remains to be seen how *Evangelicals* will resolve the issue, if it can be resolved among them at all. If Calvinists and Arminians can worship and work side by side, there should be no problem for inerrantists and *nuanced* inerrantists to do the same. The greater and more immediate problem may have to be faced by the Evangelical Theological Society which publishes the *Journal* in which this frank exchange of expressions took place. Its stated basis is this: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and is therefore inerrant in the autographs." If Pinnock's position is really embraced by that statement, what does that statement mean?

David P. Scaer

### THE SIMON GREENLEAF LAW REVIEW

Appearing in a bright green cover is the first volume produced by the Simon Greenleaf School of Law with addresses delivered in both Orange, California, and Strasbourg, France. Citing a price of \$5.00, the review will appear annually and describes itself as "A Scholarly Forum of Opinion Interrelating Law, Theology and Human Rights."

True to this description, the first volume has two articles on the veracity of the Gospels, one review dealing with the legal aspects of the trials of Jesus, and two reviews dealing with the concerns of humanity and society. Featured is the reprinted essay of attorney and Anglican churchman, Edmund Bennett, "The Four Gospels from a Lawyer's Standpoint." Another article, written by law school student, Joseph P. Gudel, examines Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*. The editor and law school dean, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, reviews three French books, which would otherwise for several reasons remain unknown for most the review's readers.

It becomes clear that the law school and its review are dedicated to demonstrating the truthfulness of the Christian message and the historical authenticity of the Biblical documents. The next issue will feature articles by Professor Elmer Gelinas of St. Mary's College, California, delivered first as essays at a conference partially sponsored by the International Institute of Human Rights of Strasbourg. Those interested in the new periodical may send their inquiries to 2430 Shadow Ridge Lane, Orange, California 92667.

David P. Scaer

# Homiletical Studies

## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 5:1-6

April 18, 1982

The person who is born of God loves God, the "parent," and he also loves God's children (v1). The two fundamental Christian duties are to love God and to love one's neighbor, and faith in the incarnation is the inspiration for both. To obey God by loving proves our love for Him (v2). The person who is born of God will not find the commandment to love God and neighbor burdensome (v3), for that which causes difficulty has already been overcome (v4) — the world, the sum of all the forces antagonistic to the Christian life. Faith conquers the world because it receives what Christ has accomplished. The remembrance of Christ's victory drives out affection for the world (v5). But how can we be sure that the incarnation that was necessary for Christ to achieve the victory has taken place? From the testimony of God at Christ's baptism and throughout His earthly life (v6). Here John is combatting the error of Cerinthus who taught that the divine logos or Christ descended upon Jesus at His baptism and departed again when Jesus was arrested so that a mere man was born of Mary and a mere man suffered on the cross. St. John makes clear that the divine Son Jesus Christ did not come only by water at His baptism but also by blood at His death. Besides these two witnesses, the water of baptism and the blood of His death, there is still a third, namely the Spirit who bears witness to the divinity of Christ because the Spirit is the truth.

*Introduction:* The non-Christian world is antagonistic to spiritual life. For that reason James urges us to keep ourselves "unstained from the world" (Jas 1:37), and Paul tells us not to be "conformed" (Ro 12:2). The non-Christian world is an enemy that must be overcome. How? John says that

### Faith Overcomes the World

- I. Faith overcomes the world by uniting us to Christ.
  - A. Christ has already overcome the world.
    1. He began overcoming the world at His baptism.
    2. He finished the task on Calvary.
    3. His victory is real because He is the God-man who was able to take our place and do all that was necessary to make us children of God (v6).
  - B. By the faith we receive at our baptism (Ti 3:5) we put on Christ (Ga 3:27).
    1. As sharers in His victory we can stand up to the blandishments of the world.
    2. As we contemplate what Christ accomplished for us, we receive power to resist the evil in the world.

There is also a positive side to our overcoming the world.

- II. Faith overcomes the world by enabling us to love.
  - A. Faith produces love for God (vv1-2), which moves us to speak truthfully and to deal honestly (1 Jn 3:18).
  - B. Faith produces love for the neighbor (vv 1-2), which enables us to rise above pettiness, vindictiveness, and self-seeking.
  - C. These commandments are not burdensome; keeping them flows from love for God and the neighbor rather than from legal compunction or threat of punishment.
    1. To love is the best way to deactivate hatred.
    2. As we actively love, we release God's power for good in the world.

*Conclusion:* We are in the world, but we do not have to be of the world, yielding to its temptations, mimicking its foolish ways, swayed by its God-dishonoring humanism. Faith unites us to Jesus Christ and enables us to love. That faith overcomes the world.

GA

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 1:1-2:2

April 25, 1982

The liturgical name of this Sunday, *Misericordia Domini* ("the Goodness of the Lord"), derives from the first words of the traditional introit in its Latin form, "*Misericordia Domini plena est terra*" ("The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord"). Another title commonly given this day is "Good Shepherd Sunday," since the traditional gospel, epistle, and gradual all portray Christ as the Good Shepherd of His people. April 25 is, however, also the Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist, and such an important festival ought to receive at least mention at some point in the service.

The proposed sermon text consists in the introduction to the First Letter of the Apostle John (1:1-4) and the first of the seven parts (plus conclusion) into which the letter is best divided. The introduction is the statement of the apostle's basic point, on which he then expands in the course of the rest of the epistle. The first two and a half verses (as far as *hemon*, "us," in verse 3) are all one complex sentence. In it the following designations all refer to one and the same thing — or, rather, person — Jesus Christ: (1) "that which [*ho*] was from the beginning," (2) "that which [*ho*] we have heard," (3) "that which [*ho*] we have seen with our eyes," (4) "that which [*ho*] we have looked upon and touched with our hands," (5) "the word of life" (1:1), (6) "the life," (7) "the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us" (1:2), and (8) "that which [*ho*] we have seen and heard" (1:3). (The neuter relative is used in designations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 to include that which Christ said and did as well as His person.) Designation 1, 5, 6 and 7 stress the divinity of Christ — in terms very close to the prologue to John's gospel — by saying that He was "from the beginning" (cf. Jn 1:1a, 2); that He was "with the Father" (cf. Jn 1:1b, 2); that He is "the Word of Life" (the designation *Logos*, which is so important in John's theology, referring to Christ's role as the Revealer *par excellence*), "the Life," and "the Eternal Life" (cf. Jn 1:4; 5:26; 6:35; 8:12; 11:25; 14:6; 1 Jn 5:20). Designations 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8 stress the humanity of Christ, through which the source of all life was made manifest to men (cf. Jn 1:14, 18).

The "we" (represented in the original by the first person plural ending of the verbs) of designations 2, 3, 4, and 8, the "our" of designations 3 and 4, and the "us" of designation 7 all refer to the apostles (as opposed to the "you" — other Christians — of verse 3, whereas from 1:6 to 2:2 "we," "us," "our," and "ours" includes all people or all Christians). The apostles saw Christ with their own eyes and touched Him with their own hands in both His states of humiliation and exaltation (e.g., Lk 24:36-43). Such was especially true of John, the best friend of Jesus, who witnessed His transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8), leaned on His chest on Maundy Thursday (Jn 13:23-25), saw Him dying on the cross (Jn 19:26-27), and ate breakfast with Him after His resurrection (Jn 21). In designations 2, 3, and 4 there is a progressive emphasis upon the first-hand knowledge of Christ by the apostles as one proceeds from hearing to seeing to beholding (*theomai* often referring to a more intense form of observation than casual sight) to actually touching (or handling). It was the task of the apostles to bear first-hand testimony (1:2) to the Risen Christ and to proclaim (1:2, 3) His word and work to

others (cf. Ac 1:8; 2:32-33; 4:19-20). This testimony took the form not only of preaching, but also of writing (1:4). Thus, we still have the apostolic proclamation — in the New Testament, since all of it was either written by apostles or authorized by them (e.g., the Gospel of Mark was based largely on Peter's testimony and was authorized by him).

The word *koinonia* ("fellowship") in verses 3, 6, and 7 denotes a close personal bond, an intimate relationship. A sinner's *koinonia* with God involves *koinonia* with the God-man Jesus Christ (1:3b, *contra* all non-Christian theology, including unitarianism). Indeed, the only possible *koinonia* with God is based on the sacrificial death ("blood") of Christ, which washes us clean from all sin in the sight of God (1:7) or, in other words, is "the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world" (2:2). That is, the death of Christ has satisfied, with respect to all sinners who have ever lived, the wrath of God aroused by sin. God's wrath revives, however, against all those devoid of faith in the sacrificial death of Christ, for *koinonia* with God comes only through faith in the apostolic gospel (1:3) and issues in *koinonia* with the apostles (1:3) and all other Christians (1:7).

In the dependent (*ean*) clause of verse 9, "confess" is a present subjunctive in order to indicate a continuous activity ("if we keep confessing"). John does not mean that confession is a condition of forgiveness. Rather he is saying that the absence of confession shows that one feels no need of forgiveness and is consequently rejecting the forgiveness which God has already pronounced (cf. 1:10). (Those pastors who encourage private confession in accordance with Augustana 25, may wish to add this form of confession as point c. to I.B.2. in the outline below.)

*Introduction:* As far as church buildings are concerned, we customarily distinguish decisively between the sanctuary and the fellowship hall. But in one sense the Christian church as a whole is not only a sanctuary or holy place, but also a fellowship hall. For all Christians are in

### Fellowship with God

- I. Through the confession of our sins
  - A. Otherwise we are deceiving ourselves (1:8).
    1. Either about the presence of sin within us.
      - a. From the time of conception (Jn 3:6).
      - b. Even as Christians (Ro 7:14-25).
    2. Or about the effect of sin on man's relationship with God.
      - a. God created man to live in perfect fellowship with Him.
      - b. Man disrupted His fellowship with God through sin (1:5-6).
  - B. Otherwise we are rejecting God's forgiveness (1:9).
    1. For we would be saying that we have no need of forgiveness.
    2. Therefore we live a life of confession.
      - a. Confessing our sins in private (the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Evening Prayer, etc.).
      - b. Confessing our sins weekly in public (the divine liturgy).
  - C. Otherwise we are making God a liar (1:10).
    1. We would be calling His Word of Law a lie when it accuses us of sin (Ro 3:20).
    2. We would be calling His Word of Gospel a lie when it speaks of salvation as a gift (Ro 3:24).
- II. Through faith in the death of Jesus Christ
  - A. As the death of a righteous man (2:1).
    1. He alone was conceived in fellowship with God.
    2. He alone remained faithful to God.

- a. Throughout the course of His life.
  - b. Even when God would have no fellowship with Him (Mk 15:34).
- B. As the death of God the Son.
  - 1. His death makes amends in the sight of God.
    - a. For every sin original or actual (1:7).
    - b. For every sinner of every time and place (2:2).
  - 2. His death restores us to fellowship with God (1:3; cf. 1:7).
- III. Through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ
  - A. Which has been certified by the apostles (1:1-3).
    - 1. On the basis of their first-hand observation (1:1-3).
      - a. They heard, saw, and touched Jesus in His state of humiliation.
      - b. They heard, saw, and touched Jesus in His state of exaltation.
    - 2. As proclaimed by them to the world (1:2, 3).
      - a. Orally (Ac 2, etc.).
      - b. In writing (1:4).
  - B. Which was necessitated by His deity (1:1-3).
    - 1. He existed from eternity (1:1).
    - 2. He was in the closest possible fellowship with the Father (1:2).
    - 3. He is the source of all life (1:1, 1).
  - C. Which enables Him to serve as our advocate with the Father.
    - 1. When we sin, which is daily (2:1).
    - 2. On the basis of His past salvific work (righteousness, 2:1; "propitiation," 2:2).

DMcCLJ

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 3:1-2

May 2, 1982

"Behold (or see) what love the Father has given us!" — an amazing, unearthly love (v1). The love of God in Christ is foreign to the world, which does not recognize Christians because from the first it did not recognize God. If it had known the Father, it would have known His children. The purpose of God's amazing love is that we would be called "children of God." We have not only the name but the character — "so we are." John then goes on to speak of our future destiny (v2). The incarnation of Christ made evident our standing as God's children, but it has not yet been manifested what we shall be. We cannot conceive of our future glory. We do know we will be like Christ because "we shall see Him as He is." Seeing God implies likeness to Him in character and affection.

*Introduction:* Hundreds of people recently fled from Cuba, Haiti, and Vietnam to the U.S.A. While most have adjusted well, others, separated from families, friends, and familiar surroundings, feel lost and helpless, and many never develop a sense of belonging. Every person needs to feel that he or she belongs, not only in a job and in a place, but in a family. Even though we may not have been, or are not now, part of a close-knit family, we Christians can have a sense of belonging because we are

#### Children of the Heavenly Father

- I. So we are named.
  - A. We did not earn the right to be so named.
    - 1. By nature we were the children of wrath on account of our sins (Eph 2:3).
    - 2. We could not put ourselves into God's family.



- B. Only through God's amazing love were we given the title of children.
  1. A love given to us when Christ lived, died, and rose for us (1 Jo 3:5).
  2. A love given to us when Christ's benefits were brought to us in baptism.

Through God's unearthly love in Christ we are called children of the heavenly Father. But that is not just a name —

II. So we are.

- A. We really are God's children, even though the world does not recognize us as such.
  1. The reason is that non-Christians have no conception of God as Father through Christ.
  2. They cannot comprehend how such imperfect people as we could be God's children.
  3. Outwardly we look like other people for we still sin and experience suffering.
- B. No matter what others and we ourselves may sometimes think, we who know Christ as our Savior are most assuredly God's children, despite our imperfections.

A great change is coming. John moves from our present dignity to our future destiny.

III. So we shall be.

- A. The day is coming when we shall be like Christ.
  1. Without sin.
  2. Never to die again.
- B. We know that we shall experience perfection because we shall see Christ as He is.
  1. We will see Christ in His heavenly glory.
  2. We will share in His glory.

*Conclusion:* Children of the heavenly Father! God has so called us. That is what we are. What a future awaits us! We do belong!

GA

#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 3: 18-24

May 9, 1982

Remember that John's readers were being threatened by gnosticism with its assertion that knowledge is everything, superior also to virtue, and which denied the incarnation. From the first verse of this epistle John has declared what he knew to be true about Christ, the incarnate Word and the unique, only Savior. Believers are called to live a life of light in the Lord. Some of John's descriptions of the ideal Christian life, perhaps alongside the gnostic emphasis on knowledge, lead many to wonder whether anyone could be sure of his salvation. It will benefit the preacher to review the significance of the Greek words for "know," "confidence," and "abide."

*Introduction:* Can a Christian be sure of where he or she stands with God? Can a believer be certain about going to heaven? Those who make evangelism calls find that most people react to such questions in terms of "I think so" or "I hope so." Many otherwise strong people of God are troubled by their failure to be "good enough" in their every-day life. In the text the Apostle John tells us how we can be

### Confident Christians!

I. Self-examination in the light of the scriptural description of a disciple could easily undermine our confidence before God.

