

CONCORDIA
THEOLOGICAL
QUARTERLY

CTQ

Volume 47, Number 3

JULY 1983

Luther on the Church	Eugene F. Klug	193
Luther's Concept of the Resurrection in His Commentary on I Corinthians 15	David P. Scaer	209
The Influence of the Two Delitzsches on Biblical and Near Eastern Studies	Raymond F. Surburg	225
Theological Observer		241
Homiletical Studies		249
Book Reviews		285



CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

CTQ

ISSN 0038-8610

**Issued Quarterly by the Faculty of
Concordia Theological Seminary**

The *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, a continuation of *The Springfielder*, is a theological journal of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, published for its ministerium by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

DAVID P. SCAER, *Editor*, DOUGLAS JUDISCH, *Assistant Editor*, GERHARD AHO, *Homiletical Editor*, G. WALDEMAR DEGNER, HEINO KADAI, ROBERT D. PREUS, *Associate Editors*, SYLVIA DEAN, *Typesetter*.

The Faculty: GERHARD AHO, DANIEL BRUCH, HAROLD BULS, EUGENE BUNKOWSKE, STEPHEN CARTER, ROBERT H. COLLINS, G. WALDEMAR DEGNER, C. GEORGE FRY, ALBERT L. GARCIA, WILLIAM G. HOUSER, DOUGLAS McC. L. JUDISCH, HEINO KADAI, EUGENE F. KLUG, GEORGE C. KRAUS, WALTER A. MAIER, KURTE MARQUART, NORBERT MUELLER, RICHARD MULLER, ROBERT D. PREUS, DANIEL G. REUNING, WILBERT H. ROSIN, JOHN SALESKA, DAVID P. SCAER, ALVIN J. SCHMIDT, RANDALL W. SCHIELDS, OTTO F. STAHLKE, RAYMOND F. SURBURG, HOWARD W. TEPKER, JAMES VOELZ, MICHAEL WARNER, WILLIAM WEINRICH, DEAN O. WENTHE, WARREN WILBERT, ALBERT WINGFIELD, HAROLD ZIETLOW, MELVIN ZILZ.

The CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. Changes of address for Missouri Synod clergymen reported to Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, will also cover the mailing change of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY. Other changes of address, Paid subscriptions, and other business matters should be sent to CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825.

Annual subscription rate: \$5.00

© Concordia Theological Seminary Press
1983

Luther on the Church

Eugene F. Klug

The church most simply defined "is holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd." With this statement in the Smalcald Articles (III, xii) Luther was right on target with the Scriptures. In characteristically artless and uncomplicated manner he stated the boundaries and gave the distinctive properties of Christ's church, His holy body, His faithful fold.

Referring to the Apostles' Creed in his famous treatise of 1539, *On The Councils and the Church*, Luther states that "the Creed clearly indicates what the church is, namely, a communion of saints, that is a crowd [*Hauffe*] or assembly of people who are Christians, a people with a special call," and, therefore, "not just *ecclesia* [assembly], but *sancta catholica Christiana*," that is, a holy and catholic Christian church.¹ "He who does not believe and is not holy and righteous, does not belong to the Holy Christian Church."²

The Lutheran Confessions parallel these definitions very closely. Whether directly written by Luther or not, they in each case show the imprint of his lucid understanding of the true nature of the church. Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession states: "The church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers." The Large Catechism (III, 48 ff.) speaks in this way:

The word *Kirche* [church] means really nothing else than a common assembly, . . . [that is] a Christian congregation or assembly [*eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung*], or, best of all and most clearly, holy Christendom [*eine heilige Christenheit*]. . . The word *communio* ought not be rendered communion [*Gemeinschaft*], but congregation [*Gemeinde*]. It is nothing else than an interpretation or explanation by which some one else meant to explain what the Christian church is, *eine Gemeinde der Heiligen* [a congregation of saints]. . . I believe that there is upon earth a little group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods which it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God.

Very early in his career as Reformer, during the crucial years between 1512 to 1519, Luther had come to clarity on the central article of the Christian faith, the justification of the sinner before God, *sola gratia sola fide*. He had moved away from *theologia gloriae*, the theology of glory, which placed the emphasis on man's efforts in gaining God's favor, as in the monastic system, to *theologia crucis*, which focused on Christ's redemptory, vicarious sacrifice for all sins and all sinners. This was the heart and content of the saving Gospel which underlay membership in Christ's church. Thus, in his treatise on the *Papacy at Rome*, which was an answer to the theologian Alveld at Leipzig, in 1520, Luther very clearly articulated, really for the first time in public writing, a statement concerning the true nature of the church. This was the question: What is it that makes a Christian? Is it adhering to Rome, the structured entity under the papacy? Or is it being under Christ? Luther answered that Christ is the true and only Head of the church and that the church by its very nature is a spiritual community, the sum total of believers built upon Christ, the Head. Moreover, Scripture does not prove anywhere that a certain external church organization has been, or is to be, established. In Luther's mind it was an abuse to call all church affairs and possessions under the Roman aegis "spiritual." The pope cannot give spiritual life and power to his members; not even Peter could do that; only Christ is able, as true Head. How can a mere man, even the pope, rule over a thing which he cannot really understand?³

Rome, Luther noted in his rightly famous *Councils and the Church*, would like "very much to be regarded as the church," but the fact is that "Christians are a people with a special call," "holy," and "God's people," because daily the Holy Spirit cleanses them "per redemptionem, per vivificationem et sanctificationem," that is, through redemption, regeneration, sanctification. So, because the Romanist church was holy by its *own* standards, it was "not entitled to the name 'Christian church' or 'Christian people' " by simple identification, for the Holy Spirit sanctifies His people by faith and through godly living according to His power and His standards. In the Romanist view, Luther stated, you need "just throw a surplice over your head and you are holy in accord with the Roman church's holiness." This was a distorted, substandard view of the church, its membership, and its true holiness.⁴

In his Genesis commentary, completed late in his life (1545), Luther pointed to Abraham (Genesis 15:6) as the spiritual leader of the church in his day and stated that they who believe are the

church.⁵ It all has to do with the "chief article of our faith," that a man is saved *sola fide*, by faith alone, in the Gospel; for God hears all who plead *sola gratia propter Christum*, by grace alone for Christ's sake — whether in Abraham's house or under some tree, it makes no difference.⁶ "We who believe are the church," like Jacob. "We have the Word and the promise . . . and have been baptized . . . Let us cling to and persist in faith and hope . . . The promise will not deceive us . . . This is the proper and chief doctrine of the church. It has been handed down by the Holy Spirit. The world and the flesh do not know it. It teaches us that we are lords and heirs of eternal life in no other way than the way in which Jacob was an heir of the blessing."⁷

Jacob's sons were far from models of piety, including Judah through whom the promised Messiah would come; but the ancient promise, reaching back to God's gracious Word to Eve (Gen. 3:15), nonetheless was there because of God's faithfulness. Luther, therefore, rightly notes: "To be the church and to rule and teach men for their salvation, to be in the people of God and in the number of Abel and the servants of God — this is the primogeniture," in a truly preeminent sense.⁸ "The church is not wood and stone but the assembly of people who believe in Christ."⁹ The Scriptures which bring us Christ are really, in comparison to the Savior Himself, but the "diapers of Christ." This role by no means demeans them, but rather underscores the truth that the Gospel opens up the Scriptures or is their heart.

Perhaps one of the sharpest, most polemical writings of Luther against the corrupt, deceitful pretension of the Roman papacy came towards the end of his life when all hope of a genuinely free council to the Reformation's charges had faded. It was his *Against the Roman Papacy — An Institution of the Devil* (1545).¹¹ The pope "has conjured horse manure into our mouths," Luther cries, and expects us to swallow it, when the pope claims that he is supreme lord over all, secular and religious, that popes are beyond recall or deposing, that the pope bestows kings with their power to rule. Luther's concentration, of course, was on the effect that such pretentious bombast had upon the church. Christ, he stated, has only one church in the world, as we confess in the Creed, because "wherever there is a church, anywhere in the whole world, it still has no other gospel and Scripture . . . baptism and communion . . . faith and spirit . . . Christ and God . . . Lord's Prayer and prayer . . . hope and eternal life, than we have here in our church in Wittenberg. . . . Everything belonging to the church is equal," except for the gifts which God bestows upon His church

and individuals in it variously.¹² "Christendom has no head and can have none except the only Son of God, Jesus Christ," and "the dear Lord knows of no more than one church in the whole world."¹³

To the essence of the church belong these attributes: it is *una*, or one, numerically and also in unity; *sancta*, or holy; *apostolica*, or apostolic, built on the apostles' doctrine; and *catholica*, universal or catholic, embracing true believers everywhere throughout the world who are tied to and built on Christ by faith. Luther summed it all up in his extremely popular *Personal Prayer Book* of 1522, in which he described the ingredients of the Christian's faith and life. As regards the church he wrote:

I believe that throughout the whole wide world there is only one holy, universal, Christian church, which is nothing other than the gathering or congregation of saints — pious believers on earth. This church is gathered, preserved, and governed by the same Holy Spirit and is given daily increase by means of the sacraments and the word of God.

I believe that no one can be saved who is not in this gathering or community, harmoniously sharing the same faith with it, the same word, sacraments, hope, and love; and that no Jew, heretic, pagan, or sinner can be saved along with this community unless he becomes reconciled with it and unites with it in full agreement in all things

I believe that there is forgiveness of sin nowhere else than in this community and that beyond it nothing can help to gain it — no good deeds, no matter how many or how great they might be; and that within this community nothing can invalidate this forgiveness.¹⁴

The church is *una*, or one, even as Christ is one, who is the Head over the one Body.¹⁵ Its oneness has no cracks or fissures; for though it has "many members, yet the many members do no divide the unity,"¹⁶ states Luther in his Romans commentary (6:12). In his "Great Confession" of 1528, on the Lord's Supper, he compares the unity and communion of the earthly elements, bread and wine, with the heavenly, the true Body and Blood of Christ, to "the unity of Christians in one spiritual body of Christ through one spirit, faith, love, and the cross, etc."¹⁷ "But the words used in connection with this sacrament," he wisely cautions, in the same context, "shall and must express with simplicity what they say," lest their meaning be lost by turning or causing them to have some sort of symbolic sense or function.

The church is *sancta*, or holy, because it is built on Christ, hence through Christ.¹⁸ By and of itself “it knows that it can err and blunder and that it must amend and change such blunder and error according to God’s Word, which alone cannot err.”¹⁹ Not by one’s own work or effort, therefore, but by God’s doing it is holy, for “nothing is holy unless it has the Word and name of God.”²⁰ So, when I say, “I believe in the holy church,” Luther explains, I am stating that this is true not “if I look at my own person or that of my neighbor, but if I look at Christ, who is the Propitiator and Cleanser of the church; then it is completely holy.”²¹ This latter statement is recorded in Luther’s Galatians commentary, often called the “Magna Charta of Christian Liberty.” The word “church,” after all, is a spiritual word, Luther notes in his *Commentary on the First Epistle of Peter*, and its holiness is tied to these truths: that “you have the Word of God”; that even He is yours”; that “you have become truly pious and holy through Christ.”²² This is stated in the context of 1 Peter 2:9, and the fact is that Christians constitute a holy priesthood because Christ “wants to have a spiritual body, that is, the Christian congregation”; and thus “only those are the holy and spiritual priesthood who are true Christians and are built on the Stone,” which is Christ.²³ With reason Luther could say in 1530, as he writes his commentary on his most beloved psalm (118):

I hope that by this time almost everybody knows that whoever prides himself on being a Christian must also take pride in being holy and righteous. Since Christendom is holy, a Christian must also be righteous and holy, or he is not a Christian. All Scripture calls Christians holy and righteous, as does also this verse [20]. This is not boastfulness; it is a necessary confession and an article of faith The whole Christian Church is holy, not by its own work but in Christ and through Christ’s holiness, as St. Paul says: “He has cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word” (Eph. 5:26). Anyone who hesitates to boast and confess that he is holy and righteous is actually saying: “I am not baptized. I am not a Christian. I do not believe in Christ. I do not believe that Christ died for me. I do not believe that He took away my sins. I do not believe that His blood has cleansed me, or that it can cleanse me. In short, I do not believe a word of what God has declared of Christ and all Scripture testified.” What kind of person thinks or says such things?²⁴

Indeed, what person could ever speak in that way, to denigrate what God Himself has made holy through Christ’s precious blood

and sacrifice? The church's and the individual Christian's holiness is real, as real as Christ's atoning sacrifice for sin is real.

The church, moreover, is *apostolica*, or apostolic, not by virtue of fabricated claims of some unbroken line of succession from the apostles to the present-day clergy, as a kind of higher spiritual estate, but simply because it is built on the doctrine of the apostles (and prophets). These, Luther says, "are the mountains of God and the cedars of God."²⁵ Theirs was the God-inspired Word on which the Lord would build His church.

Christ's church is also *catholica*, catholic or universal, in that it enfolds all true believers. With justice "we are concerned," states Luther, "that the authority of the holy catholic church stand unimpaired."²⁶ Luther's name is often coupled to the tragic dissolution of the unity of the medieval church under the Roman banner. Nothing was farther from the truth. He was not rebel. If he was, he was an obedient rebel who put loyalty to God's Word ahead of party loyalty or ecclesiastical structure. Moreover, he saw through the fictitious claim to catholicity made by Rome. In his "Great Confession" he expressed his faith in the church's existence and its true catholicity in clearest terms. This statement is the immediate precursor of the Schwabach Articles of 1529 (October), and these, in turn, of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. Hence its great importance and pertinence here:

I believe that there is one holy Christian Church on earth, that is, the community or number or assembly of all Christians in all the world, the one bride of Christ, and His spiritual body of which He is the only head. The bishops or priests are not her heads or lords or bridegrooms, but servants, friends, and — as the word "bishop" implies — superintendents, guardians, or stewards.

This Christian Church exists not only in the realm of the Roman Church or pope, but in all the world, as the prophets foretold that the gospel of Christ would spread throughout the world, Ps. 2:8; Ps. 19:4. Thus this Christian Church is physically dispersed among pope, Turks, Persians, Tartars, but spiritually gathered in one gospel and faith, under one head, that is, Jesus Christ.²⁷

At the same time, then, as Luther explained the right meaning of catholicity as regards the church, he also placed his finger squarely on the right way of looking upon its ecumenicity. There is no other church than the one that is built upon the Cornerstone, Christ! It is as wide and broad as the world is wide and

broad; but it is as narrow and restricted as the Rock on which it stands, Christ.

The true church consists not, as the Romanists boasted, in their having “the numbers and the strength,” nor in the appearance of being the apostles’ successors,” nor in “having governed the church so long,” nor “in cultivating a great holiness and the worship of God.” Both sides could argue in this way, Luther says, on who is the true church; but the only arbiter of this question is Christ Himself. Both sides might also claim to have the Holy Spirit, Luther says, but the true church will be known in accord with Christ’s promise: “When the Comforter comes, whom the Father will give you through intercession, you will surely know Him and have Him with you. Why? Because He will preach solely of Me and will tell you all that I have from the Father. And this you shall proclaim publicly by word of mouth. Now if you accept and preach this message, then you surely have and know the Holy Spirit, who alone glorifies Me through your lips and your office.”²⁸

Moreover, as Luther adds in the same context, “then it will be found that the great multitude, which boasts of being the church and of having the Holy Spirit, who preaches through it, is a false proclamation and a lying spirit, the devil’s church and vessel, even though it decks and adorns itself with names like God, Holy Spirit, and Christendom.”²⁹ Because of this silencing of the Gospel in its midst, the Romanists, Luther avers, may claim “that they are the church and that the church cannot err,” but the facts are that it was “John Hus and Jerome of Prague,” whom they (the papalists) condemned, who “were true and holy members of the holy church.”³⁰ This significant judgment occurs in Luther’s commentary on Genesis 6:3 as he distinguishes between the “sons of God” (believers) and the unbelieving “daughters” or children “of men.”³¹

It is characteristic of the royal priesthood of believers, who constitute the church, that they be “prophets or sons and pupils of the prophets.” This does not mean, cautions Luther, “that future events [are to] be revealed to us,” as some *Schwaermer*, or charismatic spirits, claim. “For the office of a prophet,” in the broad sense here intended by Luther, “it is enough that we understand Scripture and are able to teach others and also to help one another with prayers.”³² “Therefore the name ‘prophet’ belongs equally to all Christians, and he who denies this also denies that he has been baptized and has been instructed through

the Word.”³³ Men like Elijah and the other prophets of God in the Old Testament has the Spirit in a unique manner, Luther allows; but they “did not have a different Spirit,” for we have their Scriptures through which the Spirit deals with and instructs us.

Everything turns on the church’s relationship to the Gospel. It is this fact which justifies the term “universal Christendom,” because “the gospel alone is accepted by Christians throughout the world.”³⁴ The citizens of Christ’s church or kingdom are earthly, but the kingdom itself is heavenly, not perishable, but enduring, “the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, truth and peace, joy, righteousness, safety, salvation, and all good” — because of the Word, which endures, like Christ; it is like silver and gold, not clay.³⁵

Knowledge of Christ and church membership go hand in hand “as a result of [God’s] promise and because of pure mercy.”³⁶ Adam and Eve were the first members of the church because they trusted God’s promise concerning the Messiah.³⁷ This promise continued down through the patriarchs and God’s chosen people, but God’s “accidental mercy” reached out to those outside this stem too — for example, outside the stem of Judah.³⁸ Cain lacked spiritual blessing because he rejected the promise. It is believers or the “church that has the promises of grace which are eternal.”³⁹

Where faith in the promise is lacking there is no church. The unbelieving heart cannot be in the church, even though it “put on a right and believing face,” for “the church is one in spirit,” and a perverse heart is *incurvatus in se*, turned in on itself; and unbelievers or hypocrites cannot belong to Christ. Those that rejected the Gospel at Christ’s time were not in the church. “For the prophets and the Gospel come together in one faith, in one spirit, in the root of truth, in one humility,” Luther states as he draws Old and New Testament believers together in one entity, and “the church dwells in this life in the midst of two mountains,” the Old and New Testaments.⁴⁰ “The body of the church will be full, fat, and crammed with members who are sound and full of faith” through the “efficacy of the Word.”

This true church is, of course, a spiritual assembly, but it has its corporeal counterpart. However, not every assembly which purports to be the church is really so, but the believers only — thus the wheat without the chaff, a holy kingdom, not a secular.⁴¹ The church’s holiness, strength, and magnificence, which no one really sees but God, has to do with faith. “The reason for this is this rule, that we are not righteous by our works, but righteous

works are done by us who have first become righteous" by faith.⁴² The members of the church are sinners still, but sinners who know and trust in their Savior.

Work-righteous "saints" would be intolerable in Luther's book, and he frankly says: "God preserve me from a Christian church in which everyone is a saint," that is, in a perfectionist, Pelagian way.⁴³ "I want to be and remain in the church and little flock of the faint-hearted, the feeble, and the ailing, who feel and recognize the wretchedness of their sins, who believe in the forgiveness of sins, and who suffer persecution for the sake of the Word which they confess and teach purely and without adulteration."⁴⁴ Even more strongly Luther asserts concerning such counterfeit "saints": "He [Christ] admits no saint; He blows them all away . . . If sinners enter, they do not remain sinners. He spreads His cloak over their sins and forgives."⁴⁵ The point simply is that Christians are personally imperfect, though they are perfect, pure, and righteous in Christ. Sins are always latent in God's saints; but they do not dominate, even though at times they break out, much to the believing sinner's sadness and remorse. But there is forgiveness in God through Christ!