- A. Think of how real and powerful faith is to be.
  - 1. It can "move mountains" through answered prayer (Mt 17:20).
  - 2. It enables men and women to be heroic conquerors for the Lord (see He 11).
  - 3. It enables them to trust the Lord no matter what (Ps 37:5; Ro 8:28).
- B. The requirements of discipleship are strong and demanding. (Some of the expectations Christ has of His followers are perfect love (Jn 15:12), self-denial and cross-bearing (Mt 16:24ff.), and unselfish service to others (Jn 13:14-15). Cf. also 1 John 3:9,15,16,18).

Thus we could easily be led to ask with Jesus's disciples, "Who then can be saved?" (Lk 18:26). The answer lies in looking only to God and His promises.

- II. Our confidence is based purely on the promises of the gospel (v 20b).
  - A. The amazing grace of God *has* saved us.
    - 1. Christ's obedient sacrifice atoned for all our sins.
    - 2. His victorious resurrection is our victory over sin and death.
    - 3. By the gift of faith His righteousness is made ours.
  - B. The Holy Spirit is our in-dwelling Comforter (v 24).
    - 1. Through the Spirit's testimony in Scripture we *know* that we are saved because of Christ's accomplishments, not ours.
    - 2. He works faith in us and maintains it through the Word and Sacraments.

Thus, although our hearts may condemn us for many and great short-comings, as redeemed people we know by faith where we stand before God in Christ.

III. Furthermore, our confidence is demonstrated by obedience to God's will (v 23).

- A. Faith in His promises is alive and active within us.
  - 1. It is evidenced in our love for and use of the means of grace.
  - 2. It is expressed in worship and witnessing.
- B. We do practice Christian love toward each other.
  - 1. Admittedly our practice of love leaves much to be desired and is often the cause of our hearts condemning us.
  - 2. Love is alive and practiced and God knows it, or else faith has died out in us (Jas 2:17, cf. also Jn 15).

While there is never room for egotistical self-righteousness in a believer, there can and will be a Spirit-empowered confidence in God's grace and work in us.

Edwin Dubberke  
St. Louis

### FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 4:1-11

May 16, 1982

As usual the context here is essential to a correct understanding and application of what the Spirit inspired. Genuine Christian love is *the* mark of new life in Christ's people. The admonition to "test the spirits" is not merely a call to make us all "heresy hunters"; we must be deeply concerned as to whether or not our faith and life are "of God." It would be useful to research thoroughly each use of *pneuma* and *ek tou theou* in the text. All of us need greatly the supportive assurance of v 4b.

**Introduction:** Being "in the hospital for tests" is a very common occurrence. Physical health or dangerous threats to it often can only be determined by undergoing numerous, sometimes very complicated tests. Of course, our health is more than worth the trouble and expense. Spiritual health is even more important and also calls for constant monitoring of its direction and vitality. Which "spirit" or activating principle guides and motivates what we are and do? The text calls upon us to answer this question by using

### The Big Spiritual Test!

- I. The spirit that is of God is based on His truth and centers on love.
    - A. Its source is God's love for us.
      1. God is many things (power, presence, justice, etc.) but His essential being is love, *agape* (v 8b).
      2. God's love is and can only be known in Jesus (vv 9-10). (Dramatically reiterate the powerful, deep, sacrificial, victorious love that we see so vividly in the Gospel).
      3. The very nature of this love makes it an energetically seeking love (v 10a, Lk 15; 19:10).
    - B. Its presence in us is demonstrated when we put love into practice.
      1. By faith alone we personally possess the benefits of God's saving love (Cf. 3:23; Jn 3:16).
      2. God's love active and evident in our lives is both natural and to be expected (vv 7, 11).
      3. Both the presence and vitality of faith in Christ and love that reflects His love are a product of the Holy Spirit in us (1 Cor 12:3-4; 13:1f; 6:19-20). The inspired word is the key to His work in us (v 6).
- As believers in Christ we are God's children (vv 4, 6a) and have and know the "spirit of truth," which alone enables us to recognize the "other" spirit against which John warns his readers.
- II. The "spirit of error" is not of God at all but of the world.
    - A. It is very evident in that it does not recognize that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh," the incarnation of God's love.
      1. Such a "spirit" of religion does not proclaim Jesus, God in the flesh and the covering for all sin (vv 2, 3, 9).
      2. It is therefore anti-Christ and opposed to the salvation that is by faith alone (v 3). It is evidenced repeatedly by the many "isms" on the religious scene today.
    - B. This spirit and those who promote it are of no higher source than the world.
      1. The "prince of this world" is Satan himself (Jn 12:31; 11 Cor 4:4).
      2. The spirit of living that is under the influence of the world does not produce love but self-centeredness and leaves men in death, not life (Eph 2:1-3).

Because the spirit of error is so prevalent, powerful, and appealing even to believers, it is terribly important that we more carefully heed the urging to "test the spirits." We do so not fearfully but confidently with the assurance of v 4b.

ED

## THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Ephesians 1:16-23

May 20, 1982

This section is Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. Verse 17: "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" — the Spirit, as the author of wisdom and revealer of truth, reveals God to us. Verse 18: "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" — the understanding is that by which we perceive truth; "the hope of his calling" — actually get to know the hope, the object of the hope, the heavenly inheritance, and the divine power which guarantees the inheritance. Verse 19: "power to us-ward" — 1 Pt 1:5 says that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; the means the Holy Spirit uses is the Word and Sacraments. Verse 20: "at His own right hand" — the place of infinite glory, power, and majesty; the human nature of Christ shares in the resurrection and ascension. Verse 21: "far above all principalities" — Christ is Lord of all, all earthly kingdoms, the good angels, and Satan's kingdom too. Verse 22: "under His feet" — supreme exaltation, particularly over His enemies, sin, death, the devil (Ps 8:6; 1 Cor 15:27; He 2:8; "The strife is o'er, the battle won"); "head over all things" — Christ is the Head (Col 1:18); we Christians are the members of His body (1 Cor 12); "to the church" — Christ rules all things in the interest of the church, Mt 16:18. Verse 23: "the fulness of Him" — when the body has all its members, it is complete; "fillet all in all" — we are in Christ, and He in us, Jn 6:56; 15:4-7; 17:21; 1 Jn 3:24.

*Introduction:* God is a God of power, manifested in the creation of the world and in God's mighty acts in the Old Testament. In our text St. Paul connects two other events with the power of God — the resurrection and ascension of Christ and the new life of the Christian.

### God's Power at Work

- I. In Christ's resurrection and ascension.
  - A. God raised Christ, v20.
    1. To show His acceptance of the redemptive work of Christ (Ro 4:25; Ac 2:24).
    2. As the firstfruits of those asleep (1 Cor 15:20).
  - B. God set Christ at His own right hand, v 20.
    1. A place of honor and power above every power, v 21.
    2. He put all things under His feet; Christ is conqueror over sin, death, and the devil (1 Cor 15:55-57).
    3. He is Head over all things to the Church, v22.
      - a. Christ dwells in each Christian and each Christian in Him (v 21; Jn 6:56; 15:4-7; 17-21; 1 Jn 3:24).
      - b. Christ intercedes (He 7:25).
      - c. He rules all things in the interest of His Church (v 22; Mt. 16:18).
- II. In the new life of the Christian.
  - A. The Ephesians were manifesting the new life in faith and love, v 15.
  - B. Paul prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Jn 17:17; 16:13; 1 Pt 1:5).
    1. That you may know Christ (Php 3:8-10).
    2. That you may know the hope of His calling (v 18, 1 Thess 4:13; 1 Pt 1:3-5; Ro 5:2).
    3. That you may know the riches of the glory of His inheritance (v 18; Jn 14:1-6; 1 Cor 2:9; Job 19:25; 1 Cor 15:51 ff.).

*Conclusion:* God is a God of power. How comforting to our faith that God's power raised Christ and gave Him glory. Through the Word and Sacraments God's Spirit continues to comfort us with Christ and our Christian hope.

HJE

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER THE SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION

1 John 4:13-21

May 23, 1982

As is usually true of John's writing, this text is one that becomes a pretext if torn out of context. John circles in on his subject and then out again, always writing profound ideas in basic language. More than any other New Testament writer John's Greek is rich in thought while remaining simple in vocabulary. Preparing to preach this text will surely include at least one close reading of the whole letter. Phillips' Version draws out some valuable nuances.

A key to this text is *meno*, forms of which are used four times in this text and 118 times in the New Testament. (See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, p. 504.) The modern translations use "dwell," "live," "abide," "remain," "remain in union," and "continue in union." The range of thought in English demonstrates that the fullness of the Greek word is difficult for us to capture. In this text we also find forms of *agape* (but not *eros*, not even *philos*) used some fourteen times. Verse 13 repeats 3:24, and the text expands upon the thought introduced there.

The goal of the sermon is that the Christian will maintain a balance between frenzied activity which burns him out and casual indifference that gets nothing done.

*Introduction:* We Christians sometimes stand tensely alert watching for the return of our ascended Lord Jesus. At other times we emphasize resting in our Lord's protective care. Yet for everyday life in these end-times we not only look to the example of Jesus who now sits at the right hand of His Father, but we also claim the promise of Ps 132:11-12. We need a proper balance between tension and relaxing in the Lord. The text for this Sunday after the Ascension of our Lord teaches us

### How to Sit Right with God

- I. Sitting right with God requires a genuine seat.
  - A. The world tempts us with shallow chairs.
    1. "Talk is cheap," but often a lie (v20; 1 Jn 1:10; 1 Jn 2:4).
    2. Such seats collapse, usually sooner than later.
  - B. The solid seat is built by the Spirit (v13; 1 Jn 3:24) on the Savior (v14; Jn 15:27; 1 Jn 1:2; Jn 3:17).
    1. We sit on a seat made of God's love in Christ (v14-16; 1 Jn 5:1; Ro 10:9; 1 Jn 2:2; 1 Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:7, 8). To live a love-filled life is to be God-filled.
    2. This seat is solid even in the judgment (v17; 1 Jn 2:28).
- II. Sitting right with God requires a "fitting" chair.
  - A. The world offers us awkward, frightening chairs.
    1. They try to scare us (v18b).
    2. They tempt us with popularity (Ps 1:1; 1 Jn 3:7).
  - B. Jesus molds us into God's image.
    1. Sitting with Him, we are unafraid (v18a; Ro 8:15).
    2. He changes us from our natural fallen form (v15; v19; 1 Jn 3:23; 1 Jn 4:10).

3. He expects us to return to the image (form) in which He created us (v21; Lv 19:18; 1 Jn 3:11; Jn 13:34).

### III. Sitting right with God is for the long haul.

- A. We cannot be either too tense nor too relaxed.
  1. The tense Christian charging about with bared sword soon becomes frightened (v18b).
  2. The overly relaxed Christian sleeps away the day (1 Th 5:5, 6a).
- B. Sitting with God, we are sustained for the time remaining until the risen and ascended Lord returns.
  1. God's love grows in us now and eternally (v17).
  2. A seat with God is abiding, dwelling, living, remaining, continuing (v13; v15; v16; 1 Jn 2:24; 1 Jn 4:12).

*Conclusion:* In the Savior of the world we rest, ready for action. May the Lord grant us the perspective of a proper balance between being asleep in our beds and being so frantic as to drive people away from our witness; a proper balance of leaning on Him, yet ready for action for Him.

Warren Messmann  
Connersville, Indiana

## PENTECOST SUNDAY

Acts 2:1-21

May 30, 1982

The verb *sumplerousthai* is weighty; it is harvest time; it is Pentecost festival time. Lenski correctly equates *dialektois* (v6) with *glossai* (v11). Peter confronts the scoffers with his text from Joel. We too must confront detractors with the Word. The outline given below requires study of *sarx* (v17). Our translations read "flesh" (KJV, RSV, Phillips, Berkeley), "people" (NIV, AAT), "mankind" (NASV, Williams, CPV, LB), and "everyone" (NEB). Note the strength of *terata* and *semeia* (v19). The works and signs of God are not merely strange, but always significant.

The goal of the sermon is to show that in an apparently deeply divided world the Holy Spirit is uniting Christ's people.

*Introduction:* The everyday news is easily read as a listing of divided people: labor vs. management, Republican vs. Democrat, "hawk" vs. "dove," parent vs. child, black vs. white, denomination vs. denomination, nation vs. nation. In a world that seems as divided as it was two thousand years ago, it is with joy that we read God's assurance that:

### God Pours out One Spirit on All People

- I. Fallen mankind is divided.
  - A. We see physical divisions in people. All flesh is divided by
    1. Political and ethnic nations (vs 5,8-11).
    2. Age (v17).
    3. Status (v18).
  - B. People in their sinful state are confused.
    1. They are bewildered (v6) and forever asking, "What does this mean?" (v12).
    2. Those who do not scoff (v13) are at least perplexed (v12).
    3. Division among people at all levels is evidence of sin and death.
- II. The Holy Spirit brings divided people together in Christ.
  - A. On that first "Thanksgiving Day" of the New Testament church the Holy

Spirit united people with God and one another through the inspired preaching of the apostles.

1. The apostles were anointed with God's Spirit (v2).
  2. The apostles did not have "too much wine" but the Spirit (v4), who is "living water" (Jn 7:37-39a).
  3. The apostles preached the mighty works of God accomplished in the earthly ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (vs 11, 22-36).
- C. The Holy Spirit continues to unite people with God and one another through the Word and Sacraments.
1. The Word confutes the opponents of Christ (vs 15-16).
  2. The Word creates in the hearts of men saving faith in Christ (v21).

WEM

### TRINITY SUNDAY 2 Corinthians 13:11-14 June 6, 1982

The Corinthian congregation was in many ways Paul's "problem child." The forming of cliques, neglect of church discipline, Christians going to court against each other, abuse of the Lord's Supper, and errors concerning the resurrection of the dead were some of the problems Paul had to confront. Yet Paul still regarded them as "brethren" in Christ, encouraged them to mature in Him, and blessed them in the name of the Triune God. The *katartizesthe* (v11) ties in with the noun form in v9 (used only here in the Bible). Paul challenges the Corinthians to mature, to be well equipped for His service. The *parakaleisthe* (v11) means more than to "be of good comfort" (KJV). It includes the idea of being encouraged and even admonished to be all God wants people to be. Just because of its familiarity through use in worship, the concluding apostolic benediction should be explained.

The central thought of the text is that the blessing of the Triune God enables us to live in harmony and to be a blessing to each other. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers will grow in God's love. The problem is that we often fail to see the connection between a theology of blessing and the use of God's blessing, or that we are so filled with negativism that we doubt whether human relationships (even among Christians) can improve. The means to the goal is the abundant blessing of the Almighty Himself!

*Introduction:* At one time or another you have probably received one of those popular — but illegal — letters asking you to copy the letter, put your name and address at the bottom of the list, and mail ten dollars (or a recipe) to the person at the top of the list. Then in several weeks you should expect to be flooded with money (or recipes). Such schemes usually do not work. Our text presents a much better idea, a plan we might call

#### A Chain-Blessing

- I. Recognize God's blessings.
  - A. His grace.
    1. It is needed because of sin.
      - a. The case of the Corinthian church.
      - b. We never outgrow the need for grace (Ro 7:19).
    2. It is given by Jesus (Jn 1:16).



- a. He is the Christ, the promised Deliverer.
  - b. His undeserved, forgiving love comes through the cross and the empty tomb (Ro 4:25).
- 3. It is full and complete for each person of every age.
- B. His love.
  - 1. It is from our heavenly Father.
  - 2. It is the best kind of love — *agape* love.
    - a. It is shown in the giving of His Son (Jn 3:16).
    - b. It is shown in the giving of every good gift (Jas 1:17).
- C. His fellowship.
  - 1. We are part of God's family, His beloved children (Ga 3:26).
  - 2. The Holy Spirit is at work.
    - a. The Spirit makes us God's children (Jn 3:5-6; I Cor 12:3).
    - b. The Spirit keeps us in the faith (Ga 4:5-6; Ro 15:13).
- II. Then share His blessings.
  - A. We are encouraged and thoroughly fitted to do God's will (v11) though the Word and the Sacraments (1 Th 2:13; 2 Tm 3:16-17).
  - B. We can serve Him together.
    - 1. United in purpose (v11; 1 Cor 5:15).
    - 2. Harmonious in life (v11; Eph 4:3; 1 Cor 1:10; Php 1:27).
  - C. We can relate as brothers and sisters in Christ.
    - 1. By the titles (names) we use for each other (v11).
    - 2. By our demonstrations of love (v12).
    - 3. By our oneness in Christ (v13). What opportunities our circuits and Synod have for this!

*Conclusion:* Each week we begin our worship in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, thus celebrating the blessing of being His through holy baptism. During the worship we are assured of pardon, guided by His Word, and strengthened by His Supper. We hear God's words of blessing conclude the worship. Now we have the opportunity to complete the chain by sharing His blessings with others throughout the week. May that chain of blessing never be broken.

Lloyd Strelow

### FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 2 Corinthians 4:5-11 June 13, 1982

In addition to the other problems in the Corinthian congregation (see last week's introduction), Paul had to deal with its ideas about his ministry. He devotes a large portion of his second letter to this subject (chapters 2-5; 10-13). Paul speaks of his ministry (and of the Christian ministry today) realistically and unapologetically. For the Gospel to be proclaimed clearly and convincingly, both pastor and people need this Biblical perspective.

The central thought of the text is the power of God's grace, working through weak human vessels, to transform hearts. The goal of the sermon is to appreciate more God's plan for conveying His message to us and to support the Christian ministry in particular. The problem is that we tend to look too much at the weakness of the messenger or at the pressure of the unbelieving world instead of focusing on Christ and His Word. The means to the goal is the Gospel treasure.

*Introduction:* Preaching is done in as many ways as there are preachers. It may be loud and flamboyant, or quiet and subdued. Some worshippers come to church primarily to hear the preaching. Others stay away because of it. As for us, we make

### No Apologies for Our Preaching

- I. No apologies for the message.
  - A. It is not ourselves (v5).
    1. That may be the message that comes across (Christian televisions "stars," religious celebrities, cultic leaders).
    2. The preacher is tempted to take center stage.
      - a. His old Adam feeds his pride. "Look how fast my church is growing compared to yours."
      - b. The members comment: "Reverend is such a nice person." "His sermons are the best." "If pastor isn't preaching, I may not go to church this Sunday."
  - B. It is Jesus Christ (v5).
    1. God's image (v4) is revealed through Him (v6).
    2. He is our only Savior (v4, 10, 14; 5:19, 21).
    3. He is the glorious Lord (Php 2:9-10).
- II. No apologies for the messenger.
  - A. He is a servant.
    1. With the ministry of the word of reconciliation (v5; 5:18-19).
    2. For our benefit (v5; 5:20; He 13:17).
  - B. He has God's light (v6).
  - C. He and his ministry are proof of God's power.
    1. Daily besieged like Paul (vv8-11). God's ministers are often criticized, since they are earthen vessels (clergy are now sold malpractice insurance).
    2. Yet always victorious.
      - a. Through His power (v7b).
      - b. Showing His life at work in us (vv10b, 11b).

*Conclusion:* People sometimes get turned off by a quirk, habit, or weakness of their pastor. They forget he is their minister — their servant — for Jesus' sake. Praise God and support every servant who has himself been to the cross and the empty tomb, and who verbally and by his life proclaims the good news that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Lord.

LS

### SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

June 20, 1982

Psalm 116, from which Paul quotes, corresponds with Paul's mood because it was written when the psalmist was in trouble but was sustained by faith. Paul believed that God who raised Christ from the dead would raise him and all Christians and bring them into His presence. Know that everything he is going through now will bring about the final salvation of even more people sustains Paul. Even though his physical body is weakening and decaying (v16), inwardly he is being renewed because he knows affliction is being used by God to accomplish His designs (v17). The affliction is light in comparison to glory; Paul

contrasts affliction with glory, lightness with weight, and the moment with the eternal. Paul is able to see both affliction and glory in their proper perspective, because he sees affliction as the temporal thing that it is and glory as the eternal and unseen reality. Verse 1 in chapter 5 continues the discussion of the topic, for Paul contrasts the earthly tent of our body, the home of our soul on earth, with the resurrection body to be furnished by God.

*Introduction:* Affliction is always unpleasant and often discouraging. The fourth and fifth chapters of 2 Corinthians contain Paul's magnificent statement of his attitude in affliction. He shows how we can be

### Getting the Right Perspective on Affliction

- I. See affliction as opportunity for renewal (v16b).
  - A. Decay rather than renewal appears to be the hallmark of affliction.
    1. Think of how sickness weakens the body.
    2. Think of how wrongs done to us can negatively affect our body and mind.
    3. Affliction makes us keenly conscious that our body is only an earthly tent which is being destroyed (5:1).
  - B. While often accelerating the decay of the body, affliction can nevertheless direct us to Christ for inward renewal (v16c).
    1. The life of Jesus (2 Cor 4:10b) manifests itself in us when we believe that, though "we are afflicted in every way," God will not allow us to be crushed (2 Cor 4:8) and that our inner life hid with Christ in God can never be destroyed.
    2. The life of Jesus manifests itself when affliction in our lives produces endurance and character (Ro 5:3-4).

God's purpose in affliction goes beyond this life, however. We are getting the right perspective on affliction when we

- II. See affliction as preparation for glory.
  - A. Affliction makes us more conscious of eternal values.
    1. The preciousness of a faith that confesses Christ as crucified and risen Lord (vv13, 14).
    2. Our final resurrection and acceptance by God when we stand in His presence on the last day (v14).
  - B. Affliction makes us more heavenly-minded.
    1. We become more aware of the transitoriness of our present life and of the momentariness of affliction in comparison to eternity.
    2. We wait for that glorified body which will not be afflicted in any way (v5:1).

*Conclusion:* Affliction is an opportunity for renewal and a preparation for glory. When we have this perspective on affliction, we will be able to say with the psalmist, "It is good for me that I was afflicted" (Ps 119:71).

GA

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

June 27, 1982

It is important that the preacher pay attention to the five verses that precede this text. The "So" (v6) makes a double demand that the immediate and preceding context be given attention, specifically verse 5 and the fact that the Holy Spirit is the very "guarantee" of all that God has "prepared" for us and that

He has "prepared us." The use of the word "faith" in verse 7 calls for special attention. Lenski in his *Eisenach Epistle Selections* does an admirable job of pointing to "faith" as used in this text as something taken *objectively* rather than *subjectively*. Thus within this text "faith" is understood to express objectively that which is believed, i.e., the doctrine, confession, or word.

*Introduction:* Children are classic studies in "environmental bravery." A child can be most brave, secure, and confident when he is at home. He has few, if any, fears. He knows where everything is and is completely comfortable and confident. But transplant that child into a stranger's home or into his first day in Vacation Bible School, or have the family move into a new home, and watch that bravery, courage, and confidence erode. He who once was the picture of courage has now become the personification of shyness. The Word of God that is our text enables "spiritual shyness" to be removed from us because it reminds us that

### **We Are Full of Courage, No Matter What**

- I. This is true because we look to the *fact* of the matter, i.e., faith (v7). Courage holds us to the truth.
  - A. This courage is not self-made, self-induced, "possibility" or "positive" thinking.
  - B. This courage is grounded and centered in Christ and the Word.
  - C. The source of this courage is
    1. Initially, Baptism or the Word.
    2. Regularly, the Word, Holy Communion, remembrance of Baptism.
- II. Because of this guaranteed fact we are now being led into the *matter* of the fact, i.e., to please Him (v9). This courage moves us. While the "where" or "what" of that movement is not spelled out, we look to the Holy Spirit and to the Scriptures which He authored as our guarantee. Future courage (v10) is bestowed too.
  - A. Whether in the body — we walk *for* Christ with that courage.
  - B. Whether out of the body — we walk *before* Christ with that courage.

*Conclusion:* The courage that is ours no matter what is a courage that begins and ends objectively and outside of us. It is a courage that is totally dependent upon the guarantee that is delivered to us by the Holy Spirit because of the work of Christ and at the mandate of the Father. Because of this guarantee we have the necessary courage to walk through this life and to stand before the "seat of Christ" (v10).

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### **FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**

**July 4, 1982**

This year (1982) the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost falls on our national holiday of Independence Day. The preacher should not ignore the fact that his hearers are "in the world." On this Sunday it might be helpful to focus on vv14-15 as the sermon text.

*Introduction:* It has been a while since the Fourth of July, Independence Day, has fallen on a Lord's Day! In fact, the last time it did, we, as a nation, seemingly "pulled out all of the stops" as we celebrated our bicentennial. Over the past 200-plus years we have taken pride in our nation's freedoms, in our corporate and individual "freedoms of choice." The "right to choose" is very much at the core of

our national heritage and ideology. It is a privilege we enjoy as Americans. It is, indeed, a blessing from our Father. Consider, for instance, the many choices we have, as Americans — to work where we want to work, to live where we want to live, to worship where we want to worship, to shop where we want to shop, to drive the kind of car we want to drive, etc. After 206 years of having this “right of choice” ingrained into us, the Word of God before us this day rather abruptly pulls us up short with the announcement:

### **Free, and Yet We Really Have No Choice**

- I. The source of our freedom is that One died for all and now all are dead.
  - A. In Christ's crucifixion the death of all sinners was effected (Jn 3:16).
  - B. Trace the route of the “One . . . for all” source.
    1. From Bethlehem where we witnessed the birth of One.
    2. To Calvary where the pronouncement of “It is finished” was for all.
  - C. See the proof of the “One . . . for all” source.
    1. On Good Friday, as One was buried.
    2. On Easter morning, as all were raised.
  - D. Enjoy the fruits of the “One . . . for all” source.
    1. We are out of debt to sin.
    2. No one is any longer obligated to pay sin's debt.
- II. The purpose of our freedom is that we acknowledge that we have no choice but to proclaim life for all.
  - A. Know what real living is.
    1. It is not living for self (v15a).
    2. It is living for Him (v15b).
  - B. It is the “should” that underlines our lack of choice.
    1. While Christ crucified and Christ resurrected has made real living possible, not all are really living.
    2. The lack of proclamation leaves the actualization of really living unfulfilled for many.
  - C. Have you reached that Pauline “conclusion” (v14)?

*Conclusion:* As paradoxical as it may sound today on the 206th anniversary of our nation's independence, the Word of God towers over those years of celebration of the “right of choice” and reminds us, yes, even compels us, to come to grips with the 2,000 year old declaration of the Word that we have no choice.

RRK

### **FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

**2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14**

**July 11, 1982**

The “churches” of Macedonia (v1) refer to those at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Their generosity was proof of God's grace to them. Liberality is a response to grace and is itself a gift of God. *Haplotēs* (v2) is single-mindedness or heartiness of giving. All of northern Greece was in dire poverty at this time and so the contribution of the Macedonian Christians was comparable to the widow's mite (Mk 12:44). They voluntarily and energetically carried out the collection (v3), asking to be allowed the privilege of giving for the relief of the suffering Christians in Jerusalem (v4). Not only had they consecrated themselves to God (v5), but they had devoted themselves to the work of spreading the Gospel. While Paul does not wish to depreciate the “beginning” (v6) the Corinthians had made in the collection, they probably had been slack in following through. Since giving is to be unselfish and genuine, Paul does not

command them to give (v8). Nor is the collection to be made to help the Judean Christians while putting undue pressure on the Corinthians. If there ever came a time when the Corinthians would be poor, Jerusalem should in turn contribute to their support (vv13-14). The primary motivation for the giving is the magnificent grace of Jesus Christ which was manifested in making us who were spiritually poor rich in the treasures of grace. Christ is not only an example of self-sacrifice for others but the source of our power to give sacrificially (v9).

*Introduction:* We hear the word "grace" so often that its meaning may become blurred. Defining grace as undeserved kindness or favor still leaves it abstract. The text invites us to experience grace. Here is

### Grace in Action

- I. The one who was rich became poor.
  - A. The riches of Jesus stretch back into eternity.
    1. Jesus has always existed (Jn 8:58; He 13:8).
    2. He has always had all power (Mt 28:18; Col 1:16), dominion (Ps 8:7), and glory (Jn 17:5; Php 2:9-).
  - B. Jesus took on a servant form and poverty (Php 2:7).
    1. He experienced human limitations (Jo 4:7; Mt 8:20).
    2. He experienced suffering and a shameful death.

Here was grace in action — for us (v9).
- II. The ones who are poor become rich.
  - A. By nature we are spiritually poor.
    1. With no goodness of our own (Is 64:6; Gn 8:21).
    2. With no way to gain acceptance with God (Jas 2:10).
  - B. In Christ we have become incredibly rich.
    1. We have forgiveness of sins — knowledge of it by the Spirit's enlightenment, faith by which to receive it, and the ability to speak of it (v7a).
    2. We have all things working for our good (1 Cor 3: 21-22; Ro 8:28).
    3. We have heaven's eternal riches. Here is grace in action, we have become rich.
- III. The rich ones give their riches to others.
  - A. By giving money.
    1. The Corinthians were to complete their collection of money for the relief of the poor among the Christians in Jerusalem.
    2. Their inspiration and model for doing so was Christ and also the Macedonian Christians, who by their liberal giving despite their extreme poverty were demonstrating Christ's love and generosity (vv2-3).
  - B. Giving is to be generous.
    1. We sometimes find it hard to be generous because our money represents our hard work and we do not always see tangible returns from our giving.
    2. Generosity does not come about by demand (v8) but only as we contemplate the riches we have in Christ, who then moves us to share these riches in practical and concrete ways.
  - C. Giving is itself a gracious work (v7b).
    1. To be able to give generously and cheerfully is a gift of God's grace.
    2. Our giving benefits others — our financial gifts can relieve not only people's physical needs but can provide for their spiritual needs through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

*Conclusion:* Grace is not just a word; it is action by Christ, for us, and through us, for others.