It is this Word of Forgiveness, the Gospel, that builds or creates the church, not the church the Word. Luther notes how God focused Adam's attention on His Word in connection with the trees in the garden of Eden. "Here we have the establishment of the church before there was any government of the home and of the state" by the Word of God.⁴⁶ Since the Hebrew word used in Scripture speaks of God "building" for Adam his helpmeet, Eve, it occurs to Luther that she is analogous to the church, which is also built by God.⁴⁷ Moreover, God's purposes for His church are far-ranging: "Because the church is established by the Word of God, it is certain that man was created for an immortal and spiritual life."⁴⁸ "Not the stones, construction, gorgeous silver and gold make a church beautiful and holy," Luther therefore concludes, "but the Word of God and sound preaching," even as with Abram.⁴⁹ Then, as now, and at David's time the church must be seen as "established by the fingers of God"⁵⁰ and not by the fingers of men.⁵¹

God's Word may seem like a feeble instrument for building, but it is not. However quietly God the Holy Spirit works through the Word, He will have His children. Yes, "God desires to have children," even though at times it appears as though God were "sterile" and unable to beget children, Luther observes in

commentary on Isaiah 66. In fact, "He will have a very large number of children in all nations."⁵² It is faith which God's Word prompts, and faith believes even when it cannot see the reason for doing so, like Abraham.⁵³

Those who think that the church consists of certain usages, ceremonies, and orders, are replacing "I believe" with "I see," Luther states;⁵⁴ and he reminds his readers that in the Creed we confess, "I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints."⁵⁵ Precisely because of his faith which trusts God's promises, "Abraham is described as a friend of God who talks intimately with Him; and God as his friend is pleased with everything he does."⁵⁶ In the same context Luther notes that it was faith in God's Word that determined that only two out of the original mass of adults who left Egypt would enter Canaan, Joshua and Caleb.

Nothing is "more precious," "nothing better," in the eyes of God than His beloved, His church.⁵⁷ Outside of it there is no salvation, as is the case of "those who forsake the church," since "outside there certainly is no repentance or remission."⁵⁸ Luther is, of course, speaking of the *una sancta*, not some earthly claimant to such status, as the Roman church. He heightens his pitch even more by averring that the true church, the *una sancta*, cannot err and has no fault. This he states in conjunction with his *Theses Concerning Faith and Law* (1535),⁵⁹ but he repeats it at many places.⁶⁰ In Thesis 61 he states: "After the apostles no one should claim that he cannot err in the faith, except only the universal church."⁶¹

It is in the same set of theses that the famous dictum occurs concerning those who might try to twist the Scriptures against Christ or the faith in any way. Luther states in Thesis 49: "If the adversaries press the Scriptures against Christ, we urge Christ against the Scriptures." Lest modern detractors of the Bible take comfort from this statement, they should not that Luther will also reverse the dialectic in favor of Scripture's indisputable authority: "Stick to the Word of God. Ignore every other — whether it is devoid of Christ, in the name of Christ, or against Christ, or whether it is issued in any other way."⁶² It is self-evident that Luther connects errorlessness with things of God's own special creation, like the Word, and so also the *una sancta*, the holy Christian church. Should anyone try to substitute something else, or claim such errorlessness for an earthly, human agency, Luther advises: "You should answer: It is true, the Christian Church cannot err; but listen, dear friend, let us note which is the true

Christian Church.”⁶³

Nothing serves quite as well to portray the church’s true nature as the Scripture’s own picturesque figures of speech. These are graphic etchings which immediately conjure up in the reader’s mind what it is that belongs to the church’s true nature. With his vast knowledge of Holy Writ nimbly at work, Luther is able to lead the reader swiftly and engagingly from one description to the other.

The church is Christ’s mystical, or spiritual, body;⁶⁴ the kingdom of heaven;⁶⁵ the kingdom of God;⁶⁶ the kingdom of Christ;⁶⁷ the bride⁶⁸ (“These are great and incomparable words, to hear that Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom and the church is the bride”⁶⁹); seemingly the widow of Christ (in view of the condition which the church appears to have in the world);⁷⁰ the ark;⁷¹ Canaan, the land of promise;⁷² God’s pleasure garden (“David . . . paints a fine picture of it. It has His inexpressible treasure: the holy Sacraments, the dear Word, with which it instructs, governs, restores, and comforts His flock.”⁷³); God’s flock;⁷⁴ God’s dove;⁷⁵ our mother⁷⁶ (“It is our mother hen and we are its chicks.”⁷⁷); Sarah;⁷⁸ the building, or temple, of the Lord;⁷⁹ a royal priesthood;⁸⁰ Mount Zion;⁸¹ the Body of Christ, strong and feared by Satan;⁸² a hospital;⁸³ a seemingly forsaken spouse (but Christ actually stands by her);⁸⁴ Jerusalem;⁸⁵ the vineyard of the Lord.⁸⁶ Luther sums up these glorious titles, by which the church is known, in a beautiful statement on Psalm 65:

The psalmist gives a number of names to the same church. “Zion,” because it observes heavenly things; “Jerusalem,” because it has peace and perceives it; “courts,” because it is the preparation of future glory and the entrance to it; “house” of God, because God dwells in it; “temple” because God is worshiped in it; “earth,” because it is a pilgrim in this life; “river” of God, because it gushes forth from God continually with ever new believers that are born. As from a fountain the waters flow forth constantly, so the saints are born of God in His Word. (Our Fountain is Christ, our Head.) “Fields,” because the church has been spread abroad among all nations and made manifest to the whole world; “wilderness,” because it despises the things that are in the world; “valley,” because of humility; “sheep,” because of a constant self-offering and mortification. Again, “the crown of the year of goodness,” because it will stand until the end of the world; “tilled field,” because it is cultivated and always bears the fruit of merits. You can look for others if you like.

Also, the church is likened to "hills," because of the excellence of the righteousness raised above human nature. Add a fifteenth, namely, that is "sprouting," because it is always in bloom and never withers through sluggishness and lukewarmness."⁸⁷

Finally, as regards symbolic names of the church Luther senses a very interesting allusion, which ought not be omitted, in Psalm 68: 31: "The church is symbolized by the name "Ethiopia," as is sufficiently clear because of the blackness of sin and because the church confesses itself to be black. The Jews, however, are called Lebanon, because they regarded themselves as white and holy, while the church says: 'I am black but beautiful' (Song of Solomon 1:5), that is, because I acknowledge myself to be black, I am beautiful. For he who sins justifies God in His words (Ps. 51:4) and thus gives glory to God, and by that very fact he is now himself already righteous. 'I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And Thou forgavest, etc.' (Ps. 32:5) Therefore to confess sin and to be righteous are the same thing."⁸⁸

Christ will preserve his church. It is very dear to Him.⁸⁹ Because it is built on Christ, who is its Cornerstone,⁹⁰ the church will endure forever.⁹¹ The false church will not so endure.⁹² God's flock and its doctrine persist; God strengthens and upholds it against all foes, against Satan and Satan's kingdom, in all time of trouble.⁹³ Many claims are made, falsely, by those who "boast of being God's people" or "Abraham's children" spiritually, but the fact is that "only those who hear My Word" are God's children in truth.⁹⁴ It is these whom He will preserve. To boast that you are God's creature, will not save you. God made the River Elbe, He made apples, He made trees, He made you; but that will not save you. What counts is to belong to Christ by faith in Him. "This is the glory of the church, that it has no teacher and bishop but Christ who alone rules over His church through His Spirit and His Gospel."⁹⁵

FOOTNOTES

1. *Luther's Works*, American Edition [LW] (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-), 41, p. 143; *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe [WA] (Weimar, 1883-), 50, pp. 624f. Cf. *Explanation of the Ninety-five Theses* of 1518, LW 31, 216, 246; WA 1, 608, 625; also *Commentary on Psalm 117*, LW 14, 22f.; WA 31, 240ff.
2. *Commentary on Psalm 118*, LW 14, 92; WA 31, 164.
3. LW 39, 65-73; WA 6, 292-297, *Papacy at Rome*.
4. LW 41, 143ff.; WA 50, 624ff.

5. *LW* 3, 19; *WA* 42, 561.
6. *LW* 4, 54-65 *passim*; *WA* 43, 173-181.
7. *LW* 5, 184ff.; *WA* 43, 555.; cf. *LW* 6, 10; *WA* 44, 6f.
8. *LW* 7, 265; *WA* 44, 496.
9. *LW* 52, 39; *WA* 50¹, 139.
10. *Ibid.*; cf. *LW* 7, 281; *WA* 44, 508.
11. Cf. H.G. Haile, *Luther* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 295ff. for a sharply critical assay of Luther's blast against the papacy.
12. *LW* 41, 358; *WA* 54, 284.
13. *LW* 41, 327, 332; *WA* 54, 259, 263.
14. *LW* 43, 28; *WA* 10², 393f.; cf. *LW* 37, 275, *WA* 26, 411.
15. *LW* 14, 303; *WA* 5, 40; cf. *LW* 5, 223; *WA* 43, 582.
16. *LW* 25, 106; *WA* 56, 119.
17. *LW* 37, 275; *WA* 26, 411.
18. *LW* 5, 214; *WA* 43, 576.
19. *LW* 13, 383; *WA* 31¹, 423.
20. *LW* 17, 373; *WA* 31², 550, *Commentary on Isaiah*.
21. *LW* 26, 285; *WA* 40, 445.
22. *LW* 30, 7; *WA* 12, 262.
23. *LW* 30, 52; *WA* 12, 306.
24. *LW* 14, 93f.; *WA* 31¹, 166f.
25. *LW* 11, 197f.; *WA* 3, 608f.
26. *LW* 26, 65; *WA* 40¹, 131.
27. *LW* 37, 367; *WA* 26, 506. See also Wilhelm Maurer, *Luther und das Evangelische Bekenntnis* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970), pp 62ff.
28. *LW* 24, 126f.; *WA* 45, 575f., *Sermons on John's Gospel*.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *LW* 2, 20f.; *WA* 42, 276f.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *LW* 3, 364; *WA* 43, 136.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *LW* 35, 151; *WA* 10², 90.
35. *LW* 12, 103ff., 66f.; *WA* 45, 212f.; 40, 276f.
36. *LW* 1, 300f.; *WA* 42, 221.
37. *LW* 13, 90; *St.L.* 5, 748.
38. *LW* 1, 302; *WA* 42, 222.
39. *LW* 1, 305; *WA* 42, 224f.
40. *LW* 11, 288-291, 324-332; *WA* 4, 135ff., 177ff.
41. *LW* 11, 372ff.; *WA* 4, 239ff.
42. *LW* 11, 264ff.; *WA* 4, 111ff.
43. *LW* 22, 55; *WA* 46, 583.
44. *Ibid.*

45. *LW* 23, 318; *WA* 33, 510, *Sermons on John's Gospel*.
46. *LW* 1, 103ff., 115; *WA* 42, 79f., 87.; cf. *LW* 14, 55; *WA* 31¹, 84f.
47. *LW* 1, 132; *WA* 42, 99.
48. *LW* 1, 104; *WA* 42, 79.
49. *LW* 2, 334; *WA* 42, 500.
50. *LW* 10, 88f.; *WA* 3, 82.
51. *LW* 13, 301; *St. L.* 5, 1003.
52. *LW* 17, 405ff.; *WA* 31², 576f.
53. *LW* 2, 266; *WA* 42, 452; cf. *LW* 13, 286; *St. L.* 5, 987.
54. *LW* 27, 85; *WA* 40², 106.
55. *LW* 42, 162f.; *WA* 6, 131f.
56. *LW* 3, 31; *WA* 42, 570.
57. *LW* 4, 6f.; *WA* 43, 139.
58. *LW* 29, 227; *WA* 57³, 224f.
59. *LW* 34, 113; *WA* 39¹, 48.
60. Cf. *LW* 41, 194f.; *WA* 51, 479ff.
61. *LW* 34, 113; *WA* 39¹, 48.
62. *LW* 22, 451; *WA* 47, 165, *Sermons on John's Gospel*.
63. *WA* 28, 263f.; quoted in E. Plass *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), I, p. 265.
64. *LW* 25, 53; *WA* 56, 60; *LW* 35, 51; *WA* 2, 743.
65. *LW* 1, 233; *WA* 42, 174.
66. *LW* 42, 37ff.; *WA* 2, 95ff.
67. *LW* 1, 240ff.; *WA* 42, 279; *LW* 11, 12f., 226ff.; *WA* 3, 532; 4, 77.
68. *LW* 1, 233; *WA* 42, 174; cf. *LW* 11, 509; *WA* 4, 373f.
69. *LW* 12, 263; *WA* 40², 560f.; cf. also *LW* 15, 193; *WA* 31², 588; *LW* 22, 440; *WA* 47, 156; see also Plass, I, pp. 789, 805.
70. *LW* 31, 237; *WA* 1, 620.
71. *LW* 2, 68, 152; *WA* 42, 310, 368.
72. *LW* 9, 118; *WA* 14, 643.
73. *LW* 12, 173ff.; *WA* 51, 290f.
74. *LW* 13, 11; *WA* 8, 12.
75. *LW* 13, 14; *WA* 8, 14f.
76. *LW* 13, 14; *WA* 8, 14; *LW* 17, 104; *WA* 31², 342f.; *LW* 26, 441; *WA* 40¹, 664.
77. *LW* 10, 391; *WA* 3, 446.
78. *LW* 26, 443; *WA* 40¹, 667.
79. *LW* 13, 269; *WA* 41, 126; *LW* 15, 282; *WA* 54, 40f.; *LW* 16, 76; *WA* 31², 53.
80. *LW* 14, 32; *WA* 31¹, 251.
81. *LW* 14, 326ff.; *WA* 5, 57f.; *WA* 16, 28f.; *WA* 31², 20.
82. *LW* 15, 242ff.; *WA* 31², 716ff.
83. *LW* 17, 66; *WA* 31², 312.
84. *LW* 17, 237; *WA* 31², 444f.
85. *LW* 18, 119; *WA* 13, 119.

-
86. *LW* 22, 314; *WA* 47, 43.
 87. *LW* 10, 314; *WA* 3, 372.
 88. *LW* 10, 350; *WA* 3, 409.
 89. *LW* 2, 256; *WA* 42, 444; *LW* 3, 160f.; *WA* 42, 663.
 90. *LW* 14, 96; *WA* 31¹, 173.
 91. *LW* 13, 88f., 285; *St. L.* 5, 742.
 92. *LW* 16, 40; *WA* 31², 28.
 93. *LW* 3, 16f., 160f.; *WA* 42, 560, 663; *LW* 6, 52; *WA* 44, 37; *LW* 33, 227, 287;
 WA 18, 743, 782.
 94. *LW* 23, 384f.; *WA* 33, 623f.
 95. *LW* 16, 212; *WA* 31², 150.

Luther's Concept of the Resurrection in His Commentary on I Corinthians 15

David Scaer

In our time the resurrection of Jesus as historical fact has received a great deal of attention because of Rudolph Bultmann, who with his demythologizing denied it as historical fact but valued it because of its existential value for faith. This approach was not totally without value since it has forced tradition-minded Christians to reexamine the Biblical evidence to find support for what Luther sees as the linchpin of Christianity. Our intention is not to direct Luther's view to the contemporary problem, but to examine Luther within his own context. Luther's sermons on I Corinthians 15 delivered in 1533 will be studied. Here the general resurrection and Christ's resurrection are discussed as a unit.

I. Denial of Resurrection

We operate with a false view if we think that the denial of the resurrection is a contemporary problem. Bultmann's views are basically nothing new. In the last century David Friedrich Strauss startled the world by asserting that all miraculous events in the New Testament were fabricated by the writers. What is startling is Luther's claim that the Roman officials of his day did not really believe this article on the resurrection. Denial of the resurrection is motivated by the devil. Luther says, "For the devil surely presses us hard and assails us and also great men with the temptation to disbelieve this article or to doubt it. Pope, cardinals, and other great men, especially in Italy, are also fine, wise, intelligent, and learned people; yet if three could be found who believed this article, we should say that these were many."¹ Luther does not give us the details of this denial of the resurrection among Roman Church officials. Perhaps Luther sees the denial of the resurrection and of anything miraculous as a problem among church leaders in general without making a specific personal reference. The denial of the resurrection among the laity is virtually nothing in comparison with its denial among the clergy, who through their preaching can influence their congregations.² Christians should not, however, be too surprised by the denial of the resurrection. The Corinthian congregation denied it, though it had St. Paul as its pastor. The denial of the resurrection is akin to the denial of the sacramental efficacy of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Just as reason denies that

baptism washes away sins and that bread is Christ's body, so also it cannot believe that all men will be revived on the Last Day and that body and soul will be reunited.³

In some circles, including Lutheran ones in the 1950's, it has been fashionable and customary to deny the soul's survival after death. The soul is seen as a functional extension of the body. Luther's resurrection doctrine presupposes both a soul which survives and a body which decays. The body, united with the soul, is given a majesty which it has never previously known.⁴ Resurrection means reuniting body and soul in a union which we now experience.⁵ Reason is seen by Luther as the cause of denying the resurrection, because it operates only with what it can see:

To believe that [there is a resurrection] is surely not man's competence and power. For reason does no more than merely to observe the facts as they appear to the eye, namely, that the world has stood so long, that one crumbles to dust in the grave, from which no one has ever returned When reason approaches this article of faith and reflects on it, it is entirely at a loss.⁶

True to his graphic style, Luther points out how the bodily parts of the saints are scattered in several countries and how certain forms of dying make men's bodies turn quickly to dust and ashes so that no trace of them remains. The rebinding of these parts in the resurrection supersedes what reason can understand.

Luther here is not attempting to say that the resurrection doctrine is absurd in the sense that it is irrational. His diatribe against reason does not mean the suspension of the thought process. By "reason" he means induction from the collective human experience. This reason has experienced nothing more than the irreversible corruption of dead bodies, and this reason relies more on these experiences than God's Word. Luther's opposition to reason is not an invitation to surrender logic, as he himself sets up complex arguments in favor of the resurrection.

II. Proofs for the Resurrection

Luther's "proofs" of the resurrection are historical testimony to Christ's resurrection, the Scriptures, and the totality of Christian doctrine.

A. Historical Proofs

Receiving the least attention as proof of Christ's resurrection are the historical experiences of the apostles. In the current debate with the deniers of the resurrection, the defenders have chiefly focused their arguments on the reliability of the apostles as

historical witnesses. The argument from history hardly takes up a full paragraph in Luther's exposition of I Corinthians 15.⁷ Unlike current discussions there is no prolonged debate about the nature of history and historical reliability and whether or not the apostolic testimony, since it is allegedly biased, qualifies as history according to modern understanding. Luther's comparative lack of concern for a detailed historical argument is all the more astonishing since St. Paul's argument seems to be historical as he lists the witnesses to Christ's resurrection in an almost legal manner. Also noteworthy is Luther's lack of distinction between the appearances of Jesus to those who had been with him before the resurrection (e.g., Peter) and those who had not (e.g., Paul). Any serious debate on the historicity of the resurrection would also — at least it would seem to me — take into consideration the difference between the appearances of Christ during the forty-day period before the ascension and the subsequent Damascus Road appearance. Luther simply does not make the historical distinction here.

B. Scriptural Proof

It is not that Luther totally disregards the argument from history for Christ's resurrection, but he is interested in maintaining the centrality of the Scriptures as the ultimate available source of Christian truth. Even his discussion of the historical reliability of the witnesses of the resurrection is placed within the context of Scriptural prediction. Luther paraphrases Paul in this way, "All of these are, in addition to me, reliable witnesses of what we saw and experienced, carried out as foretold in Scripture".⁸ What impresses Luther is Paul's assertion that Christ "rose in accordance with the Scripture."⁹ The doctrine of the resurrection then gives Luther opportunity to extol Scripture for both its historical reliability and its efficacy. Luther is more interested in St. Paul's phrase that Christ rose in accord with the Scripture than he is in the apostle's careful listing of the historical witnesses. Luther's Scriptural obsession forces him to make quick work of the apostle's chief argument based on history so that he can concentrate on the Scriptures.

Luther interprets Paul's phrase "in accordance with the Scripture" as condemnatory evidence against those who find the Scripture a dead letter and who therefore assert that true power should be found outside of the Scripture in the Holy Spirit. Such an opinion comes directly from the devil. Luther does work with the distinction between the letter and the Spirit. The letter by itself is dead. This much Luther will grant his opponents. The letter,

however, which by itself is dead is the only vehicle through which the Spirit works. It is the deposit of all mysteries.¹⁰ Without the external word there is no working of the Spirit.