GA

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

July 18, 1982

To the age-old question, "Why does God allow trials and sufferings?" Scripture gives many practical answers. Job confesses, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). The psalmist admits the element of good in afflictions (Ps 119:71). Jesus teaches that the pruning knife leads to more fruit-bearing (Jn 15:2,5). Peter says that trials purify faith (1 Pet 1:7). The writer of Hebrews says that chastisements produce the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" (He 12:11). The text sheds further light on the age-old question.

*Introduction:* Once there were two frogs. They were brothers. They lived together in a spring house. One day one of the frogs fell into a vat of cream. As he felt himself slowly sinking, he felt sorry for himself and thought, "Why does this have to happen to me? I always tried to be a good frog." He sank deeper and deeper and died. Shortly afterwards, his brother came looking for him and fell into the same vat of cream. "Oh, dear," he thought, "I'm really in trouble. But I've heard that where there's life there's hope." And he paddled his legs madly, and churned and churned until, to his surprise, the cream turned into chunks of butter. He floated on them and finally jumped to safety. Just a simple story! But it reminds us how we can deal with life's trials and afflictions. The text deals with the question we have when troubles come:

### Why Does God Allow Trials?

- I. Trials have a way of humbling us (v7).
  - A. By making us realize our "humanity."
    1. The apostle Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. Perhaps it was headaches, malaria, or eye trouble (cf. Ga 4:13-15). We all have our "thorns" and trials.
    2. The apostle found it "a messenger of Satan to harass me" (cf. Job 2:2-7 on Satan being allowed to impose afflictions). Life is full of trials: crippling diseases, accidents, failing senses, marks of aging, etc.
  - B. By reminding us of our spiritual need.
    1. The apostle experienced a special lesson in life — "to keep me from being too elated." Paul received many visions and revelations from the Lord, even a glimpse into Paradise itself. He might have become proud and boasted about it as if he merited the favor.
    2. When we experience spiritual joys and blessings, we might feel we are deserving of them and boast of ourselves. But trials remind us of our poverty of spirit so that we trust God alone. We should remember Eph 2:3b-5 and Mt 5:3.
- II. Trials have a way of deepening our experience with God's grace (vv8-9b).
  - A. By driving us to earnest prayer to the Lord.
    1. The apostle besought the Lord three times about his thorn. He wished it would be taken out of his life, if God willed.
    2. We need to talk over our trials with the Lord in prayer and leave the matter to His gracious will.



- B. By opening us up to the wonders of God's grace.
  - 1. God answered with the promise of His sufficient grace. Grace is God's forgiving love through Christ's sacrifice. His grace proved mightier than Paul's thorn.
  - 2. If God provided such wonderful grace to save us, that same grace will not let trials separate us from His love (Ro 8:28, 35-39).
- III. Trials have a way of strengthening us for living (vv 9b-10).
  - A. By a daily experience with Christ's power. The apostle made it his motto in life to boast of his weaknessess, for then he was open to Christ's constant power. "My power is made perfect in weakness," said the Lord.
  - B. By cheerful resignation to God's gracious will.
    - 1. Paul met life's trials with the power of Christ's grace (v9b).
    - 2. He resigned himself to what trials came his way (v10) (cf. 2 Cor 6:4-5 and 11:23-29 for a list of his trials).
    - 3. He gives us the key to finding a victorious life amid trials: "when I am weak, then I am strong" (cf. TLH 521, "What God Ordains Is Always Good").

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### SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 1:3-14

July 25, 1982

The text comprises the apostle Paul's "great doxology." When Paul begins with this lofty doxology, he shows that his whole heart and life is filled with the experience of God's grace in Christ. He is caught up in the grandeur of personal salvation and soars to the heights of eloquence in describing God's plan of salvation. He writes breathlessly, as it were, of his wonderful experience. In the Greek language these verses (3-14) comprise one, long sentence. In translations like the RSV it is broken up into six sentences. The text is a pean of praise to the Triune God. It is like a three-stanza hymn, each stanza ending with a tribute of praise (3-6; 7-12; 13-14). Christ is the core and center of the text, "the golden string on which all the pearls of this doxology are strung, the central diamond around which all the lesser diamonds are set" (Lenski).

*Introduction:* The text is a doxology, or hymn of praise to the Triune God for His glorious grace. The Bible scholar Wm. G. Moorehead made this remark when contemplating the content of this hymn of praise: "God's plan is dateless, timeless, formed before the foundation of the world. The Fall was no surprise to Him, nor was redemption an after-thought. In His love He thought of us and provided for our salvation before one star glittered in the infinite expanse. Our lives should continually give:

#### Praise to God for His Glorious Grace

- I. Praise to the Father for acting in grace before time (vv3-6).
  - A. The Father is eternity elected us to be His children.
    - 1. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (v4). Our election took place in the Father's heart before we were born, or before the world was made (Ro 9:11). "In the heavenly places" (v3b) refers to the eternal nature of our blessings as expressed in our eternal election.

2. "He destined us in love to be His sons . . ." (v5; Ro 8:28-30).
    - a. Election was motivated by God's love (v5).
    - b. Election was effected by grace alone (v6; 2 Tm 1:9; Eph 2:5, 8-9).
    - c. Election results in us being "holy and blameless before Him" (v4b). We are declared holy and blameless before God by faith in Christ.
  - B. The Father in eternity desired us to live "to the praise of His glorious grace" (v6b); we aim to live "holy and blameless" lives as a fruit of saving faith (Eph 5:26-27; Col 1:22).
- II. Praise to the Son for His revelation of grace in time (vv7-12).
- A. The Beloved Son brings us redemption, "According to the riches of His grace" (v7).
    1. Grace is blood-bought, involving His cross (1 Pe 1:19-20; Mt 20:28; Ro 3:24-25).
    2. Grace results in the forgiveness of our trespasses (v7; Mt 9:2; Ps 103:12).
    3. "Grace" spelled as an "acrostic" is: God's *Riches At Christ's Expense*."
  - B. The Son unites "things in heaven and on earth."
    1. The Son will bring the work of salvation to completion (v10). He will administer the affairs on earth for the proclamation of the Gospel (Mt 24:14). On the Last Day the church on earth will be united with the church in heaven.
    2. The Son is the revealer of God's saving will (v9).
  - C. The Son executes the Father's election plan in time (vv11-12).
    1. The plan involves coming to faith in Christ (v12a). Paul sees himself and his fellow believers as first of the New Testament era to believe. We follow after (Jn 3:16; 6:40).
    2. The plan flows from the decree of eternal election, "in Christ have been destined and appointed" (v12). To ask, "Am I one of God's elect?" is the same as asking, "Am I saved?" We get the answer to both questions, not in merit or works, not in feelings, not in a small voice within, but in Christ's plan of redemption which enables us to say: "I believe Jesus shed His blood for me."
    3. The plan appoints us "to live for the praise of his glory" (v12).
- III. Praise to the Holy Spirit for His grace in time (vv13-14).
- A. The Holy Spirit implements the plan of salvation in time by calling sinners to faith in Christ by the Gospel (v13; 1 Cor 3:12b).
  - B. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our future inheritance of glory (v14). Faith by the presence of the Holy Spirit is the "down payment, the guarantee" that God will carry through on his plan of salvation and finally get us to glory (1 Jn 3:2; Phm 3:20-21; 1 Pe 1:4-5).

DP

## EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 2:13-22

August 1, 1982

The phrase "now in Christ Jesus" (v13) refers to the New Testament era — the period of proclamation to the Gentiles (including the Ephesians) of the good news that God's wrath against mankind has been fully satisfied by the vicarious obedience, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ. "But now in Jesus Christ" thus

stands in dramatic contrast to that time prior to the proclamation of this gospel to the Gentiles which is described in the previous two verses (vv11-12) and earlier in verses 1, 2, 3, and 5a of this chapter. In this previous period (the Old Testament era) the Gentiles were "far away" (v13) from God and His church (v19), and there was "enmity" between the Gentiles, on the one hand, and God and His church, on the other hand (vv15-16). The point of demarcation between these two grand eras of history lies in the Messiah's surrender of His "flesh" (*sarx*, v15) to death as a sacrifice to God (by the shedding of His "blood," v13) in such an excruciating and humiliating way ("the cross," v16) as to satisfy the wrath of God against all sinners of all times. In other words, Christ has reconciled all people to God — that is, He has made them acceptable, rather than repugnant, to Him (2 Cor 5:19); more specifically, Christ has made acceptable to God all those who would put their trust in this truth and so constitute the church (the "one body" of verse 16). Christ Himself is, in effect, "our peace" (v14) because by His self-sacrifice He has "put to death" (*apokteino*) "the enmity" (v16) toward all people aroused in a just God by human sin and, in its place (in the mind of God), He has established an attitude of peace toward all people (vv16-18) — both Jews ("those who were near") and Gentiles ("those who were far away").

The church did exist, to be sure, even in the Old Testament era (the "saints" of verse 19) — among the Jews. Since all of history is simultaneously present to the mind of God (Re 13:8), His attitude was one of peace toward men even before the occurrence of the event on which it is predicated; and people were saved through faith in the future testamentary death of God the Son promised by the prophets (vv12,20). Nevertheless, it was the plan of God that (at least, from the time of Abraham on) the gospel would not ordinarily be preached more widely than Israel until the Messiah should die and rise again. Indeed, in the intervening period Israel was to live as a very distinct people so that at least one nation might be prepared to receive the Messiah (when He should rise from death) and spread His gospel to the other nations. While the main purpose of the Old Testament ceremonial code ("the law of the commandments in decrees," v15) was to symbolize the future person and work of the Messiah (e.g. the sacrifices of spotless lambs symbolizing His future self-sacrifice), a subsidiary purpose was to fence off Israel from other nations by prohibiting things considered desirable or necessary by other nations and requiring things considered ridiculous or obnoxious by others. Thus verse 14 calls the ceremonial code "the dividing wall of the barrier" between Jews and Gentiles. The unbelieving Gentiles, therefore, directed toward the Jews, not only that natural enmity which (also today) nations usually feel toward some other nations (and, indeed, which individual people usually feel toward some others), not only resentment of the exclusivistic claims of the church (as is the case today also), but also mockery of seemingly bizarre dietary laws and the disgust which the Graeco-Roman world felt for the practice of circumcision (v11). Believing Jews, on the other hand, entertained that spiritual enmity toward unbelieving Gentiles which Christians in all ages must direct toward the world as it seeks to conform us to its ways (even as we simultaneously love unbelievers and, in this age, seek to lead them to faith in Christ).

In the course of His atoning work, however, Christ fulfilled the ceremonial code — He actually accomplished what it merely symbolized — and thereby He abolished it (vv14-15). Then He preached the New Testament gospel (v17) through the inspired words of the apostles (v20) to both Jews and Gentiles; so that, for those who came to faith in this gospel and so comprised the church,

there was spiritual peace between Jews and Gentiles insofar as they were Christians (v15). This spiritual peace still exists between all Christians of all nations and denominations insofar as they are Christians. If Christians must struggle against each other politically, this does not necessarily affect their spiritual peace with each other at all. The spiritual peace of the church is disrupted, of course, when some Christian teaches contrary in some way to the inspired and infallible words of the prophets and apostles (which for the church today are equivalent to the Holy Scriptures), since God has constituted them the very foundation of the church (v20). But when a Christian teaches falsely in some way — and so requires other Christians to rebuke him and, if he prove incorrigible, to separate from him — such a man is acting, insofar as he teaches falsely, not as a Christian, but as a non-Christian (“the old man”). Insofar as he is a Christian, even a man who teaches falsely in some respect is still at peace spiritually with orthodox Christians.

*Introduction:* American coins bear the Latin motto “E pluribus unum,” which means “Out of many one.” The phrase reminds us that the one indivisible nation called the United States of America consists in people drawn from every race, nation, language, and culture in the world. Yet the unity of any nation is superficial and fleeting compared with the unity of the Christian church. The church, in a much deeper and more enduring sense than any nation, can be described with this phrase:

### Out of Many One

#### I. Out of Many — The Disunity outside of Christ

##### A. The fact

##### 1. Enmity between people in general.

- a. On a national level — e.g., Greeks vs. barbarians in ancient times, Vietnamese vs. Cambodians in modern times (even though both nations subscribe to a common politico-religious philosophy).
- b. On a personal level.

##### 2. Enmity between Jews and Gentiles in ancient times in particular.

- a. Its existence (vv 12, 14, 19).
- b. Its symptoms (cf. Mt 15:26).

##### B. The cause

##### 1. In general — enmity between God and mankind.

- a. Because of the sin in which we are all conceived (2:1-3; 4:17-19, 22).
- b. Because of the wrath which sin necessarily arouses in a just God (2:3; 5:6).

##### 2. In particular (*re* enmity between Jews and Gentiles in ancient times) — the ceremonial code of the Old Testament.

- a. Designed to point forward to Christ (Col 2:17).
- b. Designed to separate the Jews from the Gentiles until Christ should accomplish His saving work (“the dividing wall of the barrier,” v14b; “the law of the commandments in decrees,” v15a).

#### II. One — The Unity in Christ

##### A. The fact

##### 1. With respect to the internal (spiritual) unity of all Christians insofar as they are Christians.

- a. Removal of the separation between believing Jews and Gentiles of all nations (vv13,14).
- b. Common membership of believing Jews and Gentiles of all nations in the church (vv19,22).

- c. Oneness of believing Jews and Gentiles of all nations ("one," v14; "one new man," v15; "one body," v16).
- 2. **Despite external disunity and even conflict between Christians.**
  - a. Politically (within nations and between nations).
  - b. Doctrinally (4:14).
- B. The cause — Christ Jesus
  - 1. His vicarious death ("the blood of Christ," v13; "His flesh," v15; "the cross," v16).
    - a. Reconciling us (making us acceptable) to God (vv 16, 18).
    - b. Creating peace between God and mankind and so between man and man (vv 14a, 15b).
  - 2. His fulfillment thereby — and abrogation — of the ceremonial code (vv 14b, 15a).
- C. The means
  - 1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.
    - a. God's declaration of peace to man (v17).
    - b. The central teaching of the prophets and apostles (v20b).
      - i. Whose words were taught to them by the Holy Spirit (3:1-9; 1 Cor 2:13; 2 Pe 1:21).
      - ii. Whose words, therefore (in the form of Holy Scripture), constitute the sole source and norm of the church's teaching (v20a).
  - 2. Faith wrought by the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments (vv18, 22).

DMcCLJ

## NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

August 8, 1982

In the first half of his letter to the Ephesians (chapters 1 - 3) Paul presents the great doctrine of the *Una Sancta*. In the next section (chapters 4 - 6) he tells how God's people are to shape their life in keeping with this great doctrine. The ecumenical age in which we live makes it imperative that people understand what the church is and the unity which it has. The text spells out the gifts which Christ has given to preserve the unity and to help the church reach its ultimate goal.

*Introduction:* To be chosen for a much-sought-after position is indeed an honor. But along with the honor comes responsibility. There is also a need for understanding the "why's and wherefore's" of the position in order that the end result may be attained. This can also be said in regard to our membership in the Holy Christian Church.

### We Have Responsibilities as Members of Christ's Church

- I. To recognize the unity we have.
  - A. A spiritual unity (v4).
    - 1. The Holy Spirit brought us into this unity at our baptism.
    - 2. We who by the power of the Spirit believe that God is our Father through Jesus, our Lord and Savior, are one body (vv4-6).
  - B. A hope-filled unity
    - 1. Our sure hope is that we will be eternally saved.

2. Our sure hope is that God who called us into unity will continue to work through and in us all until that final consummation.
- II. To maintain the unity we have.
  - A. Christ gives gifts to each of us (v7).
    1. The gifts are for serving the Church.
    2. Each believer's gift is different, dispensed according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
  - B. Teachers of the Word are Christ's most important gifts to the Church (vv11-12).
    1. He gave them for the purpose of building up the Church.
    2. He gave them so that we might better minister to one another.
      - a. In lowliness and meekness (v2).
      - b. With patience and forbearing.
    3. He gave them to enable us to reach full Christian maturity.
      - a. Expressed in a oneness of faith based on a common doctrine (v13).
      - b. Expressed in a thorough knowledge of Christian teaching (v14).
      - c. Expressed in speaking the truth in love (v15).

*Conclusion:* How important it is for any organization to have members who function properly, adequately fulfilling their obligations. So let us as people, called by God into His church, faithfully carry out the responsibilities He sets before us!

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### TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 4:17-24

August 15, 1982

Verses 17 to 24 Ephesians 4 contain the first of four groups of admonitions given by Paul. Putting off the old and putting on the new summarizes what the apostle says in all these admonition. The total depravity of the ungodly is pictured by Paul in the first part of this text: vanity of mind, a darkened understanding, alienation from God, ignorance, a hardened heart, and unrelenting excessiveness in doing everything sinful. At one time the Ephesians lived in such depravity. But no more. This lifestyle is now to be forever impossible for them because they have "learned Christ." They were "taught in connection with Him." They learned the truth, for "there is truth in Jesus."

One would have to be blind not to see the similarity between our society today and the way in which the Gentiles walked in Paul's day. We, as God's people, need to be ever aware of the condition and consequences of unbelief. We need also the continual reminder that we learned differently from Christ! A totally opposite life is now to be ours. No more a life that is "in process of corruption in accordance with the deceitful lusts." There is now to be a completely new life that begins with the renewal of our minds. To live a God-pleasing life by getting rid of the old man and putting on the new is the goal of the sermon.

*Introduction:* Children at times are admonished by teachers and parents to be more diligent in their school work. Young people are admonished to take more seriously their responsibilities. Adults are admonished by their physicians to change habits and lifestyles. So God also admonishes all of us in these words of the Apostle Paul to live in a manner pleasing to Him.

### Live the Life You Learned from Christ!

- I. Put off the old man.
  - A. The old man is seen in the vanity of the Gentile mind (v18).
    1. Their understanding is darkened.
    2. They have been alienated from God.
    3. Their hearts are hardened.
  - B. The old man is headed for destruction.
    1. Those who follow after the old man give themselves over completely to uncleanness (v19).
    2. God's judgment rests upon all who follow after such things (Ga 3:10).
- II. Put on the new man.
  - A. The new man is the opposite of the old.
    1. The new man is founded on the truth (v21).
    2. The new man is created after God in righteousness and holiness (v24).
  - B. The creation of the new man begins with renewal of the mind (v23).
    1. Renewal is an inner process.
    2. Renewal is a continual process.
    3. Renewal leads to a new life (Ro 7:6).

*Conclusion:* Let us by daily contrition and repentance drown the old Adam with all sins and evil lusts and again let a new man daily come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

GB

### ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

August 22, 1982

The Holy Scriptures are rich in anthropomorphic language. Anthropomorphic metaphors become the language of linkage between the Wholly Other and mankind, serving as a vehicle for understanding the living God and establishing a more personal relationship with Him. Thus we have ample evidence in God's Word that our God is a feeling God. He becomes angry; He feels compassion; He loves in extraordinary ways — the height and breadth of such love we cannot begin to fathom. As we think of God in terms of feelings, we find a step has been taken in the direction of a more personal relationship with God. Such language helps us move from the "I - it" framework to the "I - Thou" context with respect to our relationship with God. Given a clear understanding of the genre of anthropomorphic language we can speak of God the Holy Spirit smiling (being pleased) or weeping (being grieved).

*Introduction:* In the body language of human beings, we know what it means to put a smile on somebody's face or to cause them to frown or weep. We have seen a spouse, a parent, or a child laugh or weep as a result of our behavior or words. But this morning let us consider how our words and actions affect God the Holy Spirit in such a way as to bring a smile to His face or tears to His eyes. Let us see how we can

### Put a Smile on God's Face

- I. The Holy Spirit has feelings too.
  - A. The Holy Spirit weeps (is grieved, v30) when the children of God frustrate His will for them.



1. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "bitterness" festers untreated (v31).
2. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "wrath and anger" exercise themselves without control (v31).
3. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "clamor and slander" flow freely (v31).
4. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "malice" rules actions rather than love (v31).
- B. The Holy Spirit smiles when the children of God reflect His will for them.
  1. The Holy Spirit smiles when God's children are kind to one another and tender-hearted (v31).
  2. The Holy Spirit smiles when God's children forgive one another as God in Christ forgives them (v32).

*Transition:* God the Holy Spirit is affected by the way we live our lives, but . . .

- II. Why should we be concerned about the feelings of the Holy Spirit?
  - A. We should be concerned about the feelings of the Holy Spirit because in Him we " . . . were sealed for the day of redemption" (v30).
    1. Through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, against all the odds, we were brought to faith.
    2. Through the means of grace, the Holy Spirit continues to hold us in the true faith.
  - B. We should be concerned about the feelings of the Holy Spirit because we are " . . . beloved children of God" (v1).
    1. As beloved children of God we are part of a family where each other's feelings are important.
    2. As beloved children of God we know our family membership was made possible by our brother Jesus Christ, who " . . . loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (v2).
    3. As beloved children of God, we should be " . . . imitators of God" (v1).

*Conclusion:* The Holy Spirit is personally involved with each one of us. He is not a stone; our behavior, thoughts, and actions affect Him. This week, motivated by our experience of Christ's love, let us put a smile on the face of the Holy Spirit!

Mark Oien  
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## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

**Ephesians 5:15-20**

**August 29, 1982**

The central concept the following sermon outline is based on time (*kairos*). As one examines the concept of time in this text, as well as other portions of Scripture, one discovers that time is a gift. As with all other gifts, God calls us to stewardship of time. Time is neutral, like a radio wave; it can be used wisely or foolishly, for good or for evil. The image of time is one with which most hearers can readily identify. Our awareness of time is highlighted by clocks of all sizes in all sorts of shapes and places, and by the perpetual acknowledgements of birthdays and anniversaries, etc. Life every non-renewable resource, time and our use of it are important.

*Introduction:* The late Jim Croce wrote and sang a song entitled "If I Could Put Time in a Bottle." The lyricist in this song proceeds through a litany of aspects of life that he would alter if, in fact, time could be captured. However,

time does not stand still. Therefore, time becomes a precious commodity in this life. St. Paul picks up on this very thought when in v16 he speaks of "making the most of the time." (See Lenski on Ephesians 5:16 for further discussion of *kairos* in this context.)

### Make the Most of Your Moments

- I. Why should we be concerned about making the most of our moments?
    - A. Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us (a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God) (v2).
      1. Christ gave His time for us.
      2. Christ gave His life for us.
    - B. Because "the days are evil" (v15).
      1. The world seeks to occupy all of our time so that little or no time is left for the Lord.
      2. The world entices us to use our time in selfish and unhealthy ways.
- Transition:* Without question, as Christian people we ought to be making the most of our moments. The question now, however, is
- II. How do we make the most of our moments?
    - A. We make the most of our moments by seeking to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (v17).
      1. We discover the will of the Lord as we listen to the preached Word.
      2. We discover the will of the Lord as we search the Scriptures individually and in groups.
    - B. We make the most of our time when we take every opportunity to "be filled with the Spirit" (v18).
      1. We are filled with the Spirit by means of the Word.
      2. We are filled by the Spirit by means of the Sacraments.
    - C. We make the most of our time when we keep focusing on Christ.
      1. We keep focusing on Christ by "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (v19).
      2. We keep focusing on Christ by "always and for everything giving thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (v20).

*Conclusion:* No, time cannot be put in a bottle, but it can be used wisely. Christ not only gave His time for us, but His very life as well. Let us then seek to understand the Lord's will, to be filled with the Spirit, and to remain always focused on Christ; and we will, by all means, be making the most of our moments!

MO

### THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 5:21-31

September 5, 1982

The illustration used by St. Paul to describe the union and commitment of marriage is magnificent. Surely such images help to highlight the importance the Lord places upon the marriage bond. Verse 21 is a summary exhortation. All that follows is but a more detailed explanation of how a husband and wife are to look upon one another in Christ. Two concepts are pivotal in expounding the significance of the text — subjection and love. Jesus, motivated by divine love, subjected Himself to the state of humiliation, that He might pay the all-sufficient price to redeem the church. In turn, having received the benefit of Christ's love, the church should subject itself to Him in love. This truth is applicable to the

Christian corporately and individually. The Christian male and female who desire to live in holy wedlock should see their relationship as one of subjection to one another, motivated through faith and in love for Christ.

*Introduction:* The institution of marriage faces a crisis in today's society. The foundational relationship of man and woman on which the family is built is in serious trouble. Due to low morals, self-serving attitudes, zealous ambitions, and an overall decline in commitment to spouse and family, the sacred union of husband and wife is becoming an endangered species. The words of Paul that compose our text offer a practical and workable approach for the couple truly seeking

### A Fulfilling and Christian Marriage

#### I. Fulfillment comes in giving.

##### A. Self-centeredness works against the marriage relationship.

1. Living as if you were still single.
2. Allowing a career or special interest to take priority over the relationship.

##### B. "Subjection" is giving yourself to the other.

1. "We" becomes more important than "me."
2. Sharing of ourselves is the most genuine gift we have to offer a relationship.

*Transition:* Subjection of one's own self-interest for the good of the spouse and marriage is difficult. It opposes our sinful nature. We have few models after which we can pattern such loving conduct. Finally, where do we find means adequate to empower us to love in such an extraordinary way?

#### II. Love comes in Christ.

##### A. Christ is the perfect divine model of love.

1. He submitted Himself to humiliation for the needs of each of us.
2. He gave Himself to establish a relationship between us and Himself.
3. He was motivated by His love for us; there was no personal gain in it for Him.

##### B. Christ, in establishing a faith relationship with us, transforms and empowers us, thereby equipping us to establish God-pleasing earthly relationships.

1. Christ's work brings forgiveness and freedom from condemnation, releasing us to see beyond our selfish, sinful existence.
2. Having experienced Christ's love, we are equipped to love as we have been loved — in marriage, in friendships, in family life, etc.
3. Knowing ourselves to be children of God by grace, we also recognize our spouse as one for whom God has shown all love, and one to whom our love should be extended in support, compassion, and forgiveness.

*Conclusion:* Marriage can be a blessing to the couple and the family, and a witness to the glory of our God. It can be fulfilling and God-pleasing when husband and wife make their commitment to one another on the basis of living, growing, faith relationship with the God of all love, Jesus Christ.

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# FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 1:17-27

September 12, 1982

The text's emphasis upon the sanctified life can be developed well around the thought of the believer as the "first fruits" (v18) of God's creation. A brief study in a Bible dictionary will help one to recognize the significance of the concept. Briefly, the first fruits of the harvest were to be set apart for God's use.

*Introduction:* Even as the summer draws to a close, many of us are still reaping the benefits of the efforts put forth in our gardens earlier this year. We planted, toiled, and tilled, and fruits were produced. Our text from James has reference to a type of fruit-bearing, fruit brought forth by the will of the gracious God, a Father who has created us by the power of His Word, who has cultivated us by the water of regeneration, and continues to supply us with all things necessary in order that we may

## Bear Fruit to His Glory

- I. God creates and cultivates us as His.
  - A. The Father has created us by the power of His Word.
    1. He created us physically from the dust of the ground.
    2. He created us spiritually by the water of Baptism.
  - B. He in grace continues to provide us with all things needful.
    1. He changes not; therefore, there is no need to be concerned about too little or too much.
    2. His provisions are just right for us at the proper time in our growth.
  - C. He does this all that we might be the "first fruits" of His creation.
    1. He sets us apart for service to His name.
    2. Our service to Him and to our neighbor bears witness to His grace.

*Transition:* The fruit which a tree or plant bears is appropriate to the type of plant — peach trees bear peaches. The fruit of those set apart by God should be appropriate to their name, "Christians."

- II. We strive to bear fruit appropriate to our Creator.
  - A. We should avoid bearing the fruits of the world.
    1. We should avoid evil: anger, gossip, wickedness of every sort.
    2. We should seek not to fall prey to the sins of apathy and hypocrisy.
  - B. We can bear fruit as we are equipped and directed by the Word of God.
    1. He gives to us the Word of forgiveness and life.
    2. He gives to us the Word of direction and guidance.
    3. He gives to us the Word of empowerment and growth.
  - C. We can bear appropriate fruit as we are responsive to God's love.
    1. We can share God's love with those of the household of faith.
    2. We can share God's love with our other neighbors.

*Conclusion:* Our Father in heaven has set us apart as His. By the power of His grace active in us, let us bear fruit to His glory.

WGT

# FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 2:1-5

September 19, 1982

Verse 1: "My brethren" is a friendly address; "let not the faith" — their faith ought to put them above showing favoritism; "faith of our Lord" — Christ is the

object of faith. — Here “the glory” emphasizes Christ’s deity, His greatness, His exaltation (cf. Jn 1:14). Verse 2: The two contrasted visitors are outsiders. Verse 3: Note the special attention to the rich man; “under my footstool” — most people sat cross-legged on the floor; only higher persons had elevated seats. Verse 4: “judges of evil thoughts” are judges marked by evil thoughts. All men, rich and poor, are equal in God’s house. The soul of the one is worth no more than the soul of the other. Verse 5: Many of James’s hearers were poor, 1 Cor 1:26. But they were rich spiritually, in connection with faith. They were joint heirs with Christ (He 1:2). As kings they would join Christ sitting in royal splendour, 1 Jn 3:2. James asks by implication: “How many of you would be heirs of the Kingdom of God if God would act as you do?” Neither the Christ faith nor the name of the Lord Jesus should be disgraced by showing favoritism. Men are to be regarded in the church on the basis of their Christianity, not their wealth. To defame someone on the basis of his poverty is to sin against the Eighth Commandment.

*Introduction:* Clothes usually do make the man. The man who dresses well is generally rich. He can provide himself with comforts of life which make him the envy of others. Generally he is treated with deference. But in the Kingdom of Christ it is different.