At first glance it might appear that Luther has surrendered too much to his opponents in speaking of the possibility of the Scripture's being a dead letter without the Spirit. The Reformer, however, can both condemn and praise (of course, from different perspectives) the use of the Word without the proper intention of those who are using it. Luther wants to avoid any magical use of the Word, as if the mere use of the Word places an obligation upon God to act in the situation where it is used. Even where the Word is used, God still has freedom in determining what its effect in each situation will be. The Word is always efficacious, but God will determine the effect. But God's freedom in his use of the Word to accomplish salvation does not mean that God can accomplish salvation in any way apart from the Word. Quite to the contrary, God's free choice in deciding to be efficacious in each situation is counterbalanced by His decision to act in no place other than in the Word. The Word is the only arena in which God accomplished salvation.

Since the Word provides the boundaries for God's saving activity in bringing men to belief, it must also be the only means of convincing men of the truthfulness of the resurrection of Jesus. Unless Luther's concept of the Word as God's only efficacious means is understood, his concentration on the Word as his chief "proof" for the resurrection seems somewhat unwarranted. Belief in the resurrection is subsumed under his theology of the Word. Here is how Luther presents the matter:

But here you notice how Paul adduces Scripture as his strongest proof, for there is no other enduring way of preserving our doctrine and our faith than the physical or written Word, poured into letters and preached orally by him or others; for here we find it stated clearly; "Scripture! Scripture!"¹¹

To some Luther's approach in presenting the belief that Christ's resurrection is fact as a subcategory of his Word theology may at first glance appear somewhat naïve. We would be hard pressed to name a leading defender of the historicity of the resurrection who would use Luther's argument today. Conservative Christians, committed totally to Luther's view on the Scripture as the God-given and efficacious Word, have seen the value of the historical arguments for Christ's resurrection put forth by those whose views of Scriptural origin and authority may be charitably called

inadequate. Here we can mention the names of Stephen O'Neill, I. Howard Marshall, F.F. Bruce, and even Wolfgang Pannenberg, the father of the school of the theology of history. We even hazard the generalization that in recent times the greatest defense of the historicity of the resurrection has come more from Reformed than Lutheran sources. All this seems strange since Luther associates the denial of the resurrection with the denial of sacramental efficacy. Belief in the resurrection for Luther is tied to accepting the Scriptures in their totality rather than seeing it as a separate act in history capable of proof.

No one can say with any certainty what approach Luther would use were he confronting the historical denial of the resurrection today. He may have adopted an approach more saturated with concerns for historical argumentation. Luther faced a different situation. The secular and religious spheres of knowledge were not divided as they are today. Special categories for religious and secular knowledge were not developed. For him the secular denial of the resurrection was a masked religious question. The resurrection, as well as all doctrine, was being mocked by the high officials of the church. It was not a question debated by secular scholars, as all scholars and universities were Christian. The problem was not that some doctrines were being accepted and others not, but that all doctrines revealed in the Scriptures were ridiculed. The real problem was not that the church leaders had studied the historical arguments and become convinced that the resurrection did not happen, but that they held that nothing of an alleged supernatural origin contained in the Scripture was worthy of their intellectual attention. The scoffers were dressed as Christians. With the Reformed the matter was somewhat different, but the result was the same. They did not treat the Scripture as fable, but by asserting other channels of authoritative operation for the Spirit outside of the Scriptures they were, in effect, asserting that the Scriptural truth was inoperative and ineffectual. The contemporary method of demonstrating the resurrection as historical fact from the Scriptures understood not as divine word, but as historical documents, considered as having the same or more reliability than other human documents, probably would have been strange to Luther. It does not seem as if Luther would have handled the resurrection as a purely historical act outside and apart from God's total revelation through His prophets and apostles.

C. The Resurrection and the Totality of Christian Doctrine

Whether or not Luther would have handled the resurrection of Jesus as an isolated historical event apart from its place in the totality of Christian revelation is open for debate. Like contemporary defenders of the historicity of the resurrection, he does see Christ's resurrection as the doctrine basic for all other doctrines:

Paul stakes everything on the basic factor with which he began, namely, that Christ arose from the dead. This is the chief article of the Christian doctrine. No one who at all claims to be a Christian or a preacher of the Gospel may deny that.¹²

The term "chief article" is generally reserved for the doctrine of justification. Both resurrection and justification can lay claim to being the chief. Resurrection holds the honor so far as the truth content and value of Christianity is concerned; justification, so far as the personal appropriation and assurance of salvation is concerned. In Bultmann's theology this relationship is reversed, so that justification becomes the basis for the apprehension of Christian truth and resurrection becomes the personal, existential awareness of faith. Resurrection is understood as justification, and thus the two are confused.

At this point it would seem (at least, according to our reasoning) that Luther should attempt to establish some type of historical proof for the resurrection of Jesus. By laying down such proof the scaffolding of the Christian doctrine would be secured. As mentioned previously, while Luther does see the resurrection as historical, he does not use historical arguments on which to build the structure of the Christian religion.

Here is how Luther proves the resurrection of Christ within the totality of Christianity: (1) The resurrection is the one doctrine which is absolutely necessary for Christianity. (2) You are Christian or you want to be Christian. (3) Therefore, you must adhere to the doctrine of the resurrection. Let Luther speak for himself at this point:

And since every Christian must believe and confess that Christ has risen from the dead, it is easy to persuade him to accept the resurrection of the dead; or he must deny in a lump the Gospel and everything that is proclaimed of Christ and of God. For all of this is linked together like a chain, and if one article of faith stands, they all stand.¹³

As Luther himself will note, this argumentation for the resurrec-

tion of the dead is intended for Christians and not for unbelievers. Apart from a word of revelation accepted in faith, the resurrection is contrary to how reason interprets experience. Luther sees that the Christian has a vital stake in the benefits of Christianity; and any denial of Christian doctrine, especially the resurrection of the dead, can mean the end of Christianity. Luther argues from the conclusion to the premises of the argument. Thus, his point is not this: if you believe in the resurrection, you will believe in forgiveness. Rather, his argument is this: since you believe in forgiveness, why would you want to destroy it by not believing in the resurrection?

III. The General Resurrection

A. The Resurrection as Necessary for Christianity

Luther, putting himself in the shoes of a non-Christian, is quite critical of Paul's argument that Christ's resurrection is sufficient proof for the truthfulness of the doctrine of the general resurrection. It would have no validity in court. Luther calls this begging the question.¹⁴ The resurrection of the dead is not proven by asserting the resurrection of Christ. Even proving the resurrection of Christ as historical fact does not prove that anyone else will rise from the dead. Arguing from the particular to the universal is not valid, in Luther's opinion.¹⁵

What then is the value of Paul's argumentation on the resurrection? It is not intended for those who have not become acquainted with Christianity but for those who are Christian because they have accepted the apostolic message as it was delivered to them as true. If the resurrection is denied, the Word of which the resurrection message is a part must also be denied. The denial of the Word, in turn, means denying the truthfulness of the apostles and of God, whose authorization the apostle claims. Questioning God's veracity is, for Luther, questioning His existence.¹⁶ The proof for resurrection is an all-or-nothing argument. Christianity cannot be accepted in pieces. Belief in Christianity without the resurrection is impossible:

For whoever denies God and His Word, His Baptism and Gospel, will not find it hard to deny the resurrection of the dead as well. If you dare to say that God is not God and that the apostles and Christendom do not teach and believe correctly, it is easy for you — and nothing seems better — to knock the whole bottom out of the barrel and say that there is no resurrection, neither heaven nor hell, neither devil nor

death, no sin, etc. For what will you believe if you do not believe that God is something?¹⁷

B. The Resurrection, the Existence of God, and the Totality of Revelation

Thus, basic to Luther's argumentation for the resurrection is the existence of God Himself. In reverse it would appear in this way: The existence of God is true. This true God appoints men designated as apostles who proclaim the truthfulness of God's existence. They also proclaim the resurrection. Therefore, the resurrection is as true as God is.

Luther's argumentation for the resurrection seems inadequate on historical grounds to those who do not share what for him was assured *a priori* — that God exists. The current historical arguments, which have their origin in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, are presented with no *a priori* assumption, especially God's existence. God is not denied, but His existence plays no necessary part in the quest for the truth. The resurrection is proven as bare historical fact, from which some may go on to establish Christianity, including God's existence. However, the question must be asked whether the resurrection of Jesus as bare historical fact without prior belief in God establishes anything clear. Luther starts off with God and concludes with the resurrection. Pannenberg, on the other hand, starts off with history as a given, proceeds to the question of the resurrection as history, and concludes with the possibility of God's existence. The resurrection as bare historical fact without interpretation, as Pannenberg holds, is useless for religion and man's existence. It can create awe and wonder; but can it create much else? Luther's avoidance of the bare historical argument may, in the end, prove to be the best possible course of action.

While with Luther there is the strong concern that denial of one Christian doctrine can have grave consequences for the rest of doctrine, there is the positive result of seeing revelation as totality. God's revelation of Himself as gracious necessarily implies a total revelation including resurrection. Therefore, Luther confidently holds that Adam was given a revelation of the resurrection in Genesis 3:15 in the promise that the woman's Seed would crush the serpent's head. God does not simply reveal that He exists, but He reveals Himself as one who accomplishes man's salvation in Christ and perfects this salvation in the general resurrection from the dead.¹⁸

Thus the real proofs for the resurrection are not historical facts

which are left to human interpretation, but rather the existence of God Himself:

Thus if you can believe that God is God, you must also not doubt that you will rise from the dead after this life; for if you were to stay underground, God would first have to become a liar and not be God. But if it is true that God cannot lie or deny or abandon His deity, this article, too, must become true. It is as certain before God as if the resurrection had already taken place, even though present appearances belie this, with men lying under the ground, stinking like a rotting carcass, and consumed by maggots and worms.¹⁹

Luther's argumentation for the resurrection moves from the question of God's existence to an accomplished certainty. While it might appear that he has taken "a leap of faith" for which there is no real evidence, his procedure is logical when it is realized that he has taken the argument for the resurrection from the nature of God. Since discussion of the resurrection is really an extension of discussion of God, it follows that the resurrection is no longer a future possibility but has already become an accomplished fact in the sight of God. Since the resurrection has been accomplished in the sight of God, the Christian's hope in the resurrection is not so much a hope of what God will do as it is confidence in what God already has accomplished. Faith in God and hope in the resurrection as future events are merged when the Christian by faith begins to share God's perspective. Since Luther sees the resurrection as a theological (in the narrow sense) issue, his minimal concern with historical questions is understandable. Luther's understanding of the resurrection as a theological issue does not, however, prevent him from seeing it as Christological.

IV. Resurrection, *Christus Victor*, and *Anfechtungen*

About a generation ago the English translation of Gustav Aulen's *Christus Victor* added a new — and to Lutherans, at first, frightening — dimension to the understanding of the atonement. Aulen attempted by reference to the early church fathers, the Scriptures, and especially Luther to champion a triumphal view of the atonement to the exclusion of satisfactional and moral views (i.e., that Christ paid a price for man's sin and that He left us an example). Confessionally-oriented Lutherans became so alarmed that they not only strongly emphasized the vicarious satisfaction as the central theme of the atonement but recognized it as virtually synonymous with it. Aulen's view was not new. He simply made an old view new for the twentieth century. His

exaggeration was clearly false. Regardless of his motives, he did call attention to a *Christus Victor* theme in Luther's theology. In Luther's theology *Anfechtungen*, resurrection, and the *Christus Victor* motif form an organic unit. Studying these topics together shows the unity of Luther's thought.

A. *Anfechtungen and Resurrection Belief*

Luther discusses *Anfechtungen* in connection with St. Paul's thought that Christians are the most pitiable of all men if, indeed, Christ has not been raised from the dead (I Corinthians 15:19). For it is on account of his belief that the Christian suffers at the hands of the world:

The world is so hostile to us; it begrudges us our very life on earth. Daily we must be prepared for the worst that the devil and the world can inflict on us. In the face of this, who would be stupid enough to be a Christian if there is nothing to a future life?²⁰

But Luther does not see the world's scorn and persecution as the chief affliction. These are called child's play.²¹ The real grief which the Christian endures for the sake of the bliss of the afterlife is internal *Anfechtungen*. Here the *Anfechtungen* are identified as the fear caused by God's wrath, eternal death, and becoming partners with Satan.

Perhaps it is debatable whether Paul was referring to Luther's idea of *Anfechtungen* or simply to external miseries as the reason why Christians should be pitied if there is, indeed, no resurrection from the dead. However, it is clear that Luther understands his *Anfechtungen* as the price which he must pay to be a Christian and to believe in the resurrection and to share its benefits. The *Anfechtungen* suffered by Luther in connection with his belief in the resurrection relate to the thought that believers have the certainty of the future life and the resurrection, while unbelievers await judgment and eternal fire.²² The Christian struggles because in his *Anfechtungen* he places himself with unbelievers and experiences God's wrath:

[The Christian] must always worry that he has angered God and merited hell, although he may be pious and well practiced in faith. For such thoughts will not cease; rather, they are felt more and more and always become stronger than good thoughts.²³

The heathen, in contrast, goes to his death as if he were an animal, with no thoughts of judgment and wrath.²⁴

B. *Anfechtungen as the Common Experience of Believers*

Luther has a place for a discussion on the *Anfechtungen* in connection with the resurrection because the *Anfechtungen* were part of Christ's suffering and were the necessary prelude to His own resurrection. As Christ's resurrection released Him from His *Anfechtungen*, so Christians will be released from their *Anfechtungen* through the appropriation of Christ's atonement, and the Christian's sufferings in his *Anfechtungen* are of the same type, "anguish and the fear of hell." Since the *Anfechtungen* were experienced by Christ, they become proofs to the Christian that he really belongs to Christ. Let Luther speak for himself here:

However, you must fend this [*Anfechtung*] off and cling with a firm faith to the fact that your Christ has risen from the dead. He, too, suffered such anguish and fear of hell [i.e., the type suffered by Christians now], but through His resurrection He has overcome all. Therefore, even though I am a sinner and deserving of death and hell, this shall nonetheless be my consolation and my victory that my Lord Jesus lives and has risen so that He, in the end, might rescue me from sin, death, and hell.²⁵

Luther calls these *Anfechtungen* "a reliable sign" to the believer of his Christianity.²⁶

While there is no suggestion in Luther's thought that the *Anfechtungen* of the Christian have any contributory value in the atonement, it does become clear that the Christian knows in a personal and direct way, not merely in an intellectual way, the sufferings endured by Christ in His atonement. The sufferings of Christ and Christians may differ in their intensity but not qualitatively. While justification is attributed to the Christian in a forensic sense, Christ's sufferings are shared personally by the Christians because Christ and the Christians are organically one. Since the Christian is part of the spiritual body of Christ, he *must* suffer not only *like*, but more importantly *with* Christ. In the experience of the *Anfechtungen*, the Christian is unified with Christ. Just as the Christian has no real freedom to avoid suffering, since he is one with Christ, so Satan is also without freedom in bringing this internal affliction into the Christian life. Luther says, "For all of this misery and grief arise because of Christ. It is due to the fact that the devil is hostile to Him and to His Word and to His rule, to Baptism, and to all of Christendom."²⁷

At this point Luther is ready to make the connection of the

Anfechtungen and the resurrection with the *Christus Victor* theme. The *Christus Victor* theme concentrates on Christ's saving work as a struggle with Satan. The struggle is brought to a satisfactory conclusion for Christ through His own resurrection. The Christian finds himself in two places, both within the struggle itself and within the victory provided in Christ's resurrection. Because of the double dimension, the Christian suffers even a further conflict. Within the struggles of the *Anfechtungen*, not only does salvation seem uncertain, but hell, association with Satan, and eternal damnation appear as the overarching realities; however, in Christ who has already risen from the dead, the Christian also knows personally through faith victory over the *Anfechtungen*. Since he is incorporated in Christ, he in God's view has already risen from the dead with Christ. With God the victory of the resurrection is already a certainty. As Christ is the cause of the Christian's suffering, He is also the cause of his release from suffering through glorification by resurrection. The resurrection is not a mere possibility but a reality for the Christian in his *Anfechtungen*, since Christ Himself was already relieved of His *Anfechtungen* in His resurrection.

Just as Luther can describe Christ's atoning suffering and the Christian's personal suffering by virtually the same language, so the same picturesque language used by Luther in putting forth the *Christus Victor* concept is used in describing the Christian's personal victory through resurrection. Luther is not content merely to say with St. Paul that Christ died and rose; he paints a magnificently gory picture borrowing language of the ancient church:

But [Christ] came forth alive from the grave in which He lay and destroyed and consumed both devil and death, who had devoured Him. He tore the devil's belly and hell's jaws asunder and ascended into heaven, where He is now seated in eternal life and glory.²⁸

It is obvious that Luther here is using the ancient church's description of Christ's death according to the hook-and-worm image. The hook is the divine nature and the worm the human nature. Satan, like a fish, devours both and is destroyed. Luther exhausts the imagery by referring to Satan's torn belly and ruptured jaw, a picture appreciated by any fisherman.

What is noteworthy is Luther's projection of the *Christus Victor* imagery into the Christian's personal victory in the *Anfechtungen*. (It might be called the "stomach imagery.") In the face of the *Anfechtungen* Christians can definitely and tri-

umphantly say to Satan,

Therefore devour us if you can, or hurl us into the jaws of death, you will soon see and feel what you have done. We, in turn, will create such a great disturbance in your belly and make such an egress through your ribs that you will wish you had rather devoured a tower, yes, an entire forest.²⁹

C. *The Relationship of Christ's and the Christian's Resurrection*

Luther's connection between the *Christus Victor* concept and the Christian's personal triumph over Satan comes in his discussion of Christ's being the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (I Corinthians 15:20). Thus Christ's resurrection is not an isolated event occurring only to one person in history, but a cosmic event:

And what is more than that, calling Christ "the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep," Paul wishes to signify that the resurrection is to be viewed and understood as having already begun in Christ, indeed, as being more than half finished . . .³⁰

Luther takes total advantage of Paul's imagery of the church as Christ's body. Where the Head has gone, the body must also follow. Now since the Head is seated at God's right hand and has conquered death and the devil and whatever else causes the *Angehtungen*, the Christian no longer has any need to be concerned. It seems that the combined imagery of "Head" and "Firstfruits" suggests to Luther a birth in which the child's head comes out before the body: "As in the birth of man and of all animals, the head naturally appears first, and after this is born, the whole body naturally follows."³¹ Suddenly from this perspective all that terrified the Christian previously, the *Anfechtungen*, is now viewed as positive benefit.

D. *Adam-Christ Imagery and Resurrection*

Christ's resurrection has the same efficacy for the resurrection of all men as Adam's sin had for the death of all men.³² Luther injects the thought that the general resurrection will involve the judgment of unbelievers, who will have little reason to rejoice in it.³³ Luther does, however, point out that Paul does not handle this matter but refers only to the resurrection of Christians. Luther has taken this concept over from John's Gospel, which speaks of one resurrection to life and another to damnation. The Christian's victory through resurrection finds its certainty in at least two points in Luther's theology: (1) the unity of the Christian with Christ, who has risen from the dead already, and (2) Christ's

place as the head of all Christians in the same sense that Adam was the head of humanity in bringing sin and death to it.

E. The Resurrection and the Current Anfechtungen

Eschatology is for Luther not something that will happen only in the future, but something already in the process of happening. Faith in the resurrection is not directed to something that God will do in the future but rather to what God is already in the process of doing now. In Christ the resurrection has already begun. This point does not change the fact that today the Christian experiences death and all the other factors that contribute to the horror of his personal *Anfechtungen*. He does not now experience personally the reality of his own resurrection. Luther sees the resurrection of Christ as being effective in the Christian's perspective of life and death now. Special significance is seen in the Pauline language in which Christ is described as raised from the *dead* and the "Firstfruits" of those who have fallen *asleep*. In the first instance the lifeless condition is called *death* and in the second *sleep*. Christ's submitting Himself to what otherwise would have been an eternal death (i.e., a death for which there is no solution) has changed that death into a temporary sleep for Christians:

And so Christians who lie in the ground are no longer dead, but sleepers, people who will surely rise again. For when we say that people are asleep, we refer to those who are lying down but will wake up and rise again, not those who are lying down bereft of all hope of rising again. Of the latter we do not say that they are asleep but that they are inanimate corpses. Therefore by that very word "asleep" Scriptures indicate the future resurrection.³⁴

The resurrection is past, present, and future depending on the perspective from which the words are spoken. Christians view their death as sleeping — they *will* be raised up; hence it is future. They also know of Christ's resurrection as an accomplished fact and already are sharing in His benefits; hence it is past. Since Christ's resurrection is an event of corporate significance, God has already initiated a present activity the processes which will culminate in the final resurrection.