### Clothes Do Not Make the Man

#### I. In the Kingdom of Christ.

##### A. God chose the poor of this world.

1. There is no special merit in poverty.
2. There is no special curse in riches.
  - a. Riches are a gift of God.
  - b. The danger is that riches turn the heart away from God.

##### B. God chose the poor to be rich in faith (v5).

1. Faith’s object is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory (v1).
  - a. He is the Lord of glory, God made manifest in the flesh, Jn 1:14.
  - b. He is Jesus Christ, the Savior.
    - i. He came to seek and save the lost.
    - ii. He paid the price.
2. Faith makes all Christians rich.
  - a. It receives all that Christ earned.
    - i. Deliverance from sin, death, and the devil.
    - ii. Forgiveness, fellowship with God, Ro 5:1; Ro 3:28; Ga 3:26; 1 Jn 3:2.
  - b. It makes us heirs of the promised Kingdom, Ro 8:17; He 1:2.

*Application:* Faith, not clothes, makes us all very rich. Let us thank and praise God for the riches He gives to all who believe.

#### II. In the Christian congregation.

##### A. James rebukes his hearers for showing favoritism.

1. They treated the rich deferentially.
2. They treated the poor meanly.

##### B. Their attitude was patently wrong.

1. They were judges who harbored evil thoughts (v4). They judged and condemned.
2. They did not act as faith dictates (v1). Faith is active in love; their actions were loveless, 1 Cor 12:21-23.

- C. In dealing with fellow members of the congregation we are to remember these truths:
1. We are all brethren in Christ, Jn 15:1-8; Jn 10; 1 Pt 2:9; 1 Jn 3:2.
  2. We are to deal with one another in love, Ro 12:10; Ga 6:2.

HJE

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 2:14-18

September 26, 1982

The implicit answer to the question in v14 is that faith which does not produce works does not profit for salvation. A person who does not do the works mentioned in the preceding context, who does not bridle his tongue, does not visit orphans and widows, does not keep himself unspotted from the world, does not carry out the royal law of love or show mercy may say he has faith but that faith is not true and saving faith. In verses 15 and 16 James gives an example of such pseudo-faith. A person who refuses to act charitably (v17), who fails to give even minimal help to someone in need shows that he lacks true faith. In v18 James indicates his conception of faith to be no different from that of St. Paul. James is not teaching another way of salvation. For him, faith is trust in the Savior Jesus Christ, and that faith alone saves. But faith is never alone. Wherever true faith exists, even when that faith is weak, it will produce good deeds. That is why James can conclude by saying: "I by my works will show you my faith." Faith is a confidence of the heart and cannot be seen, but the evidence of faith lies in the deeds it produces.

The central thought of the text is that saving faith is always accompanied by good works. The problem is that we often minimize the importance of good works. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would be concerned to demonstrate their faith by their works. The means to the goal is that faith which relies on Christ for salvation is a power within us for doing good.

*Introduction:* Faith is individual and personal. I cannot believe for you, and you cannot believe for me. Nor can we look into each other's heart to see faith. Saving faith is an inner confidence in Jesus as our Savior. Yet it is possible to give evidence of our faith. James urges us:

### Let Your Faith Show

- I. Faith that does not show is a sham.
  - A. We show faith by practicing mercy (vv15-16).
    1. Offering to help in physical need.
    2. Doing whatever we can for anyone in need.
  - B. Consistently declining mercy to others makes a pretense of our faith.
    1. We may say we have faith, but we do not have it.
    2. In a church that stresses salvation through faith rather than by works, it is easy to slip into the notion that, since good works do not save us, we do not need to be concerned about doing them.
    3. Then our "faith" may be nothing more than intellectual assent to certain doctrines; that is not saving faith.
- II. Faith that is real will always show.
  - A. Faith alone saves, but faith is never alone.
    1. Faith always produces good works (Luther: "Oh, it is a living, active, energetic, mighty thing, this faith . . .").
    2. Even weak faith is accompanied by some good deeds.

B. Faith will show in infinitely varied ways.

1. A mother caring for her children, a preacher proclaiming the Gospel, a father disciplining his child, a factory worker doing his job well.
2. We have only to let our faith express itself in the faithful carrying out of our duty where we are.

*Conclusion:* Faith is a matter of the heart. Yet we can demonstrate our faith by doing good. Let your faith show.

GA

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 3:13-18

October 3, 1982

We are very concerned about wisdom today. Our colossal educational system indicates this. But James points out that there is wisdom and there is wisdom; this is, there is a wisdom which comes from this world and a wisdom which comes from God. God's wisdom is other-centered rather than self-centered as is worldly wisdom. Christ, who is called the "Wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24), pictures true wisdom best, for He "came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many (Mt 20:28)."

Verse 13: *Tis*, placed in the emphatic position, calls every reader to examine himself. *Deixato*: James is always concerned about a living and active faith rather than a faith which is only talk (cf. 2:18ff). *Prauteti*: this word sets godly wisdom apart from worldly wisdom which is hardly ever characterized by meekness. Verse 14: *Ei*: a condition of fact or reality; James is not saying that the readers are necessarily guilty of all this but merely, "if the shoe fits, wear it." *En te kardia*: this is where such ungodly attitudes fester (cf. Mt. 15:19). *Aletheias* must here refer to the gospel which has nothing at all to do with enmity and strife but with love and sacrifice. Verse 15: *another katerchomene*: true wisdom is never self-produced but is always a gift from God (cf. 1:5); from within come only adultery, murder, fornication, false witness, coveting, etc. (Mt 15). *Daimoniodes* is not too strong a word for that which is found within the unregenerate human heart. Verses 16-17 are paralleled by Paul's description of the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit in Ga 5. Verse 18: While worldly wisdom produces *akatastasia* godly wisdom produces *eirene*, two words lying at opposite ends of the spectrum.

*Introduction:* Most of us want to be wise — wise businessmen, wise farmers, wise housewives, wise students. James reminds us that there is wisdom and there is wisdom; that is, there is a worldly wisdom and there is godly wisdom. He urges each of us to examine ourselves today asking,

### Do I Have the Wisdom That Is from Above?

- I. Worldly wisdom and godly wisdom come from different sources.
  - A. Worldly wisdom comes from within the human heart and is anti-God and anti-neighbor (v15, "earthly," "fleshly," "demonic").
  - B. Godly wisdom is a gift from God and so reflects the God who gives it (v17; Jas 1:5).
- II. Worldly wisdom and godly wisdom differ in their attributes.
  - A. Worldly wisdom is self-seeking, jealous, spiteful, etc. (14).
  - B. Godly wisdom is meek and self-sacrificing, exemplified by our Lord who came to our world in the person of his Son "not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt 20) (v13b, 17).



- III. Worldly wisdom and godly wisdom produce different fruits.  
 A. Worldly wisdom produces only hatred and strife and dissension (v16).  
 B. Godly wisdom produces peace and harmony (v18).

You cannot learn godly wisdom at school. It is a gift from God. And so James urges us all, "If anyone lacks this godly wisdom, let him ask from God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him (1:5)."

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## EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 5:1-11

October 10, 1982

"Grab for all the gusto you can"; "you only go around once." So cries out a world which is concerned only about its own hedonistic lusts and desires even at the expense of the rights and needs of others less fortunate. Christians must be cautioned against such a self-seeking attitude and encouraged to look to God for all good, patiently enduring whatever suffering He permits, seeking to live in love and compassion and generosity with those around them. Verse 1: *Hoi plousioi*: certainly James would not condemn all rich people since he praises Job in this same chapter; he is condemning those who have acquired their wealth at the expense of others; it would also be inappropriate to think that James is directing this blast against his readers whom he addresses as *adelphoi* in v7. Verse 2: Note all the perfect tenses in this section emphasizing the finality and totality of the destruction. Verse 3: *Ethesaurisate*: they have no one to blame but themselves. Verse 4: These *plousioi* have built their wealth and power on the bones of the poor and helpless, and God has always been the defender of the poor. Verse 6: *Ton dikaion*: some have referred this phrase to Christ, but he context seems to favor the poor or helpless man who has legitimate rights which have been ignored and trampled upon. Verse 7: *Makrothumesati* is emphatic and sets the theme for this next section. Verse 8: *Makrothumesati* is repeated for added emphasis. *He parousia... engiken*: then the believers will receive their full reward of grace; believers should always be encouraged to "seek those things which are above where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father" (Col 3:1), for where their heart is there will also be their treasure (Lk 12:34). Verse 11: *Telos kuriou*: God blessed Job many times over in the end; the preacher should be cautious, however, lest he give the impression that the suffering believer can always expect such blessing and deliverance in this life as Job experienced. There is really no English equivalent for *poluslagchnos*; it is a highly emphatic word; note how this clause opens and closes with a word denoting rich mercy and how James artistically places the word *kuriou* in between them both.

**Introduction:** "Grab for all the gusto you can!" cry our television commercials. In contrast to this selfish, loveless, pleasure-seeking attitude our God urges us:

### Wait on the Lord; He Will Always Provide

- I. Those who grab for themselves in life, stepping over and ignoring the rights and needs of others, will reap the bitter rewards of their own greed.  
 A. The wealth and power and material goods of this life are unstable and passing (vs 2, 3).

- B. God will avenge those who despise the helpless and deprive them of their legitimate rights (v4).
  - 1. God often brings down worry and grief on those who think only of themselves (v1).
  - 2. God will punish them eternally (v5).
- II. Those who wait on the Lord will enjoy the rich rewards of his grace.
  - A. God has always cared for and blessed his people (vv 10-11).
  - B. It is God's nature to be compassionate towards His people, as the gospel more than proves (v11b).
  - C. As the farmer waits for his harvest, so the believer should wait on his gracious Lord, knowing that, if God does not deliver him in this world, He most certainly will do so in the next (vv7-8).
  - D. Looking to God's grace we can patiently suffer wrong, if need be, and not grumble at those who enjoy more material blessings and advantages than we (v9).

*Conclusion:* May God grant us this grace, to live in humility and patience as we await His glorious return to lead us into the everlasting mansions He has so carefully prepared for those who love His appearing.

SCB

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 2:9-11

October 17, 1982

*Introduction:* One of the most perceptive preachers of our century said that modern mankind has crashed on the doctrine of God. He compared this doctrinal crash to that of the supposedly unsinkable ship, the Titanic, which crashed on an iceberg and took many passengers to a watery grave. Yet man cannot fulfill his destiny without the help of God, the God who has personally and historically manifested Himself in Jesus Christ. Our text tells us that

### Jesus Determines Our Destiny

- I. As a person of the Godhead, Jesus participates in the creation and preservation of the world (v10).
  - A. "By Him" (the Triune God) all things exist.
    - 1. Each of us confesses that He "created *me*" (Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Creed).
    - 2. Jesus' participation in the creation as the second person of the Godhead gives *meaning* to all that exists in contrast to godless theories of the origin of things.
  - B. "For Him" (the Triune God) all things exist.
    - 1. Jesus has destined and elected us to be His own brothers and sisters.
    - 2. Jesus' participation in the creation provides us with a goal in life.
- Jesus is a person of the triune Godhead and therefore participates in the creative work of the Godhead.
- II. Jesus has achieved our redemption (v9).
  - A. His "suffering of death" atones for our sins.
    - 1. In His state of humiliation He was made "a little lower than the angels."
    - 2. By the grace of God he tasted death for us. (Here one may speak of anxiety in the context of death and dying and of how Jesus identified with this anxiety when He tasted death.)

- B. Because of his obedience in suffering and dying for us, He "was crowned with glory and honor."

Having identified with us by becoming one of us, Jesus takes us by the hand through His redeeming death. But Jesus identifies even further with us.

- III. As a person of the Godhead, Jesus participates in our sanctification (v11).

- A. The Holy Spirit who sanctifies us proceeds from the Father and the Son.

1. By our own reason we cannot understand the nature of God, but by the Holy Spirit He reveals Himself to us as Triune.

2. By our own reason we cannot come to faith, but the Triune God creates faith within us through the Word and Sacraments.

- B. The Christ-centered self-revelation of the Triune God touches our lives in a personal way.

1. Christ is not ashamed to call us "brethren" (v11).

2. As the "captain of our salvation" He takes us by the hand and leads us to our destiny in the family of those who inherit His crown of righteousness.

*Conclusion:* Already as children in catechetical training most of us encountered the profound teachings of Scripture about the work of the Triune God in our lives. It is appropriate that we learn again and again of this work of God for us. May the work of the Triune God comfort and uphold us as that work is revealed in the way that Jesus determines our destiny.

HHZ

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 4:12-13

October 24, 1982

*Introduction:* During the Abscam trials videotapes showed politicians stuffing illegal money in their pockets, providing evidence which clinched their guilt and demonstrated the need for punishment. We all carry a burden of hidden guilt. We would like to deny that we have done wrong. We search for peace of conscience. The Word of God exposes our secret sins like a hidden camera. It is as if our sins were permanently recorded on a videotape. Yet the Gospel can free us from the burden of guilt.

### Let the Word of God Counsel Us

- I. Let the Law of God diagnose our crucial problems.
  - A. The Law is like a sharp scalpel, exposing the sin hidden in the deepest crevices of our hearts.
  - B. The Law is like a lance, piercing the infectious tumors of sin and aggravating guilt.
- II. Let the Gospel of God heal our stressful disorders.
  - A. The Gospel is active.
    1. Our own best efforts only demonstrate our inability to cure ourselves.
      - a. We are like the prodigal son whose efforts to serve his self-interests brought him to the far country of sin.
      - b. God in Jesus Christ is loving and gracious and prepares a welcome feast for us prodigals. We cannot initiate our own therapy. We cannot heal ourselves. Christ is the physician. We are the objects of his healing ministry.

2. The Gospel is the "miracle" medicine which heals the sinner, knitting together once again the severed "joints and marrow" of his soul.
- B. The Word of God focuses on Jesus Christ.
  1. Who is our advocate before the Father on the basis of His substitutionary atonement.
  2. Who offers us rest from all our burdens.

*Conclusion:* Let the Word of God counsel us. Let it show us what we are in our sin. That will hurt. But only then can the Word heal by bringing us to Christ.

HHZ

## **TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY THE FESTIVAL OF THE REFORMATION**

**Romans 3:19-28**

**October 31, 1982**

This text, the classical text for the Reformation principle of justification by faith, offers the pastor an opportunity to preach a sermon on the very theme that underlies every sermon and each page of Scripture. The message of this text is essentially two-fold. Two ways of achieving a righteousness which avails before God are contrasted. One way, through the law (the adherence of man to God's moral standard), is utterly ineffectual. The other way, through faith in Jesus' perfect righteousness, is uniquely effectual.

The righteousness of God (Lenski calls it a genitive of origin — cf. his discussion of this concept, pp. 78ff.) has been revealed at this time. Jesus has shown what it means to be righteous. He did not fall short of the glory of God (cf. Mt 3:17; 17:50). He was put to death so that God's justice would not be compromised even while declaring the sinner righteous. By faith we gain the benefit of Jesus' work of redemption.

The central thought of this text is that there is only one way for us to approach God, and that way is through faith in Jesus Christ. The goal of this sermon is that the hearer may recognize his faith in Jesus as a priceless possession.

*Introduction:* What would you consider to be your most precious possession? In worldly terms we might think of our home or car. Along less materialistic lines we might name our family or our good health. While we might think of our faith as a precious possession, we know that it is easily taken for granted. The faith which we preach, which Luther stressed over 450 years ago, which Paul proclaimed, and which is based on Jesus and His work is a valuable asset. Yes,

### **Our Faith in Christ is a Priceless Possession**

- I. Because we cannot approach God on the basis of law.
  - A. God's law speaks clearly.
    1. A. Its demand that the law be kept perfectly is clear and unambiguous.
    2. It brings a word of judgment: all the world is accountable to God.
  - B. We have no defense in the law.
    1. Through the law we learn that we have all sinned (v23). Jesus says that to hate is tantamount to murder, to lust is a commit adultery (Mt 5:22, 29).
    2. We cannot earn God's favor by our works of law; even teaching Sunday School, being a congregational leader, a good father, an uncomplaining wife will not justify us.

As a result, every mouth is closed before God. At the judgment bar of God all who approach on the basis of the law will have to plead: "Guilty as charged, I have no defense." Our faith in Christ is a priceless possession

II. Because we can approach God confidently on the basis of our faith in Jesus.

A. God's gift of righteousness comes to us by faith.

1. Our faith brings a righteousness which comes from outside, apart from law.
2. This righteousness is Jesus' righteousness credited to the one who believes in Him.

B. This faith enables us to approach God Because of what Jesus did.

1. He sacrificed Himself to turn away God's anger over our sin.
2. He showed us that God is not only the one who gives us His righteousness, but that He remains perfectly just in doing so. Jesus satisfied the justice of God on the cross by shedding His blood for us.
3. By faith we know that Jesus did all this for us. Our confidence is in Him.

*Conclusion:* Therefore we maintain that a man is justified by faith in Jesus. With our faith in Christ, we have confidence. Our faith in Christ is a priceless possession.

David L. Bahn  
Vernal, Utah

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 4:2-10

November 7, 1982

To appreciate the meaning of this text, it will be necessary to note the history of Israel from the Exodus until their entry into the promised land, for this history is the fabric of the author's instruction. The great theme of the epistle to the Hebrews, "The Superiority of the Christian Faith," is shown also in this text. The Christian faith offers a rest greater than that which Joshua gave Israel (v8). Without faith the Israelites did not enter the promised land but wandered in the wilderness for 40 years (3:16-19; 4:3, 6). Those in whom the hearing of the Gospel is combined with faith will enter the rest of God (v3). The rest which God offers is superior to any other since the one who enters this rest has rested from all his labors, just as God did (v10).

The central thought of this text is that as people of faith (and therefore people of God) we look forward to rest with the Lord. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer will anticipate the rest in heaven which is his through faith in Jesus Christ. The means to this goal is the promise that there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (v9).

*Introduction:* Do you get tired? People do. Some of us have physically taxing jobs which literally drain our energy by the end of the day. Others of us tax our brains so much that we feel all wrung out. Even young children whose supply of energy many of us envy finally drop in exhaustion at the end of an active day. We even get tired of resisting Satan and temptation. Although we may get a moment's respite, in different ways, in church and on vacation, the work remains. That is why the message of this text is a welcome one for tired people. God is telling us that

### The Best Rest Is Yet to Come

- I. This rest is even better than Israel enjoyed when they reached the promised land.
  - A. Moses brought Israel out of Egypt and slavery.
    1. The Israelites were relieved from their terrible work load as slaves of Pharaoh.
    2. Yet they did not all enter the promised land because of their idolatry and disobedience but wandered outside for 40 years.
  - B. Joshua finally brought those of the second generation into the promised land.
    1. This was a land flowing with milk and honey — far better than the wilderness in which the Israelites had wandered, much better than the land of other nations.
    2. Still Joshua did not give the Israelites the “best rest” (of which David spoke many years later in Ps 95:8-11). It was still to come.
  - C. We can look forward to this rest.
    1. We may be able to relax a little now and then, but we still have to get up and do the work which God has given us. We go on vacation only to come back to more work. Even three-day weekends end.
    2. The rest to which we look forward is yet to come. As Christians we wait for the best rest.
- II. This rest is entered by faith.
  - A. Unbelief prevented the Israelites from entering the promised land.
    1. The deliverance from slavery, God’s guidance, the promised land were all preached to them.
    2. But “they will never enter My rest,” said God, because they refused to believe.
    3. This is a stern warning to us today who hear the good news (v7). Do not harden your heart to God’s message and offer of true rest.
  - B. We who believe will enter that rest.
    1. Jesus offers rest (Mt 11:28) to all who come to Him
    2. Receive it by faith. The “best rest” is surely ours through faith in Christ.
  - C. This rest is a peaceful repose with God in heaven.
    1. Here we struggle. We serve God and fight Satan.
    2. In heaven, we will rest from all our works as God did from His.

*Conclusion:* When you get tired of struggling against sin and striving to make a living, take a moment to enjoy the rest you have right now with God through Christ, and remember — the best rest is yet to come.

DLB

### TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 7:23-28  
November 14, 1982

There was a succession of Levitical priests (v23), but Christ gives place to no successor (v24). Therefore He can perpetually save (v25). The ground of this confidence lies also in Christ’s intercession. As His life on earth was spent on our behalf, so He continues to spend Himself for us. His intercession with God is based upon His sacrifice on the cross, which guarantees that His intercession is real and comprehends all our needs. “Such” (v26) seems to refer to Melchizedek (described in the preceding verses). Christ was not only *hagios* but *hosios*,

personally and inwardly holy, free from all evil and undefiled by sin. *Hosios* denotes Christ's oneness with God. The primary difference between Christ and the Old Testament priests is that Christ, being without sin, has no need to purify Himself before God (v27). So here (v28) is the fulfillment of the priesthood of Melchizedek by a Son who, though He became a man and was exposed to human temptations, did not yield to sin and to infirmity as did the Levitical priests. Having passed through human experience, having completed His atonement, and being forever perfected in His exaltation, He is indeed the perfect Savior and intercessor. The reference to the "word of the oath which came later" harks back to God's statement recorded in Ps 110:4 regarding the Son, the greater high priest, who by His own sacrifice of Himself would complete what the whole priestly institution was intended to predict.

*Introduction:* A few athletes and musicians have occasionally achieved a perfect score in their specialty, but perfection for most of us remains a goal. We even excuse ourselves by saying, "Nobody's perfect." The popular song which has the refrain, "I'm perfect in every way," is a satirical parody of people foolish enough to flaunt perfection. The one exception to imperfection is the appointed Son who has been made perfect forever.

### **Jesus Christ is Perfection Personified**

- I. Christ is the perfect sacrifice.
  - A. The Old Testament high priests demonstrated the need of sacrifices.
    1. They had to offer sacrifices continually for their own and for the people's sins.
    2. God's demand that sacrifices be offered demonstrated His displeasure with man's imperfection, with sin.
    3. Had it not been for Christ's sacrifice, sacrificing like that done by the Old Testament priests would still be going on (as it is still going on in some religions and even in some branches of Christendom).
  - B. Christ's sacrifice of Himself has ended the need of all other sacrificing for sin.
    1. The reason is that Christ had no sin in Himself, and so He was already perfect even as a man (vv26-27).
    2. His sacrifice on the cross had atoning value; God regarded it as an all-sufficient sacrifice for all sin of all people of all time.
    3. There is not a single sin of which anyone is guilty that was not completely atoned for by Christ's sacrifice. That is why Christ's perfection is so important to us in our imperfection.

Our imperfection shows itself in that we keep on sinning. That is why we also need to know that

- II. Christ is the perfect intercessor.
  - A. The Old Testament priests had an intercessory function.
    1. An intercessor or intermediary was required between the holy God and sinful people.
    2. This intercessory function was performed by a succession of high priests over the centuries.
  - B. Christ has made all human intermediaries unnecessary.
    1. He lives permanently to make intercession for us before God (vv24-25; 1 Jn 2:1).
    2. We now have direct access to God through Christ and do not have to go through priests or pastors or saints.



3. Because of Christ's intercession we can be sure that He is able to save eternally all of us who come to God through Him.

*Conclusion:* Absolute perfection is illusory and unobtainable in every area of life. But when it comes to our status with God we Christians have a perfection that makes us acceptable to God. It is not a perfection that we have obtained but rather a perfection given us through faith in Jesus Christ. In Christ we too are perfection personified.

GA

## LAST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Revelation 1:4b-8

November 21, 1982

This is a fitting text for the end of the church year. Verse 5 summarizes beautifully Jesus' entire ministry as "the faithful witness" (God's "beloved Son," the One who glorified the Father), "the firstborn of the dead" (a title which brings to mind the Passion account, the crucifixion of Jesus, and His resurrection as the First One and the Guarantee), and "the ruler of kings on earth" (a title which brings to mind the ascension, Pentecost, and the hope of eternal life). Jesus rules victoriously. He is Lord of all! We are part of His kingdom now. The King is near to each believer. He wants us to know that and to live accordingly.

### Faith Sees the King

- I. See the King presents problems. We can hear the words, "Jesus is Lord," and nod our heads and agree with them. We can believe them fully. But the reason that we believe them is not because we have any proof of this rule of Jesus. It is in spite of the lack of proof.
  - A. The seven churches of Revelation were weak, persecuted, small. Where was the glory, the Kingdom, the power?
  - B. To see the King and the Kingdom takes faith.
    1. At the bedside of a dying child, who is the winner? Death? God is!
    2. Powerful nations prepare for war. Who is the winner? God is!
    3. A research project results in a significant discovery. You hear the accolades. And you also hear in the Word: "Jesus Christ is Lord." Do you believe that? Does it matter? What difference does it make?
    4. Your child is exposed daily to drugs, pornography, casual sexuality, selfish using of people. Who is winning?
    5. A marriage is failing. There are many reasons to give up. You do not and yet you suffer misunderstanding and abuse. Who is the winner?
  - C. The King seems to be losing. The Kingdom seems terribly weak. God's "kings and queens" appear to be helpless. Is Christ the King? Yes!
- II. It is in the problems of life that we see the King by faith.
  - A. "Behold your King" in His time of humiliation.
    1. Jesus was asked by Pilate, "Are you the king of the Jews?" ("Then say so! Do something! Show it!") Jesus was mocked by the soldiers: "Hail, king of the Jews!" ("How silly he looks! How helpless!") Jesus heard the mob shout: "We have no king but Caesar!"
    2. Attached to the cross was a taunting sign which read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

- B. "Behold your King" in His time of exaltation.
  - 1. The King sent the promised Holy Spirit, the Church began, and the confession was made: Jesus Christ is Lord!
  - 2. Yet most of the first witnesses to the King died for their confession.
- C. "Behold, your King," then, where trials, conflicts, tensions force the question: Where is your power, your glory, your victory, Christ?
- III. Faith sees beyond the problems of life.
  - A. Faith sees a crown of life.
    - 1. Now is the time of the cross.
    - 2. But the glory is to come.
  - B. The King calls for faith to believe.
    - 1. That one plus God equals a majority.
    - 2. That our life is to be that of the King's servants — in spite of the bullies, the mockers, and the abusers.
    - 3. That we cling to our King by hearing His Word and by eating and drinking His body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar.
    - 4. That, despite what our eyes see — sometimes eyes that brim with tears or shut with fear — Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, who is, who was, who is to come, the Almighty.
    - 5. That we believe that He is faithful despite our unfaithfulness.

*Conclusion:* Christ is King! As we say this, we anticipate that moment when the King will come to call an end to church year calendars and will begin an endless age of the Kingdom. Then what we believed by faith will suddenly burst upon our sight, and we shall say it again and again: Jesus Christ is King! Then we shall say it with the crown of life on our heads. But in the meantime we continue to pray: "Lord, Thy Kingdom come."

Richard G. Kapfer  
Ames, Iowa



## Book Reviews

**BIBLICAL ERRANCY.** An Analysis of Its Philosophical Roots. Edited by Norman Geisler. The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, 1981. Paper. 270 pages.

This book is an effort to point out the epistemological roots of the current denial of the inerrancy of the Bible. The essayists are Evangelical teachers, who heed the apostolic exhortation: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy" (Col. 2:8). But the authors feel that "to beware of philosophy" we must first be "aware" of it.

Many errantists have been influenced by the philosophers, catching their assumptions as one catches a cold. These assumptions include Bacon's inductivism, Heidegger's mysticism, Hume's skepticism, Kant's agnosticism, Hegel's transcendentalism, Kierkegaard's existentialism, Nietzsche's atheistic relativism, and Wittgenstein's linguistic noncognitivism. It is the earnest hope of the editor that by exposing these alien presuppositions, these essays will alert Evangelicals to the philosophical roots of the opposition to inerrancy.

These essays are well written by men very knowledgeable in their fields. This reviewer feels that this material could easily mislead the reader into the acceptance of the very error it warns against.

Otto F. Stahlke

**FAITH AND ITS COUNTERFEITS.** By Donald G. Bloesch. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, 1981. Paper. 122 pages. \$3.95.

The author states that his purpose in this book is to print a handbook on evangelical spirituality that can be used by lay people as well as by clergy and theological students. His purpose is to show the difference between true Christianity and some counterfeit versions of the faith. Some of these counterfeits (such as legalism, ritualism or formalism, humanitarianism, enthusiasm, eclecticism, and heroism) are found also with the church. Donald G. Bloesch is professor of theology at Dubuque Theological Seminary. The author writes in a very lively style.

The reviewer recommends this book to lay readers for serious, prayerful study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The church today needs an awakening in its zeal for Jesus and His work. A church that has become lukewarm in its faith requires a new heart and a new spirit, Ezek. 18:31. True religion will acknowledge that human salvation lies not in religion *per se*, but in the outpouring of God's mercy as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Otto F. Stahlke

**LUTHER ON THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE AND CONGREGATIONAL FUNCTION.** By Gert Haendler. Edited with an introduction by Eric W. Gritsch. Translated by Ruth C. Gritsch. Fortress Press, Philadelphia. 1980. 110 pages. Cloth. \$9.95.

Who can quarrel with Haendler's observation that Lutherans will always try to solve their problems by quoting Luther? This is especially true of the topic of church and ministry. Haendler, a theological professor at Rostock, leans, but not too heavily, toward assessing Luther as locating some sort of ultimate authority in the congregation. This assessment cannot be pressed too far because, in tracing Luther's thought, Haendler offers what he recognizes as contradictory evidence. On the one hand, Luther inveighed against a congregation who called Carlstadt as its pastor after he had maneuvered himself into

being selected by the congregation. On the other hand, the Reformer suggested that, where a congregation found it impossible to follow the ordinary procedures of pastoral selection, it should simply get up and move away with the pastor from the community. The author questions the practicality of this suggestion. Haendler does not really want to solve the controversy, and a little fuel for the fire which nobody really wants to put out is appreciated. Haendler's topic is important not because it speaks to ordinary situations, but because it addresses those critical situations when there are disputes about calling and deposing pastors. The Reformation period does not provide a uniform historic answer to the questions which arise in such situations. All can, however, agree with Haendler's final statement, "We feel particularly close to the Luther who, between 1522 and 1524, accepted and supported an active role on the part of the various congregations." This kind of statement almost concedes that Luther's enthusiasm for such a role may have dampened later.