The resurrection of Christians means that the Lord who proved by His resurrection that He was indeed the *Christus Victor* becomes totally operative in the lives of His Christians. This fact means that the *Anfechtungen* can be totally conquered. The *Anfechtungen* can be seen for what they are, temporal and not

eternal realities. The *Anfechtungen* are not God's final Word. Death, wrath, and hell were all real, but not in the sense that they would last forever for Christians. Satan preaches these as eternal realities of God and terrifies all Christians. Christ's resurrection has shown that Satan was still deceiving us all and that the eternal reality for all Christians is life with Christ. By resurrection Christ has shown us that the *Anfechtungen* were only God's masks, behind each of which stood a loving Father drawing us closer to Himself. In conclusion, let the Reformer speak with his own eloquent words:

Behold, thus we must view our treasure and turn away from temporal reality which lies before our eyes and senses. We must not let death and other misfortune, distress, and misery terrify us so. Nor must we regard what the world has and can do, but balance this against what we are and have in Christ. For our confidence is built entirely on the fact that He has arisen and that we have life with Him already and are no longer in the power of death. Therefore let the world be mad and foolish, boasting of and relying on its money and goods; and let the devil rage with his poisonous darts in our conscience; and let him afflict us with all sorts of trouble — against all of this our own defiant boast shall be that Christ is our Firstfruits, that He has initiated the resurrection, that He has burst through the devil's kingdom, through hell and death, that He no longer dies or sleeps but rules and reigns up above eternally, in order to rescue us, too, from this prison and death In the face of this, why should we let the devil terrify us and make us so despondent, even though he comes face to face with us and reaches out to us, as though he would rob us of everything; even though he kills wife and child, torments our heart with all sorts of misery and sorrow and in the end also destroys the body, assuming that he has thereby taken everything away?³⁵

FOOTNOTES

1. Martin Luther, *Commentary on I Corinthians 15*, tr. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther's Works*, 28 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), p. 61.
2. *LW* 28, p. 62.
3. *LW* 28, pp. 69-70.
4. *LW* 28, p. 121.
5. *LW* 28, p. 69.
6. *LW* 28, pp. 69-70.
7. *LW* 28, p. 70.

8. *LW* 25, p. 76.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *LW* 28, p. 77.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *LW* 28, p. 94.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *LW* 28, p. 95.
16. *LW* 28, pp. 95-96.
17. *LW* 28, p. 96.
18. *LW* 28, pp. 97-98.
19. *LW* 28, p. 98.
20. *LW* 28, p. 103.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *LW* 28, p. 104.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *LW* 28, p. 105.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *LW* 28, p. 106.
28. *LW* 28, p. 108.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *LW* 28, p. 110.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *LW* 28, pp. 113-115.
33. *LW* 28, p. 114.
34. *LW* 28, pp. 109-110.
35. *LW* 28, p. 111.

The Influence of the Two Delitzsches on Biblical and Near Eastern Studies

Raymond F. Surburg

The nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth saw the appearance of a father and son on the stage of European Biblical studies both of whom exercised a considerable influence upon the theological and philological thinking of many scholars, pastors, and lay people. They were Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890) and Friedrich Delitzsch (1850-1922).¹ Their lives present many interesting parallels and also exhibit many contrasts relative to their attitude toward Hebrew, the Old Testament, and the New Testament. Both men were also interested in Near Eastern Studies; the son probably contributed more in the arena of Near Eastern studies than did the father, while the latter's literary and teaching efforts were much more important than his son's in the disciplines of Biblical interpretation.

I. Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890)

Franz Delitzsch was born in Leipzig of Jewish parentage.² Despite poverty he studied theology, Hebrew, and rabbinical literature. He was converted to Christianity, specifically, to Lutheranism. His friend Schultz was, humanly speaking, responsible for his conversion, and Delitzsch, after his adoption of the Christian faith, associated intimately with the circle of students who were followers of the Reverend Martin Stephan, many of whom followed the latter to America in 1839. As a result of Delitzsch's associations with this group he soon became an enthusiastic Lutheran and it was for this reason that he declined a call to a Prussian university. Loehe intended to call him as professor to Fort Wayne, Indiana.³ In 1842 Delitzsch became privatdocent at Leipzig. Delitzsch was a voluminous writer throughout his academic career. By 1842 he had already published a number of works. In 1836 he composed *Zur Geschichte der juedischen Poesie* (Leipzig), two years later he published *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judentum* (Grimma), three years after that appeared *Anekdoten zur Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Scholastik unter Juden und Moslemen* (Leipzig), and in 1842 came *Philemon oder das Buch von der Freundschaft in Christo* (Dressen) and *Wer sind die Mystiker?* In 1846 Delitzsch was called to a professorship at Rostock to succeed von Hofmann, and in 1850 he assumed a chair at Erlangen, where he was to be von Hofmann's associate.⁴

The article on "F. Delitzsch" in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* says: "In early life he was a adherent of the theology represented by Hofmann, but his Biblical criticism was freer than Hofmann's hyper-conservative position would allow."⁵

In 1867 Delitzsch became professor at Leipzig, where he labored with Luthardt and Kahnis until his death in 1890. At Leipzig he became acquainted with the school which was developing at the University of Erlangen under the influence of J.C.K. von Hofmann, the father of what came to be known as the *heilsgeschichtliche Schule*. Hofmann developed a hermeneutic which differed from that of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions and the use of this different hermeneutic led to departures from orthodox Lutheran theology. As a result of Delitzsch's association with von Hofmann and others of the Erlangen school, he adopted erroneous views about the Bible and the person of Christ.⁶

Delitzsch established himself as a great scholar and teacher. He wrote on a number of different disciplines. However, his main interest was the field of Old Testament interpretation. In addition to writing commentaries he wrote on Hebrew poetry, on plants, and very early in his career on Lutheranism.⁷ One of the passions of Delitzsch's life was to see in Old Testament studies a confrontation with the Judaism of his time. He founded the "Institutus Judaicus," later called the "Delitzschianum." Here he occupied himself with Jewish literature and culture. It was his burning desire that the middle wall of partition between synagogue and the church should be broken down. No other Protestant theologian ever showed such a concern for a confrontation with Judaism as Delitzsch manifested. Throughout his academic career he wrote books dealing with post-Old Testament Judaism. In 1838 he issued *Wissenschaft, Kunst, Judentum* (Grima) and in 1841 *Anekdoten zur Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Scholastik unter Juden und Moslemen*. No other person was better qualified to translate the Greek New Testament into Hebrew, which appeared as *Die Buecher des Neuen Testaments aus dem Griechischen uebersetzt*, and before his death 70,000 copies of this Hebrew New Testament had been sold. In the interest of this work he wrote a number of tracts and edited *Saat auf Hoffnung*. Of abiding interest is Delitzsch's concern to bring to life the Jewish background of the New Testament writings as he did in such books as *Hillel* (1887), *Handwerkerleben zur Zeit Jesu* (1868; English translation, 1902), and *Ein Tag in Capernaum* (1871).

Franz Delitzsch as a Theologian

In 1839 Delitzsch published a book, *Luthertum und Luegentum* for the three-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. He wrote in the preface:

I confess without shame that in matters of faith I am 300 years behind our time, because I came to see, after wandering a long time in the mazes of error, that the truth is but one, and indeed a truth eternal, immutable, and, since it is revealed by God, in no need of sifting or improvement.⁸

Concerning Holy Writ Delitzsch further asserted:

It alone is the foundation on which the Christian Church bids defiance to the gates of hell, the touchstone distinguishing truth from error, according to which the Church judges but should also be judged . . . The Church is placed over this word not as judge, but as steward, of whom God will demand account.⁹

Delitzsch rebuked those who were misusing and misinterpreting Luther and claiming him as their patron for their interpretation of the Bible. In opposition to them Delitzsch claimed:

Never, however, does Luther by the term "Word of God" understand anything else than the letter of the Holy Scripture, never the inspiration of the inner light, the vagaries of blind reason, or the illusions of the mistaken feeling, but always the written Word, according to the simple sense of the words, according to its clear meaning to the exclusion of all human mediation, falsification, and spiritualization . . .¹⁰

In this same book Delitzsch spoke highly of the Old Lutheran theologians and also advocated what the opponents of Lutheran orthodoxy have termed "repristination theology." Of the Old Lutheran dogmaticians he wrote in this jubilee volume:

These old Lutheran teachers were not merely erudite, but also sanctified theologians, trained in the school of the Holy Spirit, filled with heavenly wisdom, sweet consolation, and a living knowledge of God; God's Word was implanted in their hearts, it was fused with their faith, and turned into sap and strength in them . . .¹¹

Delitzsch appealed to the people of the 1840's to return to the same Word of God in the manner of Jeremiah, who said: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16). He spoke appreciatively of the fact

that the doctrine of justification and the means of grace has been restored to the world through Luther. To this generation Delitzsch appealed to "search the Scriptures: you will find and see that this faith is the Lutheran, the Christian faith, based on the immutable and imperishable Word of the eternal truth. This faith has nothing in common with confused doubt, brooding gloom, and sickly decadence, as many imagine; no, indeed, it produces bright eyes, good cheer, and strong vigor."¹²

Ten years later Delitzsch sent greetings to his American friends of strictly confessional tendencies, renewed his confession to the Lutheran Confessions, and admonished Lutherans to cling to their faith, because in it lay the future of the Lutheran Church. However, from a strictly confessional viewpoint, under the pressure of "scientific science" (to quote C.F.W. Walther) Delitzsch later forsook his own testimony of faith. At one time Walther and F. Delitzsch were great friends, as may be seen from the letter of condolence Delitzsch sent on the occasion of Walther's death in 1887.¹³

Despite this seemingly confessional stance, Delitzsch opposed the idea "of fencing off" theology with the letter of the Formula of Concord, and when his colleague Kahnis was attacked, Delitzsch published a defense of him (1863). In 1863 Delitzsch published his *System der christlichen Apologetik*. After 1850 his confessional Lutheran position deteriorated. He abandoned the inspiration of Holy Scripture. He raised this question: Is it permissible to call Jesus Christ the Lord Sabaoth, the one God, besides whom there is none other? (The reader may consult *Die Allgemeine Ev. Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* of 1884, No. 49.) It is the conviction of Francis Pieper that, by raising this question and answering it negatively, Delitzsch "manifested that his spiritual insight had fallen far below the Christian level, for he actually denied the clear statement of Colossians 2:9. If Delitzsch really followed the implications of his denial, then he thought of the Son of God only as a half-god or third-god. Every form of Subordinationism and modern Kenoticism is nothing less than a relapse into pagan polytheism."¹⁴

Delitzsch came to hold un-Lutheran views on Christ's incarnation in that he deprived the Son of God of the possession of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.¹⁵ Furthermore, his theology was not free from theosophic influences, as is shown in his *System der biblischen Psychologie* (Leipzig: 1855). For those who took offense at his concessions to the modern critical school he wrote *Der tiefe Graben zwischen alte und moderner*

Theologie. Ein Bekenntnis (Leipzig, 1888; second edition, 1890).

Franz Delitzsch as an Exegete

Franz Delitzsch was foremost as an exegete. As already stated he was the author of a number of commentaries. They came from his pen in rapid order — *Habbakkuk* (1843) written while at Rostock, *Genesis* (1852; fifth edition, 1881), *Psalms* (1859-1860; fifth edition, 1894), *Job* (1864; second edition, 1878), *Isaiah* (1866; fourth edition, 1889), *Proverbs* (1873), *Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes* (1875).¹⁶ Together with Carl Friedrich Keil he produced the *Biblischer Kommentar ueber das alte Testament*. This commentary was to be written from the perspective of Lutheran orthodoxy and was to renew the churchly tradition. The critical scholar was to abstain from the use of higher criticism in his commentaries. The facts of revelation were to be the basis for the exegetical comments. However, Delitzsch always presented a careful exegesis based upon thorough grammatical-lexicographical studies.¹⁷ Delitzsch had been a student of Fuerst, a great student of the vocabulary of the Old Testament. Delitzsch stressed the Hebrew idiom. His discussion of grammatical and lexicographical matters is highly instructive.¹⁸ In his early years he desisted from using that type of approach which challenged the statements of the Old Testament books. However, as time went on he yielded to the higher criticism which was promoted by other Old Testament scholars and which was regarded as scientific and scholarly.¹⁹ His later commentaries as well as his revisions of those he had written earlier reflect his change of exegetical methodology, as he endeavored to be in tune with the views that were advocated by scholars who rejected the miracles of the Bible, predictive prophecy, and the inerrancy of the Bible. The article on Delitzsch in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* claims that his Old Testament commentaries were some of the best ever produced in Germany. In the earlier editions they show the influence of von Hofmann, but in his *Commentary on Hebrews* (Leipzig, 1857) he defended the Old Protestant doctrine of the atonement.²⁰

In his first edition of the *Genesis* commentary he considered the book a unity. As time went on he changed his position and adopted one of the forms of what later was known as the Final Documentary Hypothesis. Delitzsch saw two different historical traditions in *Genesis*, an Elohist *Grundschrift* ("foundational document") and a Yahwistic source. The first, he claimed, had its origin in the days of Moses, and the second had its origin in the

days of Joshua. He espoused the Supplementary Hypothesis which Tuch had advocated. This early dating of supposed sources of the Pentateuch was surrendered by him in later additions to the Genesis commentary. When J. Wellhausen was setting forth his devastating views, Delitzsch again revised his Genesis Commentary.

It appears that Delitzsch was constantly changing his views from commentary to commentary, depending on the views current at the time of the issuing of a commentary. Hans Joachim Kraus asserted that it is not easy to give a presentation of Delitzsch as an exegete, because he changed his views from commentary to commentary.²¹ It was especially in regard to *Psalms*, *Isaiah* and *Genesis* that Old Testament men who have adopted a historical-critical methodology have spoken favorably of Delitzsch's exegetical efforts. However, Keil and those Lutheran scholars who rejected the presuppositions and the conclusions of nineteenth-century higher criticism opposed Delitzsch's changing views. Keil refused to accept in any way the Documentary Hypothesis, nor would he countenance the theory of a multiple authorship of the Book of Isaiah.

Relative to Genesis 1:2, Delitzsch (like Kurtz, Rudelbach, and Guericke) taught that *tohu* and *bohu* denoted the remains of an earlier world which perished when some of the angels fell and that the creation described in Genesis 1 was merely a restitution of a prior creation,²² a view for which there is no Biblical evidence whatsoever.²³ In dealing with Genesis 6:1-3 Delitzsch supported the view advocated by Kurtz, in his book *Die Ehen der Soehne Gottes mit den Töchtern des Menschen* (1857), that angels married women. This interpretation contradicts the statement of Christ that angels do not marry nor are they given in marriage.

Delitzsch rejected the concept of the Messiah as the central theme controlling the Old Testament. He claimed that the concept of God's rule was the organizing theme of the Old Testament.²⁴ Delitzsch did consider the Old Testament Messianic prophecies important, although here also he was not as conservative as other Lutheran scholars. In the summer of 1887 Delitzsch delivered his lectures on Messianic prophecies. In his preface, written shortly before his death, to the second edition of these lectures he wrote as follows:

... I sought to put the product of my long scientific investigation into as brief, attractive, and suggestive a form as possible. At the same time the wish inspired me to leave as a

legacy to the *Institutum Judaicum* the compendium of a *concordia fidei*, to our missionaries a *vademecum*.²⁵

Delitzsch states that, in dealing with the prophecies of the Messiah according to chronological succession, critical questions should not be ignored.²⁶ He did assert his belief in the supernatural and in some form of predictive prophecy. Delitzsch employed the term "Messianic" in both a wider and narrower sense. Genesis 3:15 he interpreted as being the Protevangelium, and he stated that it was not to be understood as merely announcing that there would be a struggle of the snake and its descendants with mankind.²⁷

Delitzsch discussed the great trilogy of Messianic texts in Isaiah's chapters 7, 9, and 11. He translated *almah* as virgin but also claimed that the prophecy of Immanuel's birth would be fulfilled in Assyrian times:

The birth of this Immanuel is the *oth* (sign) worked by God which takes the place of the sign which Ahaz declined to ask. The meeting of Isaiah with Ahaz occurred about the year 734 B.C., and it is impossible that the sign can first have been realized after seven centuries; the birth of Immanuel is in the view of the prophet a fact of the immediate future . . .

Delitzsch thus espoused what one might call a typical understanding or that of double fulfillment — contrary to orthodox Lutheran hermeneutical principles. He likewise wrote about Isaiah 7:14:

Those who think that Immanuel, because he was a child of the Assyrian time of judgment, could not be the Messiah, fail to recognize the law of perspective shortening to which all prophecy, even that concerning Jesus Christ Himself in the Gospels, is subject.

For Delitzsch, then, it was only in an indirect way that Isaiah predicted the virginal conception and birth of Jesus. It was Delitzsch's hope, however, that his discussion of these Isaianic verses might lead the Jews to Christ and that they would accept Jesus' claims to be the fulfiller of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies.

Franz Delitzsch as a Textual Critic

Delitzsch was interested in the textual criticism of the Old Testament's Hebrew and Aramaic text. In 1886 he published *Fortgesetzte Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der kompli-*

tenischen Polyglotte. Between 1861 and 1897 he, together with S. Baer, edited an edition of the Old Testament, with the exception of Exodus-Deuteronomy. Paul Kahle thought, however, that Delitzsch placed too much confidence in the textual efforts of Baer.

Delitzsch was, then, a very competent scholar who was held in great esteem, as may be seen from the title "the venerable" bestowed upon him by students and colleagues. Kraeling asserted about Franz Delitzsch that he "was one of the foremost exegetes of the nineteenth century."²⁸

II. Friedrich Delitzsch (1850-1920)

Friedrich Delitzsch was the son of Franz Delitzsch. He was born in Erlangen on September 3, 1850, and in his home Friedrich received an orthodox Lutheran religious education. Like his father he was educated at the University of Leipzig. He received his doctorate for work in Sanskrit. He studied Assyriology under E. Schrader in Jena from 1873 to 1874. His academic career spanned service at three German universities, those of Leipzig, Breslau, and Berlin. He taught Assyriology from 1874 to 1893 in Leipzig, in Breslau from 1893-1899, in Berlin from 1899 to 1920.²⁹

Friedrich Delitzsch won fame as an Assyriologist and as a teacher of men who developed the young science of Assyriology. His books for his students laid the groundwork for a much-needed systematic approach to the Assyrian and Babylonian languages, now commonly called Accadian. He was also a pioneer in the discipline of Sumerology. Delitzsch wrote numerous scientific treatises on other Semitic languages and on Oriental geography and religion. After a number of British scholars had succeeded in deciphering Assyrian-Babylonian and were able to read some of its inscriptions rather correctly, it was Delitzsch who helped develop the new science of Assyriology and placed it upon a sound philological basis.³⁰ In fact, Delitzsch has been called the real founder of the science of Assyriology. He trained some of the greatest Assyriologists which Germany has produced. We refer to men like Heinrich Zimmern (1862-1931), who worked at Leipzig; Peter Jensen (1861-1936), who taught and did research at Marburg; Fritz Hommel (1854-1938) at Muenster; and Paul Haupt (1858-1926), who taught at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, where W.F. Albright received his training. American scholars who received their training under Delitzsch were Hilprecht of the University of Pennsylvania and

R.F. Harper, who later became president of the University of Chicago.

Besides teaching, Delitzsch published textbooks for his students and other scholarly works. His grammars, chrestomathies, and dictionaries went through a number of editions. *Assyrische Lesestuecke* (ninth edition, 1899; English translation, 1899), *Assyrische Grammatik* (1889, English translation, 1899) *Assyrisches Handwoerterbuch zur gesammten bisher veroeffentlichen Keilschriftliteratur* (3 parts, 1887-90), *Grundzuege der Sumerischen Grammatik* (1913). In 1884 he wrote a treatise on *Die Sprache der Kossaer* (Leipzig) and in 1896 a discussion of the origin of cuneiform writing, *Die Entstehung des aeltesten Schriftsystems order der Ursprung der Keilschriftzeichen*. In 1891 he authored a history of Babylonia, appearing in German as *Geschichte Babyloniens und Assyriens* (Calwer Verlag). With Paul Haupt he edited the *Assyriologische Bibliothek* (Leipzig, 1881ff.) and *Beitraege zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (1889ff.).³¹

Friedrich Delitzsch as Biblical Scholar

While most of Delitzsch's labors dealt with Assyriology and related fields, he was also interested in the Old Testament and theology. In 1881 Delitzsch published his study *Wo Lag das Paradies?* Many theories and books have been written on the original location of Paradise. He favored Babylonia and indentified the four rivers which flowed out of Eden with the Euphrates, the Tigris, and two Babylonian canals.³²

Twice in his lifetime Delitzsch caused a stir that had widespread repercussions. His lectures delivered at Berlin in the presence of the German emperor caused quite a stir when delivered and when they appeared in print as *Babel und Bibel* (1902-1903). The Christian world was upset by them because he claimed that the Old Testament was dependent on Babylonia for its distinctive ideas and religious values.³³ As a result of excavations in the Mesopotamian valley and the decipherment of religious texts, a school of interpretation sprang up especially in Germany which claimed that the prototypes for much of the Old Testament were to be found in the Sumerian and Babylonian literatures. Clements has called it the "Bibel-Babel" controversy, which held the attention of people between 1902 and 1914.³⁴ This controversy was a sharply conducted debate over the question of traces of Babylonian mythology in the Old Testament which

began with a lecture given by Friedrich Delitzsch before the German Oriental Society in the presence of Kaiser Wilhelm.

Delitzsch's Bibel-Babel views were a part of a movement sponsored by Hugo Winckler, "who maintained that a unified system of thought, embodying the conceptions of the ancient Babylonians about the nature of the universe and man's place in it, has been the common property of all people in the ancient Orient from early times."³⁵ It was Winckler's contention that many conceptions in the Old Testament had been derived from this system of ideas. The "pan-Babylonian" theory which Delitzsch helped to fire did not have many advocates, and this school of thought did not survive long. Later on it was the Egyptologists who made similar alleged claims about the influence of Egyptian ideas upon the Old Testament. Since 1929 Ugaritic specialists have been asserting the same claims for the influence of the Ugaritic language and Canaanite conceptions on Old Testament language and religion.

Delitzsch's Attack upon the Old Testament

The other work of Friedrich Delitzsch which caused a sensation in church circles was his two-volume attack upon the Old Testament called *Die grosse Tauschung* ("The Great Deception").³⁶ The purpose of this two-volume work was to "show with strong arguments why the Old Testament is unfit to be used as normative Scriptures by the Christian Church." These books were intended for lay people who were favorably inclined toward the critical approach to the Old Testament. The charges made against the Old Testament in these two books shocked many Christian people when they read the denigrating statements about the Old Testament, which was considered the Word of God by Jesus, Paul, and the other New Testament authors.

What led Delitzsch to make such an attack upon the Bible of Judaism by one who had Jewish blood coursing through his veins? As a child and young man he had received an orthodox Lutheran training in Christianity, and his childhood and adolescent training had inculcated in him a high respect for both the Old and New Testaments. The truth is that it was his university training which was responsible for shaking his faith and which ultimately caused him to hold an extremely low view of three-fourths of the Bible. His faith was singularly shaken in a course taken at Leipzig dealing with the Book of Deuteronomy. The professor explicated the view that this Mosaic book was not

written by Moses, but actually was a document which came from the time of Josiah, written by a school of writers known as the Deuteronomists in the sixth century B.C. After Delitzsch heard and accepted these views, he exclaimed: "Then Deuteronomy is a falsification!" When the professor heard the young Delitzsch blurt this out, he exclaimed: "For God's sake! That may be true, but one must not say such a thing." At that time it was still possible to charge professors with heresy, and so higher-critical teachers needed to state things circumspectly. As a result of that course, the desire and resolve was born in Friedrich Delitzsch to unmask the deceptions he believed were found in the Old Testament.

Delitzsch, therefore, embarked upon a vicious and slanderous attack upon the Old Testament, a book which his father prized so highly and loved so much. In endeavoring to show the deceptions of the Old Testament, he deliberately chose episodes which Kraeling claimed had great difficulties associated with them and with which most people, who did not read the Old Testament, were unacquainted.³⁷ Thus Delitzsch claimed that Jericho fell through the treachery of a bribed harlot who admitted the Israelites into the city. What an indictment of the morals of the Israelites! — thus argued Delitzsch. The taking of the city of Jericho as described in Joshua 6 he claimed was simply ridiculous and impossible. He had a field day ridiculing Old Testament narratives, and he summarized his first folume by asserting that "the Old Testament" was full of deceptions of all kinds — a veritable hodge-podge of erroneous, incredible, undependable figures, including those of biblical chronology; a veritable labyrinth of betrayals, of misleading reworkings, revisions, and transpositions, and, therefore, of anachronisms; a constant intermixture of contradictory particulars and whole stories, unhistorical inventions, legends, folk-tales — in short, a book full of intentional and unintentional deceptions (in part, self-deceptions), a very dangerous book in the use of which the greatest care is necessary."³⁸ According to Delitzsch, the only value of the Old Testament was as an historical document, a book full of linguistic beauty with helpful archaeological information. However, as a book to be used by Christians it "was a relatively late and very cloudy source, a propaganda document" from Genesis 1 through 2 Chronicles 36.

That this two-volume diatribe should have elicited severe criticism from both Jews and Christians surprised no one. The

Jews accused him of anti-Semitism, although he disclaimed this charge, citing the fact that he supported Jewish students and that he had friends among the Jews. Delitzsch argued that Jesus was not a Jew, but a Galilean, in whose veins the blood of the Cutheans surged, people who had come from the Sumerian plains and thus were not Jews. He also endeavored to support the alleged non-Jewish ancestry of Jesus by an appeal to His supposedly non-Jewish mental outlook. Jesus sponsored a broad universalism and humanitarian outlook which Delitzsch claimed stood in sharp contrast to Jewish particularism. Delitzsch could find no bridge between the Old Testament and Jesus' mentality. The son of Franz Delitzsch contended that Christianity is an absolutely new religion, totally distinct from that of the Old Testament. Kraeling, in describing the views of Delitzsch reflected in volume 2 of *The Great Deception*, wrote:

How monstrous from the standpoint of Christianity that the all-wise God should have chosen as His favorite people one that was to crucify the Son of God and entertain for Him and for Christianity such a deadly hate through all generations.³⁹

Delitzsch suggested that the study of the Old Testament should be abolished as a branch of theological studies. It would be better, if one insisted on teaching theological students the contents of the Old Testament, to have it taught as part of Oriental studies and the history of religion, and then taught by competent scholars, who naturally would be committed to the historical-critical approach to the Old Testament. Delitzsch claimed that it was a waste of time for theological students to study Hebrew. A course in Hebrew literature, history, and religion would suffice for the training of future Protestant pastors. The New Testament should be studied without consulting the Old Testament, and teachers should teach New Testament courses in such a way as to show students the errors of Jewish evangelists who found Christ foretold in the Old Testament. Delitzsch argued for freeing the New Testament from the embrace of the Old Testament and further recommended that Jesus' teaching should be reduced to its original purity for the blessing of the Christian church. The views of Delitzsch on the Old Testament were similar to those of his famous contemporary, Adolph von Harnack, who taught that the use of the Old Testament in the Christian church had done irreparable harm to the latter.⁴⁰

*Delitzsch's Interest in the Old Testament
as a Literary Production*

Although he advised Christian students that it was not necessary to study the Old Testament in preparation for their task of proclaiming the teachings of the Bible, Delitzsch himself made an intensive study of the Hebrew Old Testament. In 1883 he published *The Hebrew Language Viewed in the Light of Assyrian Research* and, three years later, *Prolegomenon eines neuen hebraischen-aramaeischen Woerterbuch zum Alten Testament*, showing the preparation he made for a Hebrew lexicon on which he spent many years and which was ready for publication but was never printed by any publishing firm, a development Kraeling called "poetic justice."⁴¹ In 1920 Delitzsch published his *Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament*, which was intended as an aid to the lexicon and grammar and to lectures on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. He claimed that he had gathered these observations while working on his never-published lexicon. It was Delitzsch's contention that the Hebrew Old Testament text was replete with all kinds of errors,⁴² which he attempted to classify in this 160-page book. He did not think very highly of the scribes of the Talmudic period (c. 135-500 A.D.) or of the Massoretes (500-1000 A.D.), who studied the text very carefully and who were meticulous in their copying of the sacred text.

Although Delitzsch's Old Testament views were hostile to the Old Testament, in his evaluation of Delitzsch's position Kraeling appears to be sympathetic to the former's contribution to the Old Testament studies. Kraeling claimed that, if one eliminated the anti-Semitism and the charges that the Old Testament contains deceptions, Delitzsch made people aware of the limitations of the Old Testament. In Kraeling's opinion pious Christians have read the objectionable Biblical stories in a daze. The Union Seminary professor averred: "This has doubtless been seriously detrimental to the moral sense of Christendom. The constant uncritical acceptance of the most monstrous contradictions in the record, furthermore, has helped to lull people's critical faculties. If the church was shaken by having it said, it well deserved to be."⁴³ Kraeling further opined that Delitzsch had rendered a great service to Christianity by showing that Christians would have to find a better basis for retaining the Old Testament in its religious program. The Jewish traditionalism of the New Testament writers could no longer be defended. According to Kraeling Delitzsch showed the impossibility of the old orthodox views concerning the Old Testament which, says he, no enlightened

person would now wish to defend.⁴⁴

Both Delitzsch and Kraeling, brought up originally as Lutherans, as higher critics rejected the reliability of the Bible; both refused to acknowledge that either testament is the Word of God. The inerrancy of the Scriptures is anathema to both. Since the Bible is for them a human book with all the limitations one associates with human productions, it is only a matter of degree to which a given writer will go in his unfavorable treatment of the Old Testament. Neither Delitzsch or Kraeling have an adequate view of the value or the purpose of the Old Testament Scriptures. Their opinions of the New Testament are also unsatisfactory.

III. Father and Son Contrasted

What a contrast the two Delitzsches represent! The father held the Old Testament in the highest esteem as a part of God's revelation to mankind. The father found Christ foretold and foreshadowed in the Old Testament; the son rejected Messianic prediction completely. The father was a Christian believer; the son was an apostate. The father made positive and worthwhile contributions to Old Testament studies, especially in the period before he constantly had to change his views to be relevant to the latest fads of Old Testament scholarship. The son helped to rob believing Christians of their faith in the trustworthiness of the Bible — both the Old Testament and also the New Testament (because of the manner in which the New Testament writers used the Old Testament).

The father, Franz Delitzsch, made worthwhile contributions to Biblical studies. He was interested in Jewish evangelism. His appreciation of the New Testament for the correct interpretation of the Old Testament was a worthwhile viewpoint. From an orthodox viewpoint, however, his capitulation to rationalism and his bowing before the "golden calf" of higher criticism somewhat diminished his ultimate contribution. The son, Friedrich Delitzsch, made significant contributions to Near Eastern studies, but unfortunately employed his Assyriological knowledge to attack the Old Testament.

FOOTNOTES

1. E. Kutsch, "Delitzsch, Franz," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3. voellige neubearbeite Auflage, II, pp.74-75; Emil C. Kraeling, "Delitzsch, Franz," *Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia* (1971), VII, p. 205a.
2. George J. Fritschel, "Delitzsch, Dr. Franz," *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, edited by H.E. Jacobs and J.A.W. Haas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 153.
3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*
5. Cf. Elgin S. Moyer, *Who Was Who in Church History?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 230.
6. Hans Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-Kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testament* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956), p. 210.
7. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, 205a.
8. Franz Delitzsch, *Luthertum und Luegentum. Ein offenes Bekenntnis beim Reformationsjubilaem der Stadt Leipzig* (Grimm, 1839), as cited by Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I. p. 168.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Pieper, p. 178.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 390.
15. Pieper, II, pp. 105, 292.
16. Kraus, p. 211.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
18. Emil Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 95.
19. Kraus, p. 212.
20. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
21. Kraus, *ibid.*
22. Pieper, I, p. 471.
23. The restitution theory was rejected in the nineteenth century by Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positiva*, edited by C.F.W. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Verlag, 1869), II, p. 83.
24. Franz Delitzsch, *Biblischer Kommentar ueber die Psalmen* (Leipzig: Doerffling und Francke, 1867), pp. 45-452.
25. Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies in Historical Succession*. Translated by Samuel Ives Curtis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), author's preface.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. ix-xii.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
28. Kraeling, "Delitzsch, Franz," *Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*, 1971, VII, 205.
29. I.M. Price, *Beitraege zur Assyriologie*, 102 (1927), pp. i-xi.; H. Zimmern, *Zur deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft*, 77 (1923), pp. 121-129.
30. J. Brinkman, "Delitzsch, Friedrich," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 736.
31. For Friedrich Delitzsch's contribution to Assyriology cf. Wallis Budge, *The Rise and Progress of Assyriology* (London: Martin Hopkinson and Co., 1925), pp. 98, 119, 178, 209, 210, 253, 272-277, 299.; F.M. Th. de Lange, "Assyriologie," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, I, p. 657.; C. Wade Meade, *Road to Babylon: Development of U.S. Assyriology* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 16, 40, 41, 46, 64, 98.
32. Kraus, pp. 274-278; Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, pp. 150-160.
33. Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel* (Leipzig, 1903-1905).
34. Ronald E. Clements, *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation*

- (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 13-14.
35. Robert Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 90.
 36. Friedrich Delitzsch, *Die Grosse Tauschung* (Leipzig, 1920-21), 2 vols. Cf. also Kraus, p. 279.
 37. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151.
 38. Delitzsch, *Die Grosse Tauschung*, p. 52.
 39. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
 40. A. von Harnack, *Marcion*. 2. Auflage, 1924, pp. 127-222.
 41. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
 42. Friedrich Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1920), p. lii.
 43. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

Theological Observer

PREMILLENNIALISM AND THE AUGUSTANA

A study in the "Theological Observer" section of the previous issue ("Post-millennialism and the Augustana," XLVII, pp. 158-162) argued that, contrary to the vagaries of some nominal Lutherans, postmillennialism is excluded by the Augsburg Confession as well as by the subsequent symbols of the Lutheran church. It is dispensational premillennialism, however, that is currently the most vocal form of popular American eschatology; and some have sought to reconcile also this school of chiliasm with Lutheranism on the ground that the sixteenth century confessions do not speak to the distinctive tenets which congealed into dispensationalism in the writings of J.N. Darby (1800-1882) in the nineteenth century. (The distinctions drawn in my previous study between post-millennialism, historic premillennialism, and dispensational premillennialism are assumed in the present case.) In the course of the last four and a half centuries, to be sure, most students of the Lutheran Confessions have understood the third sentence of Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession as a repudiation of all forms of millennialism. This interpretation was not only unanimous during the Age of Orthodoxy, but is maintained by such modern symbolists as Werner Elert. There are scholars, however, who have restricted the scope of the repudiation in question to a few rabble-rousers on the lunatic fringe of sixteenth-century Protestantism.

Even Edmund Schlink follows this line of thought (*Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J.A. Bouman [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961], p. 284, note 15):

This sentence has long experienced various interpretations. Does it reject every kind of chiliasm . . . , or only a coarse, carnal variety as promoted in word and deed by certain Anabaptists under the influence of Jewish ideas. ? Does this condemnation reject Rev. 20, or does it merely reject a brand of chiliasm which contradicts also the Apocalypse, by teaching that the pious will have a world kingdom *before* the resurrection of the dead? Even though the old Lutheran theology generally rejected every kind of chiliasm and understood the millennium (Rev. 20) not as an eschatological event but as a past epoch of church history, it must not be overlooked that the wording of A.C.XVII rejects only a definite perversion of the millennial idea. Plitt rightly observes that "it would be a mistake to turn the point of the last sentence of Article XVII against anything beyond what contemporary history suggested."

By italicizing the word "before" in his third sentence, Schlink is evidently closing the door to the postmillennialists while leaving some room in the house of Lutheranism for at least some "brand" of premillennialism. Two points in this quotation require comment.

For one thing, there can be no serious question of a rejection of Revelation 20 in Augustana XVII. The authors and signitors of the Lutheran Confessions did, to be sure, distinguish between the homolegoumenous books of the New Testament and the antilegomena, including the Revelation to John (cf. Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, tr. Fred Kramer, I [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971], First Topic, Section VI, pp. 168-195; Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, I [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950], pp. 330-338). In actuality, however, almost all of the confessors accepted the apostolicity, and hence the canonicity, of the Apocalypse without reservation. Consequently, Article I of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of

Concord uses Revelation 4:11 to confirm an article of faith (homologoumenous passages being cited first), using the phrase "Scripture testifies" (34). The "book of life" of Revelation 20:15 is thrice equated with Christ in Article XI of the Formula of Concord (Epitome, 7; SD, 13, 25; the manner in which the phrase is quoted, especially in the last citation, shows that the reference is to Rev. 20 as well as to the homologoumenous Phil. 4:3). This figurative understanding of one particular phrase is indicative of the symbolic interpretation which the confessors gave to Revelation 20 in general — in line with the view which, according to the admission of all, had predominated in the church since the time of Augustine. This symbolic interpretation, which sees the present New Testament era as the "millennium" of Revelation 20, arises, indeed, from the Johannine context itself, since, according to its own explicit claim, Revelation 20 is the record of a vision (vs. 1, 4, 11, 12) rather than a prediction in direct terms — even as John previously describes the Book of Revelation generally (1:2; the word *semainoo* is used by John, like some Greek authors, to refer to prediction in a figurative manner; cf. John 12: 33; 18:32; 21:19). For the confessors, then, the point is obviously not the rejection of Revelation 20, but rather the rejection of an unscriptural interpretation of it.

All forms of premillennialism necessarily collide with confessional Lutheranism, therefore, when they make Revelation 20 the fountainhead of millennial doctrine. Indeed, the liberal-minded premillennialist George Eldon Ladd goes so far as to restrict the doctrinal base of the millennium almost exclusively to Revelation 20. He does, to be sure, see in Romans 11:26 an explicit assertion of a future conversion of the Jewish race (perhaps a nation) and in 1 Corinthians 15:23-26 a possible prediction of an interim Kingdom of God ("Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium*, ed. Robert G. Clouse [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977], pp. 27-28, 38-39). Yet he acknowledges: "The strongest objection to millennialism is that this truth is found in only one passage of Scripture — Revelation 20 . . . It is a fact that most of the New Testament writings say nothing about a millennium" (*ibid.*, p. 38). Other premillennialists, especially dispensationalists, would find many more descriptions of the millennium, but Revelation 20 still supplies the basic framework of world history into which the exegete is supposed to fit these other references. Even the postmillennial pseudo-Lutheran Franz Delitzsch made Revelation 20 so central to the understanding of Scripture as to insist "that what the Apocalypse predicts under the definite form of the millennium is the substance of all prophecy, and that no interpretation of prophecy on sound principles is any longer possible from the standpoint of an orthodox anti-chiliasm" (*Isaiah*, tr. James Martin, 2 vols. in 1 [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, rep. 1975], II, p. 492). When Schlink, then, asks of Article XVII:3 of the Augsburg Confession, "Does this condemnation reject Rev. 20 . . . ?" we may respond with a definite negative.

At the same time, however, we cannot affirm the alternative which Schlink offers when he asks of Augustana XVII:3, "or does it merely reject a brand of chiliasm which contradicts also the Apocalypse, by teaching that the pious will have a world kingdom *before* the resurrection of the dead?" If Schlink had phrased the question, "or does it reject chiliasm, which contradicts also the Apocalypse" (using a comma to make the relative clause non-restrictive, so as to modify "chiliasm" generally), then we should readily answer in the affirmative. According to Schlink, however, Augustana XVII:3 "rejects only a definite perversion of the millennial idea" and so can be used to exclude only a "brand of chiliasm" promulgated in "contemporary history," namely, "a course, carnal variety . . . promoted . . . by certain Anabaptists under the influence of Jewish ideas . . ." One may concede, indeed, that the immediate occasion of the

Seventeenth Article of the Augsburg Confession was the activity of men like Melchior Rink and the Augsburg Anabaptist Augustin Bader, who was executed at Stuttgart on March 30, 1530. Inspired by Jews residing in Worms, Bader had expected the millennium to begin on Easter of 1530. Yet the confessors clearly have no intention of restricting the scope of their condemnation of chiliasm to several sixteenth-century fanatics.