David P. Scaer

CREATION, SCIENCE, AND THEOLOGY. By W. A. Whitehouse. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1981. Paperback. 247 pages. \$10.95.

A British theologian and clergyman in the United Reformed Church of England, Whitehouse (now retired) has gained considerable respect for the depth of his scholarly work, not least from the redoubtable T. F. Torrance. Half of the book is devoted to a perceptive and sympathetic evaluation of Barth's theology, first his *Dogmatics in Outline* and then selected volumes of his *Church Dogmatics* itself. Whitehouse clearly is an admirer of Barth and his theological methodology and system. This in itself is no detraction from the essays in this collection, for they are incisive and critical evaluations of one of the twentieth century's most notable theological voices, covering Barth's views on the doctrines of man, creation, divine providence, eschatology, Christology, the two kingdoms, ethics, etc.

In the second part of the book Whitehouse's essays focus on the general theme of divine authority. Most significant perhaps for many readers will be the author's suggestion as to the way for science and religion to live together. Whitehouse notes that the "physical, chemical, geological, and biological accounts of our world's structure and of the functioning of all its components" no longer "easily harmonize with the accepted versions of religion, more particularly of Christianity" (169). No longer can theologians "dictate the terms of the struggle" between the two disciplines, says Whitehouse. It is his opinion that "in the present cultural climate it is the scientists who have come to rank as authoritative guides to human needs and possibilities." In making such a statement Whitehouse does not agree that science should have the final word. While he grants apparently that science should have the ultimate word in areas of its competence, he still insists "that nothing in the climate of scientific culture has a rightful claim to deflect Christian theology from fundamental fidelity to its own proper object, Jesus Christ and his Lordship" (p. 183). By so speaking, however, Whitehouse is hardly satisfying the existing tensions. Yielding the field, after to all, to evolutionary theories is to succumb to a rival theological system hostile to Christianity.

E.F. Klug

ANTWORTEN ZU FRAGEN UNSERER ZEIT. By Hans-Lutz Poetsch. Verlag Lutherischen Buchhandlung Heinrich Harms, Grosz Oesingen, 1981. Paperback. 116 pages.

Is life nothing but a play, and are we nothing but players on the stage, with a considerable amount of sound and fury, but in the end signifying nothing? An absurd existence? "Hardly," says Poetsch, the multi-talented director of the Lutheran Hour for Europe. God cares very much for each one of us, and our life is not an empty sort of happening, but a carefully orchestrated and graciously directed pilgrimage that takes a blessed meaning and purpose from the saving work of Christ in our behalf.

This and many other significant questions form the body of this sprightly little book that speaks meaningfully to many questions that people are asking today as they ponder their existence. Instead of the stock existentialist answers, which lead nowhere and which bring no real answer anyway, Poetsch offers the sound Biblical answers that provide life with rich meaning and purpose about topics like these: the dangerous misunderstanding of God's earnest exhortations in His Word; the blessings of Christian fellowship; the priceless worth of the human being; leisure time, to use or abuse; "golden" youth; marriage; dealing with anxiety; being sick and without hope; triumph over death. There is a present pertinence to each chapter, and we can be sure that the radio audiences which first heard these messages would testify to the reader that these are indeed words for our time.

E. F. Klug

DIONYSIUS VON ALEXANDRIEN: ZUR FRAGE DES ORIGENISMUS IM DRITTEN JAHRHUNDERT. By Wolfgang A. Bienert. Patristische Texte und Studien, Band 21. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 1978. 251 pages.

Scholars have long recognized the importance of the third century for the church's developing doctrine and practice. With renewed interest in the trinitarian and Christological debates of the fourth century, modern patristic scholarship is becoming even more conscious of the third century as a pivotal period. However, to a considerable extent we are ill informed in the third century. The scholar has a reasonably large amount of evidence from the western, Latin-speaking church and is blessed by rather extensive extant writings from several major figures (Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Novatian). However, the eastern, Greek-speaking church yields its third-century evidence more begrudgingly. Here we have primarily the immense output of Origen and the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Methodius. Beyond these three we have relatively little from the third-century Greek figures, although some were quite evidently important, even leading figures (Firmilian, Paul of Samosata).

This dearth of material is especially acute in regards to the church at Alexandria, which is tantalizingly enshrouded in historical mist until the episcopate of Alexander and the outbreak of Arianism (c. 310). To be sure, both Clement and Origen were associated with Alexandria, but neither tells us much about the "official" Church of Alexandria. While some evidence indicates that Clement may have been a presbyter, his relations with the "official" leaders of Alexandria were largely tangential. However, Origen clearly had significant contact with bishops of his day, including the bishop at Alexandria. Bishop Demetrius (189-231) recognized the immense talent of the young Origen and chose him to be the leader of the famous catechetical school in Alexandria. Origen received great acclaim in Alexandria and abroad for his penetrating and

forceful speculations, but his relationship to the Alexandrian leadership was not always harmonious. In 215 Demetrius disciplined Origen for misconduct (Origen had as a *layman* expounded the Scriptures before bishops in Palestine!), and around 231 Origen was forced to leave Alexandria because of intense opposition to him in the church there.

Despite these troubles, however, scholars have usually assumed that the pervasive theological and heremeneutical influence which Origen did in fact exert on Christian thought after him was predominant in third-century Alexandria as well. It is this common viewpoint which Bienert examines and finds wanting in this informative and well-argued book. Bienert examines the presence and influence of Origen in third-century Alexandria by investigating the most important third-century Alexandrian bishop, Dionysius (247-265).

In two introductory chapters Bienert attempts to define "Origenism" as it would have been in the third century (pp. 1-27) (too often the Origenism of the fifth century, which occasioned such strong reaction, is anachronistically read back into the third century) and discusses the early church witness about Dionysius and the nature of the extant works of Dionysius (pp. 28-70). Chapter 3 (pp. 71-133) establishes the primary historical thesis of the book: contrary to the general scholarly consensus that Dionysius was a follower and student of Origen, the evidence indicates that Dionysius was Origenistic in neither exegesis nor theology. The evidence is primarily two-fold: (1) The opposition which forced Origen's departure from Alexandria was led by Heraclas, leader after Origen of the catechetical school and bishop of Alexandria (231-247). It was Heraclas who as bishop gave the leadership of the catechetical school to Dionysius, which is hardly understandable were Dionysius a follower of Origen. (2) Examination of the extant writings of Dionysius show that they differ from Origen in exegetical method and specific theological opinion. While Origen allegorized the Biblical text, seeking the spiritual meaning hidden under the literal word, Dionysius was strongly philological in his exegetical approach. Dionysius also differed from Origen on the question of the pre-existence of the soul which was a central teaching of Origen and one which infected his entire system.

The last part of the book (pp. 134-221) discusses the role Dionysius played in the various disputes and problems which arose during his own episcopacy (247-265). Of special interest here is the moderate and mediatorial role played by Dionysius in the Novatian schism, the dispute with Egyptian chiliasm, and the trinitarian discussions of the mid-third century.

After this book scholarship can no longer unqualifiedly assert the "Origenistic" character of the Alexandrian Church. The "official" church of the bishop appears throughout the third century to be somewhat cool to Origen and his teaching (we know that Peter (300-311) was strongly opposed to Origen). Yet Origen had his followers in Alexandria. But these appear to have been principally independent philosopher-teachers. Needless to say, this book cannot be overlooked in the contemporary interest in the origins of Arianism and its early development.

William C. Weinrich

THE BIBLE AND HIGHER CRITICISM. By Harry R. Boer. Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981. 108 pages. Paper. \$3.95.

Already printed three times under the title *Above the Bible? The Bible and Its Critics*, Boer's contribution is one of the many attempts to find a middle



road between contemporary Biblical criticism and the traditional views of inspiration and inerrancy. Hypothetically a convincing case is made for Biblical criticism. The homogenization of four Gospels does destroy each evangelist's individual contribution. His treatment of the pericope of the rich young ruler in the three synoptics punctuates the contribution of each writer in handling the same episode. Had Boer ended his study with his deft handling of this pericope, an unequivocal recommendation might have been given. The final three chapters, however, reveal a deeper philosophical problem which virtually necessitates error when the divine participated in the human. Supporting this view from Jesus' own lack of omniscience not only indicates a faulty Christology, but a faulty understanding of omniscience or the lack of it. Jesus may have acknowledged His intellectual limitations in regard to the last day, but even from a human point of view this was not a mistake. To confuse matters further Boer insists that his views are compatible with the traditional ones. They are not. A blockbuster is delivered for anyone still tied down to the sanctity of the *Textus Receptus*. Did you know that the last six verses of the Book of Revelation are only Erasmus' translation of the Vulgate's Latin back into Greek?

David P. Scaer

**THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD.** The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther. By Siegbert Becker. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1982.

Neo-orthodoxy has called upon Dr. Martin Luther as a witness for its denial of the doctrine of the natural knowledge of God. Against this ill-founded attempt, rooted in Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century and developed by Barth and others in this century, Dr. Siegbert Becker provides a thoroughly captivating study of Luther's concept of reason. The reformer's stinging rebuke of Aristotle concerned the use of philosophy in religion and was not intended to be a total rebuke of that Greek philosopher or philosophy in general. Quite to the contrary, Luther had such a high appreciation of secular knowledge that he could confidently assert that in matters outside of faith, unbelievers could far excel Christians. Even Aristotle received accolades from Luther. Here was an endorsement and not a condemnation of human knowledge.

Professor Becker shows that Luther drew a sharp line between matters of reason and faith, so that reason in its highest form was incapable of establishing faith in the heart. This did not mean that for Luther reason was incapable of any knowledge of God at all. God's existence can be discovered by reason, but who that God is and what He is remains unknown to man. While Becker readily recognizes certain apparent similarities between Luther and the twentieth century neo-orthodox theologians regarding the inability of human reason to find a gracious God, Becker clearly points out that for Luther the failure to find God is the responsibility of sinful human nature and does not result from God's failure to disclose Himself in the world (contrary to neo-orthodoxy).

Becker points out that, while the presupposition for Luther is God's existence, the question of overarching importance for him was God's personal acceptance of him. Rational arguments for God's existence could result only in probabilities and not in the absolute certainties provided by God's special revelation in Christ. Faith feeds not on the probabilities of human reason, but on the certain revelation of Christ in the Bible.

The inability of reason to find Christ did not mean that Luther deserted reason to the philosophers. At the Coburg in 1530 he translated Aesop's *Fables*,

and he could recommend the wisdom sayings of the philosophers. Even faith was not a leap into irrationality, but reason illumined by faith could grasp Christ. Becker points out that faith does not eradicate the reasonable powers of a man, but transforms them for God's purposes. Becker convincingly points out that Luther did not hold to a contradictory position on reason. His condemnations of reason were directed against its autonomous use separated from faith. In secular matters reason could excel, and through conversion it could be used as the vehicle of faith, but in no way can it be instrumental in creating faith. Luther can even use rational arguments in destroying the positions of his opponents, but he would never concede that rational arguments had value in creating faith. Only within these sharply defined parameters did Luther find a purpose for apologetics. Against the view that a man could be lead to faith through a series of rational arguments, Luther cited the example of children, upon whom God could most easily work His grace since their reason had not yet developed. Dr. Becker rounds out his book by showing how Luther and subsequently his followers held to their particular understandings of the two natures in Christ, the real presence in the Lord's Supper, and universal grace and election against opponents who found these positions rationally unacceptable.

Luther has been so falsely painted in our century as the enemy of reason that he has been made to appear as purely emotional, operating on his instincts to the point of irrationality. Dr. Becker has gone a long way toward clearing up the confusion over Luther's concept of reason, a confusion which has plagued Luther research since the advent of neo-orthodoxy. Not only has he located the Luther citations discussing the reformer's understanding of reason, but he has tied down his discussion to such Lutheran doctrines as the natural knowledge of God, the person of Christ, the Lord's Supper, and election against the background of universal grace. All who read Dr. Becker's monograph will be convinced that Luther may have been anti-rationalistic, but he was not irrational. It would be difficult to find a better description of Luther's view of reason than Becker's: "It is not Christianity that needs to be made reasonable. It is reason that needs to be made Christian."

David P. Scaer

**MINISTRY, WORD, AND SACRAMENTS: AN ENCHIRIDION.** By Martin Chemnitz. Edited, translated, and briefly annotated by Luther Poellet. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1981. 173 pages. Cloth. \$14.95.

Concordia Publishing House must hold the record for making sixteenth and seventeenth century Lutheran dogmatic literature available to the contemporary church. If historic Lutheranism fails, no blame can be placed at the feet of Concordia. Chemnitz's *Enchiridion* was devised for the regular examination of the clergy by the church superintendents, the Lutheran substitutes for bishops. This theological handbook is divided into four parts, of which only the first two parts, on the call and on the Word and the Sacraments, are developed — through the use of 333 questions and answers. The last two headings are hardly more than titles. It seems that the traditional Missouri Synod instruction of children through the question and answer method of the Schwann catechism probably evolved from Chemnitz's handbook. The question and answer method, which has now been popularized nationally through the advice columns of the newspaper, has the advantage of directly centering the material on a specific problem without the obfuscation of lengthy introductions, frequently irrelevant

to the urgent reader. The Lutheran pastor should not expect anything outstandingly original in the *Enchiridion*. He will more probably realize that the form of Lutheran theology which has indelibly stamped his psyche is as much from the hand of Chemnitz as from anyone. The *Enchiridion* came from that period in Lutheran theology when the periodic doctrinal examination of the clergy was considered necessary. Though the *LCMS Handbook* requires similar duties of counsellors, it would be difficult to find an area where the practice is still extant.

Like all handbooks (on gardening, plumbing, medicine, civil service, etc.) the *Enchiridion* can be picked up, understood without preliminaries, and be put to immediate use. Consider this random example: "219. *Is absolution a sacrament of the New Testament?*" Chemnitz answers that it cannot be a sacrament like Baptism and the Lord's Supper but that disputes about terminology should not hinder the teaching of it. Fifty-three questions are devoted to the subject of the ministry alone. Other sections into which the questions are divided include the Word of God, repentance, law, sin, contrition, Gospel, justifications, faith, predestination, good works, baptism, Lord's Supper, purgatory, invocation of saints, the last day, and the universal church. The LCMS distributes many documents with out direct charge to its clergy. If the publishers were to produce a paperback edition, this is one book that could well be distributed as a gift of the synod to every pastor. It deserves to be at every pastor's right hand. Though it is nearly three hundred years old, it still provides simple, direct answers to what still appear as complicated questions. As no angels are currently appearing in the skies, most readers will not begrudge the somewhat inflated cost of \$14.95. A more reasonable way for providing good printed theology to the clergy should be found.

David P. Scaer



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