For one thing, the statement occurs among the twenty-one doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession, in which the goal was to enunciate the articles of faith in a general (although not completely comprehensive) manner by means of affirmations and condemnations. Thus, the conclusion to the doctrinal articles begins with these words in the Latin form: "This is just about the sum of the doctrine among us." The German form enlarges upon this assertion:

This is just about the sum of the doctrine that is preached and taught in our churches for proper Christian instruction and consolation of consciences — also improvement of believers. Certainly we should not wish to put our own souls and consciences in the gravest peril before God by misusing the divine name or word, nor should we wish to pass on or bequeath to our children and posterity any other teaching than that which agrees with the pure divine word and Christian truth.

Consequently, the condemnations attached to the various doctrinal articles are meant to embrace, not only such "brands" of heterodoxy as may be named, but also all who hold similar views. The German form of Article VIII, for example, ends with the *dammamus*, "Accordingly the Donatists and all others who hold contrary views are condemned," while the Latin text repudiates "the Donatists and others like them." Likewise, Article XVII:2 ("Our churches condemn the Anabaptists who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils" [Latin form]) clearly denounces all universalists, not just Anabaptists.

The following sentence, Article XVII:3, has an equally general scope. The German text, to be sure, speaks of "some Jewish teachings" (*etlich judisch Lehren*) and describes them as including the idea that the godly will "annihilate" (*vertilgen*) all the godless before the resurrection. The Latin form, however, sets the *dammamus* very broadly on "others" (*alios*) — that is, *besides* the Anabaptists, who are mentioned in the previous sentence — and uses "Jewish opinions" (*iudaicas opiniones*) generically to describe all assertions that "before the resurrection of the dead [1] the godly will take possession of the kingdom of the world, [2] the ungodly being everywhere suppressed" (*oppressis*). This terminology comprehends all brands of chiliasm since the phrase "resurrection of the dead" in Augustana XVII refers, not to a resurrection merely of the just (which occurs before the millennium, according to premillennialism), but to a resurrection of "all the dead" (XVII:1), both believers and unbelievers, "on the last day" (German) or "consummation of the world" (Latin). The German translation preserved in Nuremberg of a Latin text predating the official form of the Augustana includes a similarly comprehensive condemnation of chiliasm when it rejects "those who on the basis of Jewish thinking say . . . that before . . . the last judgment the godless will be everywhere suppressed by the saints and that they [i.e., the saints] will bring the temporal government [*das zeitlich Regiment*, i.e., of the world] under their control [*unter sich*]." Interestingly enough, this document repudiates more specifically the idea "that the promise of the conquest of the promised land must be understood literally," a point which is, of course, central also to modern dispensational premillennialism) — namely, that the predictions by the Old Testament prophets of an Israelite reoccupation of Palestine refer to a physical appropriation in a future millennium. (Orthodox Lutheran exegetes would argue, of course, that the

prophets were speaking in figures of the extension of the church through the proclamation of the gospel in the present New Testament era.)

Another proof that the *damnamus* of Augustana XVII:3 encompasses all brands of millennialism is the assumption of the confessors that the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession accord in an obvious manner with the theology of the great doctors of the western church. The conclusion to the doctrinal articles argues in this way: "Since this doctrine is grounded clearly on the Holy Scriptures and is not contrary or opposed to that of the universal Christian church, or even of the Roman church (in so far as one may note this doctrine from the writings of the Fathers), we think that our opponents cannot disagree with us in the articles set forth above" (1, German form). Likewise, the introduction to Articles XXII-XXVIII, "Articles about Matters in Dispute," begins, "From the above it is manifest [*So nun*] that nothing is taught in our churches concerning articles of faith that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures or what is common to the Christian church" (1, German form). The reference to the "writings of the Fathers" would embrace, above all, St. Augustine, to whom appeal is made in Article XVIII (4) and several more times in the Augsburg Confession (XX:13, 26; XXVI:17; XXVII:2, 35). Now, modern millennialists claim such early authors as Tertullian, Lactantius, and even Irenaeus as fellow-chiliasmists, but they admit that Augustine and the post-Augustinian church as a whole was amillennial prior to the Reformation (Charles L. Feinberg, *Millennialism: The Two Major Views*, third ed. [Chicago, Moody Press, 1980], pp. 95-96). According to Clouse, indeed, the Council of Ephesus in 431 condemned millennialism as superstition (*op. cit.*, p. 9).

The confessors, moreover, accept the three ecumenical creeds as the most eminent enunciations of the Christian faith outside of Scripture and, indeed, as normative because of their fidelity to Scripture (e.g., AC I:1, "We unanimously hold and teach in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea"; III:6; FC-Ep. Rule and Norm 3, with respect to "the Apostolic Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, we pledge ourselves to them, and we hereby reject all heresies and doctrines which have been introduced into the church of God contrary to them"). And it is clear that the Augsburg Confession understands the phrases, "when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead," "the resurrection of the body," and "the resurrection of the dead," in the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds as all referring to a simultaneous second coming of Christ, bodily resurrection of all the dead, and final judgment of all people in history. Article XVII itself makes this statement: "It is also taught among us that our Lord Jesus Christ will return on the last day for judgment and will raise up all the dead, to give eternal life and everlasting joy to believers and the elect but to condemn ungodly men and the devil to hell and eternal punishment" (cf. III:6, "as stated in the Apostolic Creed"). Postmillennialism, to be sure, makes the same connection, but the equation of second coming with final judgment is, as noted previously, contrary to the distinctive essence of premillennialism. The Athanasian Creed itself, indeed, clearly makes these events simultaneous when we confess, "He sitteth at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead; at whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies and shall give an account of their own works; and they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire." This same equation of second coming and final judgment occurs in the Apology when Article XVII is succinctly restated. The comprehensive scope of the Augustana's antichiliasm receives confirmation, finally, from the way in which the authors of the Roman Confutation accepted Article XVII "without exception" (Apol. XVII).

In conclusion, one may aptly note that the language of Augustana XVII:3 is quite similar to phraseology used by the Blessed Dr. Luther in a sermon preached some nine years subsequent to the presentation of the Augsburg Confession. Characteristically he described "the chiliasts" — clearly referring not just to a few contemporary sectarians but to millennialists of all ages, including Tertullian — as having "played the fool with the idea that before judgment day the Christians alone will possess the earth . . ." And on this occasion, as on various others, the Reformer pointed out the real *raison d'être* of millennialism (WA 47, 561):

And what moved them to harbor this idea is this, that the ungodly are so fortunate in the world, possess kingdoms and worldly authority, wisdom, and power, while the Christians are of no account in comparison with them. So they thought: Surely, all the ungodly will be rooted out so that the pious may live in peace.

In other words, the theology of glory is the true text of chiliasm; Revelation 20 is merely the pretext.

Douglas McC. Lindsay Judisch

DOES THE STATE OF ISRAEL REALLY DESERVE SPECIAL RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATION?

Recent Israeli military action in Lebanon provides an opportunity for evangelicals to reevaluate their religious commitment to Israel. American foreign policy is strongly influenced by the size and organization of ethnic groups represented in our country. This is simply a fact of political life. Current support for the modern state of Israel goes beyond these dimensions. Not only does Israel claim support from American Jews as either coreligionists or sharers of a common heritage, but it benefits from the even greater numerical support of a majority of evangelical Protestants. Evangelical support for Israel, as a matter of belief, recognizes the Israeli government's claim to the Biblical Caanan, today's Palestine, as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. Israel's right to existence is based by her evangelical supporters not on natural law, applicable to all other nations, but on a specially revealed divine mandate given to Abraham and authenticated by the prophets. A high view of inspiration and inerrancy only serves to intensify this belief. Unlike the support given by ethnic groups to their home countries, Protestant support for Israel is purely a matter of religious conviction, as Protestants do not think of themselves as ethnic, cultural, or religious Jews. Although orthodox Israelis, but certainly not all Israelis, are in agreement with evangelical Protestants in recognizing the special divine character of the Old Testament, the two groups are irreconcilably divided over the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. Jews flatly deny that He has come in the person of Jesus. In spite of this fact, both groups are committed to furthering the causes of the state of Israel. So strong is American Jewish and evangelical Protestant support for Israel that any suggestion of making Israel a secular state for both Jews and Arabs is hardly a live option.

Protestants supporting Israel for religious reasons are most frequently those who are most vocal in calling for a separation between church and state. They remain absolutely opposed to American diplomatic recognition of the Vatican. Any proposal to exchange ambassadors with the pope would bring immediate cries of violating the Constitution. These Protestants do not allow for Roman Catholics what they demand for themselves. They cannot understand that the Vatican's claim to political power is no less mandated by revelation for Roman Catholics than Israel's claim to Palestine is for themselves. The religious problems connected with the special support accorded Israel are more serious than merely that of applying American constitutional principles even-handedly.

One problem connected with Israel's claim to Palestine is determining who are the descendants of Abraham to whom the promise was first given. It is not that clear that modern Israel constitutes all of Abraham's heirs. Many others, now unaware of their Abrahamic lineage, might make a claim to the land. Besides the Jews who claim descent from Abraham through Isaac, Arabs claim a prior descent from him through Ishmael, his first son. After Sarah's death, Abraham had other children through Keturah. Even if the inheritance is narrowed down to Jacob, Isaac's second son (Genesis 25:6), whose God-given name "Israel" is the current national designation, the matter of identifying his descendants through his twelve sons becomes hardly less thorny. Between the eighth and the sixth centuries before Christ, all twelve tribes were carried into captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians. Only a small portion ever returned to Palestine with others maintaining their identity in many different places. Others lost this identity through intermarrying with Gentiles. Such intermarriage could hardly disqualify any progeny from a share in the Palestine inheritance. Obed, King David's grandfather, was himself only half-Jewish. Again in the first century, the Jews who became the first Christians gradually lost their ethnic identity. This loss of Jewish identity could hardly be a cause of disinheritance. On the contrary, one might argue that the claim of such Christian Jews to Palestine has become stronger, as they were Abraham's descendants not only by blood but by faith, which both Jesus and Paul consider the most important. (Today Christians cannot be Israeli citizens!) Abraham lived about four thousand years ago and through these four millenia his descendants have been literally scattered to the world's four corners. All tracing their origins from the Middle East may have Abraham's blood running through their veins. What a disastrous thought for any committed anti-Semite!

There is also the issue of Biblical interpretation. From its very beginning, the Christian Church has recognized itself as the true Israel and the legitimate successor to the Old Testament promises. John the Baptist said that God could find descendants among the

stones for Abraham (Matt. 3:9). Jesus said the Jews who did not believe in Him were not Abraham's descendants because they did not share Abraham's faith (John 8:39, 40). The Gentiles are to take the place of the Jews at the final banquet (Matt. 8:12-13). The parable of the vineyard teaches that God's kingdom is to be taken away from the Jews because of their failure to recognize Jesus as God's Son. Descendants of the Old Testament Jews no longer have an exclusive claim to be God's people (Matt. 21:23-41). Peter took Israel's special designations as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people, and God's own people and transferred them to the church (I Peter 2:9,10). The prophecies about Israel find their living fulfillment in the church today and not in any modern state.

At the heart of the problem lies the recognition of Jesus as the Christ. Essential to the New Testament understanding of Jesus is that He is the fulfillment of all of God's gracious promises in the Old Testament. The church is God's true Israel, but only through faith in Him. Luke records the explicit claims of Jesus that all the Scriptures, including the promises to Abraham's progeny, center in Him (24:27,44). Jesus is to be recognized as the ultimate King, Prophet, Priest, and Temple. Likewise, He is the ultimate "promised land" to which the Old Testament saints looked for rest. The pre-occupation of many Protestants with Israel's real estate claims to Palestine denotes a failure to recognize that the proclamation of Christ is not only the major goal of the Old Testament revelation but its all-embracing goal. Through Him the church becomes God's new Israel, Abraham's true sons. This is not to say Jews have no advantage over Gentiles. They do. Jews brought up on the Old Testament know the Messianic portrait even before recognizing its realization in Jesus. This fact makes their continued rejection of Him all the more tragic. The Jewish advantage is proximity to the Old Testament description of the Messiah and not divinely mandated property rights. Christians detract from the glory of Jesus by seeing in the state of Israel the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Reading the Old Testament as a land contract is of no ultimate significance and detracts from the role of Jesus as the consummation of God's saving revelation. Such religious concern for land deeds is already a stumbling block to the Jews, since they will look to themselves and not Jesus as the total fulfillment of God's promises.

Americans are said to be virtually missionary-minded in their foreign policy as they have shown concern for the peace and prosperity of downtrodden peoples in other lands. European Jewry suffered unimaginably at the hands of the Nazis. The Estonians, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Ukrainians, and the Cambodians have likewise suffered at the hands of genocidal dictators in our times. The Israelis themselves are now seen by many as the perpetrators of such sufferings. Christians cannot overlook such suffering. No nation has the right to claim for itself a consideration which others cannot equally share.

David P. Scaer

Homiletical Studies

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 24:37-44

November 27, 1983

A new church year begins unnoticed by a world bent on self-destruction and preparing feverishly for a materialistic Christmas celebration which begins on the Thanksgiving weekend and culminates a month later when sentimental words about "peace on earth" and "happy holidays" serve as a narcotic against the harsh realities of modern life.

Jesus in Matthew's Gospel predicts both the fall of Jerusalem (vs. 4-22) and the signs of the end when He will come again in judgment (vs. 23-31). He tells a number of parables which describe the disciple's attitude as he waits for the end. In our text Jesus compares the end times to the days of Noah when unbelievers were totally unprepared as they continued with "business as usual." He also characterizes an unprepared householder who only counts his loss after the thief has robbed him unexpectedly. The need to watch and be ready are the key thoughts of the text. Jesus is coming again.

Introduction: The season of Advent begins today, ushering in a new church year of God's grace. We look to Jesus Christ our King, who first came into our world in Bethlehem's manger, who comes daily into our hearts through Word and Sacrament, and who will come again in triumph at the Last Day. This morning we look at the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24 about being unprepared for the Last Day. In a world and sometimes a church which is oblivious to the signs of the times, our text trumpets the Advent message that

The Son of Man Is Coming

- I. In Judgment upon the unprepared.
 - A. Two examples describe the consequences of being unprepared.
 1. People in the days of Noah lived openly in sin and conducted "business as usual," ignoring God's threat of judgment with destruction as the consequence.
 2. An unprepared householder discovers too late that a thief has unexpectedly robbed him.
 - B. People today often are unprepared because they fail to watch for the coming Son of Man.
 1. As in the days of Noah people engage openly in sin and become preoccupied with pressing daily affairs, including hectic Christmas preparations, thus ignoring God's threat of judgment upon the unprepared.
 2. Christians too, like the unprepared householder, may fail to keep watch against the temptations of the Evil One and are caught unprepared to meet the Son of Man.

II. In mercy toward His people.

- A. A watchful and prepared Jesus came the first time to live and die for the sins of the world. As He speaks in our text He is preparing for the cross. Advent reminds us of His first coming for us.
- B. The Son of Man comes to us in Word and Sacraments regularly to prepare us for His final coming. He makes us watchful.
- C. The Son of Man will receive us to Himself when He comes at the Last Day.

Conclusion: As we prepare again to celebrate Jesus' birthday, we heed the warning to watch and be prepared because we know not the hour when the Son of Man will come. He supplies us with His unfailing mercy to make us watchful and prepared.

Stephen J. Carter

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 3:1-12

December 4, 1983

Advent stresses preparation for the coming of Christ. John the Baptist appropriately is described in the Gospel for the Second Sunday in Advent. Arriving on the scene with the credentials of an Old Testament prophet (his wilderness location, dress, diet, and message), John attracts crowds. His strong message of repentance and baptism also for Israelites alienates some but strikes home with many in preparation for the Messiah's ministry.

Introduction: When a presidential visit is anticipated in a local town, the word spreads; people gather; everyone is straining to catch the first glimpse of a helicopter or motorcade. An advance speaker addresses the crowd as it waits. In our text John the Baptist appears at the Jordan River as the advance man with a timely message for Israel and for us. He is

Announcing the New Reign of God

- I. The new reign of God stirs up interest!
 - A. Israel responds to John's appearance
 - 1. They are dissatisfied with world conditions and Israel's plight. They feel hopeless and long for deliverance.
 - 2. John's person and message place him in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets and raise Messianic hopes of a new reign of God in the Davidic line.
 - B. We also respond to John's message.
 - 1. We experience a general dissatisfaction with world conditions of war clouds and national economic difficulties.
 - 2. John's message about a new reign of God to solve our problems sounds exciting. A Disney World church sounds pleasant and enjoyable.
- II. The new reign of God calls for repentance!

- A. John the Baptizer shocks Israel from the Pharisees to King Herod with a radical exposure of sin and a call for the baptism of repentance.
 - B. John exposes our sin and summons us to the same kind of radical repentance which exposes our desire to reign over our own lives.
- III. The new reign of God changes hearts!
- A. John's message leads many to conversion as they are prepared to embrace the Messiah's reign in their hearts.
 - B. John's message points again to the Messiah who died and rose again for the world's sin, and our hearts are rekindled through Word and Sacrament in this Advent season to embrace Christ's new reign in our hearts and lives.

Conclusion: As John the Baptist announces the new reign of God, we respond with more than superficial interest. Led to repentance, we find ourselves transformed by the Spirit to announce God's new reign in Christ to others.

Stephen J. Carter

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 11:2-11

December 11, 1983

Commentators on this text have trouble with John the Baptist's question. Some find it hard to accept that John, the great and effective way-preparer, might have doubted and they make John's disciples the doubters to whom John confidently says, "Go and find out for yourselves." Such an interpretation, it seems to the present writer, weakens the thrust of the message--that no matter who we are, our Lord sustains us in our faith by directing us to Himself who heals and cleanses and raises up. He was then, and is now, the Christ for us.

Introduction: There are times when all of us feel emotionally low. Our lives can be seriously disrupted by sickness or death, unmet expectations leave us frustrated, economic difficulties discourage us, or, spiritually, sin and guilt erode our well-being. Doubts about God's presence and power in our lives can be entertained. Is He really here for us? It is John's question and our question that Jesus addresses. He directs us to Himself and in Him we are made

Greater than the Great

- I. Questions are a part of our human condition.
 - A. John questioned whether Jesus was the Messiah. Imprisonment was miserable enough but, now that his preaching was ended, he may have questioned whether Jesus' ministry was proceeding as he had envisioned it and preached about it.
 - B. His disciples may have been part of his concern. John's faithful followers could have raised doubts as to whether he had prepared for the right person.

- C. Such questions are a part of the human condition. Sin has destroyed the once perfect relationship with God and, in our lack of full understanding, we question how God fits into our lives and we fit into His will. The paradox is that in doubt we can still believe (Mk 9:24). The danger always is that our questions can turn into unbelief and rejection of God.
- II. Jesus answers our questions
- A. Jesus' answer curbs our disbelief and rejection. Listen and see! Fruitful ministry is taking place. John's disciples were directed to healing and cleansing and proclamation that was changing people's lives. It is that power of God in the world that still redeems and saves and makes whole.
- B. For the answer centers in Jesus. "Blessed is he who takes no offense in Me," not just because he is preserved from the consequences of unbelief and rejection, but because God in Christ indeed blesses all of us who take no offense in Him. God's answer to this world's sin is the Divine Life born into the world at Christmas, given into death on Good Friday, and on Easter raised to live again victoriously. The saving glory of God is fulfilled in Jesus (Is 35:1-10).
- III. Our faith in His answer makes us great.
- A. John might have questioned, but Jesus still knew his faith. He calls to mind John's powerful ministry a man unshaken by questions or by a lack of creature comforts. He would remain faithful to the One whose way he had prepared. Jesus considered him to be great.
- B. Astoundingly, Jesus counts any of us as being greater than John. For we have heard and seen the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ as not even John experienced them. The power of God that works repentance in us sustains us also with faith and life in Christ.

Conclusion: Thus God brings us through the turmoil of life. We live patiently, in trusting faith, anticipating the Lord's coming, taking the prophets, like John the Baptist, as our example (Jas 5:7-10).

Luther G. Strasen
Fort Wayne, Indiana

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 1:18-25

December 18, 1983

The virgin birth of Christ is clearly stated in the text and already in the prophecy of Isaiah. In Immanuel God is present with judgment and salvation throughout all generations.

Introduction: This somewhat embarrassing turn of events for Joseph was not just a static occurrence with no connection to what went before it or to what followed. "All this took place to fulfill" underscores that it is pertinent to the life of every person before it

took place and all who have lived since. This phrase shows that God became a human being in order to fulfill His promise to every person in this world to be

God with Us to Save Us

- I. God has promised to be with us.
 - A. He never forsook His people of old—certainly not Adam and Eve, who deserved His rejection, nor in the ensuing years. His promise, "I will be your God," can be traced through the time of the patriarchs and prophets, through the captivities of His people and their returns to Palestine.
 - B. He was with Joseph and Mary. If they had not believed in His presence and promises, their strange circumstances would have destroyed their life together and made them miserable people. Instead, today they are saints in glory.
 - C. He is still with us. The promise of Jesus who saves is for all time. Paul preached that it was fulfilled for the Romans and for us and thus the presence of God with grace and peace is ours (Ro 1:1-7).
- II. We set up barriers against God's presence.
 - A. Mankind is not always ready to believe that God is with us. King Ahaz did not rely upon God when He promised to protect Judah from its enemies (Is 7:1-17). He refused a sign, but God persisted and proclaimed the virgin birth of God the Son as a sign of judgment upon the unbelief of Ahaz and all others who reject the salvation which He would accomplish.
 - B. Joseph set up barriers against God's plan. But the very sign of God's judgment against Ahaz became the sign of salvation. Immanuel would be born of the Virgin Mary. God with us to save us.
 - C. We can set barriers against God's presence. Rejecting the virgin birth of Christ is a barrier; the basic barrier is our sin, which prevents us from wanting God to be with us to control our lives.
- III. God breaks through with His presence.
 - A. God still insists on being with us in our lives. Life without God with us does not have true peace and joy and hope. God knows that fact better than we do, and the One who saves His people from their sins comes to us to bring grace and peace from God our Father.
 - B. God instills faith in us. The celebration of Christmas is often a view from outside. We listen to carols, watch Christmas programs, are delighted by decorations. Through the operation of God's Holy Spirit in the Word God is with us to save each of us with His forgiveness in Jesus.
 - C. We live confidently in the enjoyment of God's blessings, no longer by ourselves or to ourselves. His grace and peace enriches our lives with forgiveness, the power to love, and the

confidence that God is with us so that, whether living or dying, we are the Lord's.

Conclusion: Immanuel-praise and thank God this Christmas that He has accomplished your salvation. He is with you.

Luther G. Strasen
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Luke 2:1-20

December 25, 1983

Because of spatial limitations, this study will be restricted to the song of the heavenly host in verse 14, "*doxa en hysistois theoo kai epi gees eireene en anthroopois eudokia*" or "*eudokias*" ("suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host [stratia, "army"], praising God and saying," v13). These words, of course, constitute the first line and so form the basis of the Gloria in Excelsis in the main service handed down to us with loving care by generations of fathers in the faith. During the penitential season of Advent the church has denied herself the enjoyment of the festive Gloria, but now on the high feast of Christmas its ringing cries of joy seem all the more glorious by reason of a month-long absence. It was, indeed, through its use in the Christmas vigil that the Gloria most likely entered the eucharistic service of the Western church. By virtue of the angelic origin of its first line Martin Luther could say of the Gloria that "it was not made on earth, but it came down from heaven." It is in singing the Gloria in Excelsis and the Sanctus that the church is most conscious of the company of angels--however small the congregation and however humble the setting (cf vs 7, 8, 12)--as her members join in the worship of God (cf 1 Cor 11:10, He 12:22).

The song of the angels consists in two parts, in which the individual members are paired in an artful and significant manner--with a contrast between the datives ("God" and "men") and the principal prepositional clauses ("in the highest" and "upon earth") as well as a complementary relationship between the principal subjects ("glory" and "peace"). Reasonably enough, the angels sing in the first place of the divine glory of which they are always so aware (cf. Is 6:1-4; Mt 18:10). Even the Latin version of this line is familiar to most Lutherans, laymen as well as pastors, by virtue of its use as the refrain in the popular (originally French) carol, "Angels We Have Heard on High" (*Lutheran Worship*, 55): "Gloria in excelsis Deo." Although the jussive form "be" is used in most English translations which supply some form of the copulative verb, there is no verb in Greek; and in such a case the usual procedure is to understand the simple indicative form *esti*. Thus, the idea is that the news just announced by the angel (v 11) redounds in itself to the glory of God. This *doxa* is the awesome manifestation of any or all of God's

attributes to His creatures. The divine attributes which are particularly manifest at this time are (1) the grace of God in coming into the world ("the Lord," v11) to save men from His wrath (as thesecond half of this hymn will assert; cf. also "for you a Savior," v 11) and (2) His faithfulness in fulfilling His previous promises to do this very thing (cf. "in the city of David," with Mic 5:2; cf. "Messiah" with my studies of Is 42 and 61 in CTQ XLVI, pp. 307-312). Although the *doxa* of God in Christ is usually veiled from human view in this world (vs 7, 12, 16; cf K. Wengenroth, "The Theology of the Cross," CTQ XLVI, pp. 267-275) it is quite visible in heaven (literally, "in the highest places"), that is, to the angels and those who have died in the faith.

The second half of the celestial song consists in two coordinate clauses of parallel thought (for the purpose of emphasis) -- with "on earth" equaling "among men" and "peace" expounded as "good will." Thus, the reason why the birth of Christ fills all of heaven with divine glory is just because in Christ God declared peace on mankind. For by becoming man God the Son was able to keep the divine law perfectly in the place of all men and, in His state of humiliation (vs 7, 12, 16), to endure in the place of all men the divine wrath aroused by rebellion against God. In this way, Christ has neutralized the enmity 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" (*eireenee*) toward the whole world ("on earth"), or, in other words, "good will among men" (*anthroopois*, "human beings" without qualification). (On this concept cf. my studies of 1 Jn 1-2 and Eph 2 in CTQ XLVI, pp. 44-46, 62-65.) The word *eudokia* ("good will") refers to God's gracious desire to save people from eternal death (cf. Eph 1:5-9). For this reason Isaiah, in the traditional Christmas Old Testament reading (9:2-7, used also in the gradual), had called the divine child whose birth the angels announced (cf. Is 9:6 with Lk 2:11) the "Prince of Peace," of whose peace there would be no end (Is 9:7 cf. Is 26:3, 12; 54:10; 57:19; 66:12). Unfortunately most of the world's people have not heard God's declaration of peace on them, or have rejected it when they heard; in this way they continue their war against God; and the justice of God requires Him to take up arms once more against them through the use of His law (in creation and the word) and ultimately to surrender them to hell.

This exegesis of Luke 2:14 assumes that the correct reading is the nominative *eudokia* in accordance with the great majority of manuscripts, the reading accepted by the Authorized Version, the *Lutheran Hymnal*, and *Lutheran Worship*. If one follows most of the modern versions in accepting the genitive *eudokias* as the correct reading, the analogy of faith will, of course, exclude the synergistic dream of the Romanists and Arminians that peace with God is obtained only by "men of good will" ("hominibus bonae voluntatis" in the Vulgate), as if such men existed (cf. Ps 14, 53). This interpretation also runs counter to the common meaning of *eudokia* (which

never refers to a moral quality) and the common usage of *anthroopoi* (which is not otherwise modified by a qualitative genitive). The analogy of faith (e.g., John 3:16) would likewise rule out the Calvinistic idea, prevalent among contemporary commentators, that the work of Christ was meant to bring peace with God only to "men of His good pleasure," that is, the elect (by supplying a supposedly self-understood "His"). If *eudokias* is accepted as the reading, the best course is to connect it with *eireenee* as a genitive of source and translate the clause thus: "and on earth peace coming from His good pleasure with men" (see T. Mueller, "An Application of Case Grammar to Two New Testament Passages," *CTQ* XLIII, pp. 323-325).

Introduction: One of the things that makes Christmas so enjoyable is Christmas carols. There are many of them, and most we sing only at this one time of year. But the first Christmas carol, the song of the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, we are able to sing all but ten weeks of the year: "Glory be to God on high: and on earth peace, good will toward men." We have abstained from using this hymn during the month of Advent, but today it bursts anew from joyful hearts. Today we have joined with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven in singing.

The Original Christmas Carol

- I. Stanza 1: "There is glory for God in the highest places."
 - A. Because of His Grace.
 1. Despite our attempts to seize the glory which is His alone.
 2. Evinced by His assumption of a human nature to allow us to enjoy once again the sight of His glory.
 - B. Because of His faithfulness to His promises.
 1. Relayed by the Old Testament prophets.
 2. Fulfilled by Christmas and the saving work which followed.
- II. Stanza 2: "There is peace on earth, good will for men."
 - A. Not war.
 1. A war which man declared on God and still continues through his sins.
 2. A war which God, therefore (because of His holiness and justice), was obliged to declare on man.
 - B. But peace (referring to the attitude of God toward man).
 1. A peace which God achieved.
 - a. Becoming a human being like us.
 - b. Enduring the wrath of God which we deserved.
 2. A peace which God declares to man through the Gospel.
 - a. Which angels declared to the shepherds.
 - b. Which the Word of God declares to us today.

Douglas McC. Lindsay Judisch

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

January 1, 1984

Against the suggestion that verse 15 teaches a typological relationship between Israel's sojourn in Egypt and Christ's, the inspired evangelist requires us to consider Hosea 11:1 a rectilinear prophecy. Only this interpretation will conform to the rule that there is only one intended sense of any assertion in Scripture *sensus literalis unus est*. Equally significant, the grammar and context of Hosea 11:1 stand against the typological view. First, though *ki* can be rendered temporally, the causal meaning is more common. Secondly, the copulative verb is implied, *not* expressed. It is more natural to translate "Israel *is* a child" than "Israel *was* a child." Hosea 11:2 reinforces this point by showing the irresponsibility of the Israelites down through the years. Thirdly, Israel is called God's son (as opposed to "sons") in but one place, Exodus 4:22-23. "My Son" in its literal sense would suggest not Israel but the Messiah, who had been called "Son" in previous passages of Scripture (e.g., Ps 2). Fourthly, "called" obviously refers to a word the Son heeds. While this is appropriate in the case of Jesus, stubborn Israel did not leave Egypt because it was called out. It was, rather, forced out in the wake of the plagues (Ex 12:39; cf. Ex 5:19-23; 6:11-13). The total scene in Hosea 11 is God's abiding love for His rebellious people (who are pictured in this prophecy not as a son, but an unfaithful bride). This love is especially shown in the promise of One who would obey, even though Israel disobeyed. Hosea 11:1 is in some respects parallel to the first half of John 3:16.

The pericope appointed in Gospel Series A of *Lutheran Worship* focuses on the point of the prophecy, Jesus' flight into Egypt and His return. However, the danger presented by Herod is stated explicitly even though the account of the infant massacre (vv16-18) is omitted. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer live courageously and resolutely in difficult days. The problem is that the world is cruel. The means to the goal is the good news of the Savior's coming to a world that needs Him desperately.

Introduction: You may well be glad the rush is over. At Christmastime, you can be stuck in a traffic jam, listening to the radio play carols while you are obsessed with the idea of plowing into the rear of the car ahead. The message of peace on earth meets with contradiction. So it was when the Savior came--and found Himself on the run to escape Herod. This constitutes

The Other Side of Christmas

I. This is a cruel world.

A. The innocent suffer. Life carries a low price tag.

1. Herod the Great even had members of his own family assassinated when he thought they were plotting against Him. He easily resorted to massacre to eliminate the "king of the Jews."

2. In our society, abortion is a ghastly parallel. For other instances of cruelty, consider any of the "this year in review" specials on television lately.
- B. Contrast Herod with Joseph.
 1. Faith versus fright.
 - a. When the angel said "go," Joseph went.
 - b. Herod left orders that others be executed as soon as he died so that grief would be associated with his death. That is insecurity.
 2. Contentedness versus contentiousness.
 - a. Joseph accepted his place in God's design that his first son would be his foster son.
 - b. Herod was never satisfied with his sway over the Jews. He wanted the place only the Christ could have.
 3. Obedience versus obsession.
 - a. Joseph carefully did all he was told. He knew his responsibility to Someone greater than himself.
 - b. Herod was moved by self-interest and bulldozed the opposition.
- II. We can do little about it.
 - A. Shall we involve the church as church in the political sphere? To do so confuses the two kingdoms and mixes Law and Gospel.
 - B. Shall we isolate ourselves into a Christian community walled off from the world? It will not work. We share the evil inclination of a Herod or a Hitler.
 - C. Shall we make the best of it? The world cannot bear us. If Christ had to flee, will Christians fare better?
- III. Into it comes the Child.
 - A. He came as a result of God's mercy (cf. Ho 11:8-9). God did not give up on His wicked people.
 - B. He came to obey.
 1. It was obedience "from below," as a Nazarene. Jesus played the game on Herod's turf, but not by Herod's rules. He won by being the obedient Son (cf. Ga 4:4-5).
 2. His obedience took Him through a substitutionary life to a substitutionary death in which He endured the punishment for all cruelty and rebellion against God. This is the focal point of the other side of Christmas.
 - C. He came to win. Jesus rose. God approved His work. The tables are turned; now the game is on Christ's turf. He has won.
- IV. He emerges--in control.
 - A. We live in His victory.
 1. He empowers us to live even in a sin-riddled world. After the plague had ravaged their city, the remaining twenty-five residents of Goldberg, Silesia, gathered in the streets on Christmas Eve, 1353, to sing carols. They risked con-

- tamination to come together and sing, "God with us--against us who dare be?"
2. He takes care of us in our daily lives. How did Joseph finance a trip to Egypt? He "just happened" to have gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
 3. His care extends even to our suffering (cf. I Pe 4:12-13, 19).
- B. We share in His work.
1. Suffering is inevitable--but we do not seek it out or stand idle when it happens to someone else.
 2. We pray. At times we even need to pray that the evil which cannot be reformed be condemned.

Conclusion: A boy was walking in England during World War II. "There is a house which has sent a son into the war! There is a star in the window." Then, noting the evening star, he said, "God must have sent *His* Son. There is a star in His window." God did send His Son into a difficult, dirty war. He faced the other side of Christmas--and emerged as Lord of all.

Ken Schurb
Columbus, Ohio

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 3:13-17

January 8, 1984

Matthew expressed his message in such a way that we would not put the emphasis on the amount of water in baptism (in no way implying a complete immersion) or on anything we do but on the revelation of God and His grace in Christ. The Lutheran emphasis on the Word and Sacraments as means of grace should be specified and celebrated in a sermon on this text. The doctrines of the Trinity and of baptism are reconfirmed in this text.

Introduction: Just as God the Father initiates the earthly ministry of His Son with the miraculous appearance of the Spirit and the Sacrament of Baptism, so we initiate our pilgrimage through life when the Word and Spirit miraculously create faith in us at our baptism. The life and death urgency of baptism for us and our loved ones and for those unbaptized whom we ought to love is underscored at the baptism of Jesus by John at the Jordan. The living God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reveals Himself at the baptism of Jesus and in our baptism.

The Persons of the Trinity Revealed in Baptism

- I. Jesus the Christ is revealed when He is baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (vv13-16a).
 - A. Jesus humbles Himself to become sin for us.
 - B. Jesus reveals His priestly function by being baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (v15b)
 1. In His baptism Jesus initiates an enterprise which culminates in His substitutionary atonement.

2. Our pastors apply Christ's righteousness to us through the Word and Sacrament in our baptism.
- II. The Holy Spirit is revealed when He descends upon Christ (v16b).
 - A. He descends in an objective form (the dove, v16b).
 - B. The Spirit's presence evokes non-visual effects when he "comes upon" us (v16b).
 1. He evokes John the Baptist's awe-filled faith in Christ at the Jordan.
 2. He evokes our faith in Christ in baptism.
- III. God the Father is revealed when His voice consecrates His Son (v17).
 - A. God reveals His love for us when He says of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son" (v17a).
 1. Note that, while the sense of sight was touched in the vision of the dove, here the sense of hearing is touched by the voice of the Father.
 2. The revelation of God comes as a result of His taking the initiative, not as a product of our thought.
 - B. God reveals the joyous climax of baptism when He speaks of Jesus as the one in "whom I am delighted" (v17b).
 1. At this moment God blesses baptism as a means of gracious enrichment of His children.
 2. Now God accepts Christ's obedient death for us, which we remember in our daily dying and rising with Christ.

Conclusion: As the Father rejoiced at the baptism of His Son in whom He was well pleased, we can rejoice that we and our children and loved ones have become well-pleasing to God through our baptism. As for those not yet reborn in baptism, we like John reach out to communicate the Word of God to them.

Harold Zietlow

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

John 1:29-41

January 15, 1984

John's account in the text avoids two extremes: (1) an overemphasis on human effort as in the "I found it" religious experience and (2) an emphasis on God determining everything in such a fatalistic manner that people become apathetic toward witnessing.

Introduction: Here is authentic human searching for a more profound relationship to God in Christ. God uses the questions raised by John the Baptist and by his disciples to lead to a discovery of Christ.

God Leads Us to Discover Christ

- I. As the Son of God.
 - A. Christ ranks above the prophets such as John the Baptist (v30).

- B. John the Baptist said, "He was before me" (v30, Christ's pre-existence).
 - C. We need a Christ who tenderly approaches us in our needs but who also has the divine power and love to raise us up through our problems.
- II. As the Messiah.
- A. The priestly office of Jesus was revealed to Israel by John (v41).
 - 1. John said, "For this purpose I come baptizing with water" (v31).
 - a. John preached repentance.
 - b. John preached the urgency of the Kingdom of God.
 - c. John preached the forgiveness of sins.
 - 2. The purpose of Christ's coming was "that He might be revealed to Israel" (v31) and later to us.
 - B. The priestly office of Jesus consisted in offering Himself up as the Lamb of God in our place (vv29, 36).
- III. As the One chosen of the Spirit (v33).
- A. The disciples address Him with honor as "Rabbi" (v38).
 - 1. Their question, "Where are you staying?" (v38), indicates a searching-finding process.
 - 2. The answer, "Come and see" (v39), invites the inquiring potential disciples to learn from the greatest prophet of all.
 - B. The function of the Holy Spirit in leading people to Christ is seen in "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain. . ." (v33).
 - 1. The Holy Spirit remains with Jesus, showing the Trinitarian nature redemption.
 - 2. By the Spirit's guiding the seekers discover and remain with Jesus.
 - C. Jesus is manifested as "He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (v33).
 - 1. The Holy Spirit finds seekers through the witness of "brothers."
 - 2. Those whom Christ has found then follow Him by bringing others to Christ.

Conclusion: As I was writing this outline I answered the telephone. A woman responded to my advertisement about the formation of Bible study groups. "Who are you? Are you one of those sects which doesn't believe in the Trinity?" "No," I said. "I belong to a church which teaches the authentic message of the New Testament, according to which God works through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit." "Good," she said. "Your group can meet in my living room and I'll furnish Bibles for study and cake and coffee for refreshments." Thus began another encounter in which people came

to God through Christ. God led new brothers and sisters to discover Christ.

Harold Zietlow

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 4:12-23

January 22, 1984

Jesus' ministry had been inaugurated with His baptism and temptation (Mt 3:13-4:11). John, the last prophet to operate solely under the old testament, is removed from the scene (v12.) But John was also the herald of the immediacy of the New Testament Kingdom (Jn 1:29). Now the kingdom is near (v17), or better, "rubbing up against you." Jesus had to begin His teaching - preaching - healing ministry (v23) in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali (v15) to fulfill Isaiah 9:1-2. He comes not only to a certain place, but also with a particular purpose (v16), thus fulfilling Isaiah 42:6,7. We see that the urgency of Jesus' mission is conveyed to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, because they all respond immediately (*eutheos*, vv20,22). The urgency of the call to the disciples contrasts with the more leisurely attitude of Elijah in I Kings 19:20. For Jesus the fullness of God's time had come (Ga 4:4), and He had to get on with the task. Note that nowhere in Scripture are we told that these professional fishermen ever caught any fish without the direct intervention of the Lord. In Acts they are fishers of men (v19) through whom the Word of the Lord grew, but certainly this was the work of God, not of men.

Introduction: Too often church people today have a cavalier attitude toward our commission. Jesus' coming "soon" (Re 22:20) seems delayed and somehow remote. But the Epiphany light is shining now and Jesus urges us to

Welcome God's Kingdom!

- I. God's saving activity is everywhere (v17b).
 - A. Under the old testament, most of God's saving work was localized, but John was removed (v12) and the scene was set for the new testament (Mt 3:13-4:11), which is world-wide.
 - B. Jesus began His work remote from Jerusalem and Judea (vv13,15,16), thus signaling a wider mission than John had.
 - C. God comes to us where we are (vv18,21).
 - D. Jesus sends us everywhere--where the "fish" are (v19b).
- II. God's kingdom is here now (v17b).
 - A. When the time came for Jesus He was anxious to do His work.
 1. He immediately proclaimed the kingdom of God (vv17,23).
 2. The power of His public ministry was the cross in His future (cf. Mt 9:5,6).
 - B. Jesus communicated His sense of urgency to the disciples (vv18-22, esp. vv20,22).
 - C. God's working changes people *now* (Mk 1:15).

1. They are healed in spirit and body (v23).
2. They are called out of an old life (vv20, 22).
3. They are called to a new life (vv19, 21c).

Conclusion: Welcome the kingdom of heaven. It is God working through you. The kingdom of God is working where you are. God's kingdom is here now.

Warren E. Messmann
Rushville, Indiana

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 5:1-12

January 29, 1984

Because of distortions of the Sermon on the Mount are today, in Luther's phrase, "really the devil's masterpiece," the preacher will want to take care to avoid two common extremes. The Beatitudes are not a description of conditions in some millennium. On the other hand, Jesus was addressing His disciples (v1), and His words ought not be cast as pearls to swine. Jesus is not outlining good works by which men gain heaven. Rather He is presenting the condition in this world of those who already know their Savior. A word study of *makarioi* is always blessed (pun intended).

The poor in spirit are those who do not depend on their own resources-this is, the penitent (v3). The mourners lament the status of a sin-sick world (v4). A person can be meek as an individual even while firmly exercising his office as parent or employer or pastor or whatever, and such meekness results in true rule and possession of material blessings (v5; see Ps 37). Hunger and thirst after righteousness is not an emotional reaction, but a real concern (v6). Mercy not only forgives the frail, but also does good to the needy (v7; Mt 10:42; 25:35ff). Only the Word of God can purify the heart (v8). Peace with God must precede true peace among men. Therefore, makers of true peace among men must already have and offer peace with God (v9). We have two choices-either peace with Christ or peace with the world. To have peace with Christ implies persecution by the world (v10). Jesus makes this Beatitude emphatic by repeating it in another form (v11) and yet more emphatic by commenting on it (v12).

Introduction: Just as the collective Church has its marks in Word and Sacrament, so the individual Christian has "marks" that set him apart from the world. Our problem is that too often we permit the marks of the world and the world itself to woo us into forgetting or even denying the blessings Jesus has already given us. In our text He calls us to

Rejoice in the Marks of Your Faith

- I. There is a price to pay in this world for claiming Christ.
 - A. We can no longer claim any worth of our own (v3).
 - B. The world's sickness saddens us (v4).

- C. We must separate a man and his office (v5).
- D. Righteousness requires sacrifice (v6).
- E. Charity requires sacrifice (v7).
- F. We must renounce human wisdom (v8).
- G. Peace can come only on God's terms (v9).
- H. Persecution must follow the proclamation of Jesus (vv10-12).
- II. But "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Ro 8:18).
- A. We already have and will soon fully enjoy heaven itself (v3).
- B. "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Re 21:4; v4).
- C. We will be stewards of the new earth (v5).
- D. "Those who lead many to righteousness" will shine "like the stars" (Dn 12:3; v6).
- E. God will tell us "Well done!" (Mt 25:23; v7).
- F. We shall see God (V8).
- G. "The peace of God will guard" our "hearts and minds" to eternity (Php 4:7; v9).
- H. We are persecuted only because we already have heaven (vv10-12).

Warren E. Messman

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 5:13-20

February 5, 1984

Preaching a sermon based on a sermon would ordinarily be out of the question. It is a different matter, however, if the sermon comes from our Savior's lips. Such is the case with these pericopes from Christ's Sermon on the Mount. We dare not tinker with the texts even if there is a preponderance of Law. The One who speaks is the Word made flesh to fulfill the Law. He is the Gospel in person. His sermon is heard aright when we are led by it to see how inadequate we are on our own and are drawn to Him by faith to receive His righteousness.

Introduction: The Epiphany season is the right time to talk about witnessing. It is sacred truth that Christ was revealed to the whole world as its Savior. We are marking this truth almost every Sunday during Epiphany. No Christian seriously wants to escape the joyous task of sharing Christ with anyone. However, excuses abound why a person feels inadequate for the task. One of them is the feeling that a person is not good enough to witness to Christ. The fact of the matter is that

You are Good Enough to Witness

- I. Your righteousness is a gift.
 - A. It is given through Jesus.
 - 1. He fulfilled the Law as the perfect life and perfect sacrifice (v17).

2. He grants to believers His own righteousness (Ro 4:5).
- B. It is better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (v20).
 1. Their veneer of holiness was glued on by their own effort.
 2. Their veneer of holiness came off with every sin.
 3. Christ declared them unfit for life eternal.
- C. The gift qualifies you for heaven.
 1. Even though the qualifications for heaven are high-perfection.
 2. Since he who is righteous by faith shall live.
- D. It qualifies you to witness by word and deed.
 1. The Pharisees said in effect: "Look at me!"
 2. We boldly confess: "Look at Christ!" Our witness is not based on works of righteousness which we have done any more than our salvation is.
- II. Your righteousness is your witness.
 - A. It provides the saltiness of your salt.
 1. Salt has many uses.
 2. Your righteousness in Christ is your basis to effect a change in the lives of others. It works!
 - B. It is the source of light which lets people see the Father when they watch your works.
 1. Our witness of words is backed up by deeds. We do good works for all to see. The source of our piety is God's grace.
 2. Our deeds are seen but the praise is directed to the Father. We are doing the good for the Father's glory.
 3. Our deeds assist our witness when we lead people to praise the Father.
 - C. It is the doing and teaching of all the commandments.
 1. Because our righteousness is complete, we teach and obey the whole Law.
 2. We do not have to pick favorites. We witness with the whole Law even though it condemns us too.
 - D. It produces a witness better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees.
 1. Their witness drew people to a life of bondage and destruction.
 2. Ours leads people to freedom and eternal life.

Conclusion: Are you good enough to witness? Yes, you are, by faith in Christ. What makes you good enough is also the content of your witness.

Lowell F. Thomas
Fort Myers, Florida

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 5:20-37

February 12, 1984

Sometimes flaws are hard to find, especially when they are hidden beneath the surface. Flaws can lead to serious consequences when

they cause a malfunction in an airplane or automobile. Flaws in our humanity can be equally disastrous. Jesus taught that even though people looked good on the outside, inner flaws could cause their destruction. The only lasting comfort for people who are concerned about their eternal future lies in being flawless. Jesus assures you that

You Are Good Throughout!

- I. Thorough righteousness is impossible through works.
 - A. Many, like the Pharisees, try to find comfort in outward behavior.
 1. They do not murder people (v21).
 2. They do not abuse people verbally (v22).
 3. They live in peace with their neighbor (v23).
 4. They keep their marriages intact (v31).
 5. They use God's name carefully (v33).
 6. The disruption of their comfort is but a slip away.
 - B. The sinful activities of the mind and heart trip us all.
 1. Jesus teaches that anger is murder of the heart (v22).
 2. Jesus teaches that lust of the heart is adultery (v28).
 3. Jesus makes it impossible to find comfort in the Law.
 - C. Jesus wanted His hearers to repent of all sin.
 1. Deeds, to be sure, but also thoughts and words which break God's Law call for repentance.
 2. Our trying to be good on our own also calls for repentance.
- II. Thorough righteousness produces obvious good works.
 - A. Jesus makes us good throughout.
 1. He was righteous in His life for us (Ro 5:19).
 2. He took our sins and died for them on the cross (Is 53:4, 5).
 3. He returns to us His perfection through faith in Him (2 Co 5:21).
 4. Our sins are all forgiven (Ps 103:2,3).
 5. We are declared good throughout by faith (Ro 4:5).
 - B. Our lives are empowered by Him to do good.
 1. We are outwardly just as godly as the Pharisees were, but our motive is God's grace.
 2. We are leaders in piety because our power is not pride but God's grace (2 Co 5:17).
 3. We are good outwardly because our hearts and minds are reconciled to God through Christ (Eph 2:10).

Conclusion: Believers in Christ need not wonder how good they are. They can be confident that because of Christ they are flawless. Their works show it.

Lowell F. Thomas

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**Matthew 5:38-48****February 19, 1984**

The language of these verses is startling for the words oppose what seems reasonable and natural (vv39-42). We tend to surround ourselves with walls of security. We are cautious with whom we love (v43). But in this text Jesus bids us to love as He Himself did--to love even those who are loveless (v44). Our Lord's concern is that we practice the same kind of love the Father has shown us--a love without qualifications.

The central thought of the text is that disciples should be willing to follow the example of their Master and demonstrate love toward all in every situation. The goal is that the hearers will broaden the scope of their love to include those who seem least deserving. The problem is that we resist loving those who treat us in any unreasonable way. The means to the goal is the Savior who loves us when reason would deny us love.

Introduction: We feel good when we hear stories of amazing love. These can be stories about communities that rally to the support of fellow citizens who suffer from some natural disaster, or stories about people who risk their lives to save someone in need, or stories about farmers and ranchers who pitch in to help a neighbor who cannot do his own work. In the text for today Jesus does not tell us a love story; instead, He invites us to participate in one. It is a story of

Unqualified Love for Unreasonable Times

- I. It is natural for us to qualify love.
 - A. Jesus observed that this is the way of the world (vv46, 47).
 1. We love those who love us.
 2. We love those who belong to our families.
 - B. The world denies love to those who make unreasonable demands.
 1. The Law recognized this fact by placing limits on revenge (v38; Ex 23:4, 5; Lv 24:19, 20).
 2. The scribes allowed for hatred (v43; Lv 19:18).
- II. The Father does not qualify His love.
 - A. He loves when reason would qualify love.
 1. This is true in the realm of nature.
 - a. We might expect God to bless only the "deserving."
 - b. His love provides for all (v45).
 2. This is true in the Person of His Son (Ro 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10).
 - a. Jesus loved those who might offend us (Lk 5:30-32).
 - b. Jesus loved those who despised Him (Lk 23:34).
 - B. He loves even us.
 1. We are not worthy of His love (1 Jn 1:8, 10).
 2. He still forgives and accepts us (1 Jn 2:1, 2).
- III. The Father's children love as He loves.
 - A. We belong to the Father's family.

1. We belong because of the gracious working of God in our lives (Jn 1:12, 13; 1 Cor 6:11).
2. We are new creatures different from the mold of this world (2 Cor 5:14-17; Eph 4:17).
- B. We are to live as members of the Father's family (vv44, 45; Eph 5:1, 2).
 1. This means loving like the Father (1 Jn 4:11).
 - a. This love is not qualified (v44; Ro 12:14, 19-21).
 - b. This love takes a risk (vv39-42; Ac 7:60).
 2. This means we need the enabling power of the Spirit which comes through the means of grace.
 - a. The Spirit reminds us of how we have been loved (I Pe 2:23-24).
 - b. The Spirit gives us the strength to love (Php 2:13).

Conclusion: Loving others may not always seem reasonable. Loving others may not always be easy. But nowhere does Jesus call us to do the reasonable and easy thing. He calls us to live the love we have received from our gracious Heavenly Father.

Lawrence W. Mitchell
Bloomington, Indiana

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 6:24-34

February 26, 1984

How is it possible for Mammon (v24-earthly goods, money, riches, etc.) to master life? How is it that a person becomes enslaved to things? It happens when people allow themselves to be controlled by the desire to accumulate things. It makes no difference if people want many things or only a few basic necessities. If the desire to acquire these things is directing a person's life, that person is enslaved by Mammon. In addition to being a form of idolatry this slavery to Mammon results in the totally useless activity of anxiety (v27). If our priorities are right--if we are serving God and pursuing the goals of His Kingdom--we have the assurance that God will provide for our needs (v33).

The central thought of the text is that Christian lives should be controlled by the pursuit of godly concerns rather than by the desire to accumulate things. The goal is that the hearers will commit themselves to lives of faithful service to God. The problem is that we sometimes feel that we must live in the pursuit of things to provide for ourselves. The means to the goal is the way in which our gracious God provides for us so that we can serve Him in faithful devotion.

Introduction: Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land and helped to establish them there. Near the end of his life he assembled the people of Israel and challenged them to be faithful to God and to put away the false gods which their fathers served in

Egypt and neighbors served in Canaan. He said to the people: "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Jos 24:15). Although we are far removed from the days of Joshua, his challenge still applies to us. A false god--Mammon--would divide our loyalty to our Heavenly Father. This twentieth-century idol would have us live in the service of accumulating things. What will we do? Joshua would urge us:

Choose Your Master

- I. There are only two options.
 - A. Some will serve Mammon.
 1. Mammon becomes a master when people are controlled by the desire to accumulate things (1 Tm 6:9, 10).
 - a. It was a popular master long ago (1 Kgs 21:1-4).
 - b. It is still a popular master today.
 2. Mammon is a disappointing master.
 - a. Things can be taken from us (Mt 6:19).
 - b. Things have no lasting value (Lk 12:20; 1 Tm 6:7).
 - B. Some will serve God.
 1. God is the Creator of all things.
 - a. He made the earth and all that is in it (Gn 1:1; Ps 24:1).
 - b. He made us (Ps 139:13-18).
 2. God will not disappoint us.
 - a. He knows how to give us the things we need (vv26, 28b-30; Ps 145:15, 16).
 - b. He gives us the best in Jesus (Jn 3:16).
 - (1) Here is eternal treasure (1 Cor 15:55-57; 2 Tm 1:10b).
 - (2) It is God's free gift (Ro 3:28; Ro 6:23).
- II. There can be no compromise.
 - A. God will not tolerate compromise (v24).
 1. God demands complete devotion.
 - a. God is completely faithful to us (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Tm 2:13).
 - b. He expects us to be faithful to Him (He 13:5).
 2. A divided loyalty despises God.
 - a. To serve Mammon is to deny service due God.
 - b. God will not share His glory with anyone (Mt 4:10; Is 42:8).
 - B. Compromise results in anxiety.
 1. Any service to Mammon implies that we are left alone to care for ourselves.
 - a. The result is anxiety that causes us to miss the point of life in the Kingdom of God (v25; Lk 10:41, 42; Ro 14:17; Php 3:18, 19).
 - b. The result is anxiety that causes us to miss the business of living one day at a time (v34; Ex 16:19, 20).
 2. Service in the Kingdom of God is rendered with the assurance that He will care for us (vv31-33; Ps 37:4; Php 4:6; 1 Pe 5:7).

Conclusion: Joshua was not willing to compromise his service to God. He boldly proclaimed: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." May God enable us to stand with Joshua in the resolve to serve God alone.

Lawrence W. Mitchell

LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 17:1-9

March 4, 1983

The transfiguration was an important event in the earthly ministry of Jesus. He was on the road to Jerusalem, going there to be crucified, Peter had only days before made the great confession of faith, "You are the Christ..." (Mt 16:16). Peter had also argued with Jesus regarding the prophecy that Jesus would be crucified, die, and rise in three days. The same Peter who had been praised for his confession of faith was chided for his effort to hinder the Lord's work. From Peter's perspective, what might have been the purpose of the transfiguration? Does our Lord function in a similar manner with us today?

Introduction: At times it would be nice to be able to hide from everyone and everything, crawl up in a corner, and go unnoticed. Life is a struggle. Life as a Christian is a struggle. Peter found life to be that way. One time he was patted on the back for confessing Jesus to be the Christ (Mt 16:16), and a short time later he was scolded for offering to defend Jesus from those who would try to put Him to death (Mt 16:23). As disciples of Jesus we sometimes feel it would be best in dealing with life's struggles and confusions, to say:

"Let's Hide and Maybe It Will All Go Away"

I. The desire to hide.

A. Who would want to hide?

1. In the Old Testament David prayed for escape from his struggles (Ps 55:6).
2. Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration wanted to remain there.
3. All of us at one time or another, feeling the pressures of life, think that it would be easier if we could be insulated in some way from all of it.

B. Why would anyone want to hide?

1. Peter had reasons for wanting to hide.
 - a. Peter was possibly tired of traveling, of being hassled by crowds, of being challenged by Jewish leaders.
 - b. Peter was confused as to what all of the Lord's teachings meant for him and the other disciples.
 - c. Peter was afraid as to what might become of him and Jesus if they journeyed on to Jerusalem.
2. We have reasons for wanting to hide.
 - a. We too are often weary of standing against the sinful flow of the world around us.

- b. We are frequently confused when life is difficult. How do divorce, unemployment, drugs, and forms of blatant sin creep into Christian's lives?
- c. We are afraid that God will change His mind about us, afraid that our faith is not strong enough, afraid of life.

Transition: Peter thought he had found a safe haven there on the mountaintop. But hiding does not work. Hiding does not change or remove fears, frustrations, or struggles; it only heightens them. Even when we use religion as our hiding place, it does not work. God in His grace wants to equip us so that we will not need to hide, but rather we can cope with and ultimately overcome our fears, frustrations, and struggles.

II. The power to live through Christ.

A. Because hiding does not work, God intervenes in grace.

- 1. He intervened in Peter's life.
 - a. God intervened in Peter's life when Jesus called him as a disciple.
 - b. The moment on the mountain was designed to strengthen and reaffirm the faith given to Peter.
 - c. Peter himself (2 Pe 1:16f) identifies the event as a revelation of God's majesty and glory.
- 2. He intervenes in our life.

- a. God has intervened in our lives by working faith in us in order that we can know Jesus as our Lord and Savior.
- b. We are given moments through God's grace that allow us to see that God is there active in our lives, forgiving, loving, strengthening.
 - (1) The absolution - the pastor's words are as certain as if God spoke them Himself.
 - (2) The Word - the Scriptures are still able to give comfort and strength.
 - (3) The Lord's Supper - the meal nourishes the struggling spirit.
 - (4) Faithful witnesses - those around us who witness to Christ's love are instruments of His grace to strengthen us.

B. Coming out of hiding is not easy, but we are not without help.

- 1. Peter was being equipped to go to Jerusalem.
- 2. We are being equipped to face the challenges of our daily lives.

Conclusion: God in grace gives us a glimpse of His glory. He transports us to the mountaintops so that we by grace may overcome in the everyday struggle on the plains below.

Wm. G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Matthew 4:1-11

March 11, 1984

The temptation of Jesus follows chronologically His baptism. Having been baptized by John, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. Lenski says, "It was God's own will that this mighty battle should be fought now." In the devil's efforts to tempt Jesus we find nothing unusual. The cunning, the attack on personal need, the play to ego are all tactics that are common to Satan. Jesus' temptations are not vastly different from those which come to us. Hebrews 4:15 ". . . For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Introduction: Recently while trying to lose weight, someone who was well aware of my diet waved a large piece of chocolate cake under my nose inviting me to eat it. That is temptation! Daily Satan waves temptations under the nose of Christians in an effort to persuade them to transgress their relationship with God. Satan, as the tempter, is so bold that he even tempted Jesus. This Biblical account of Jesus' temptation is recorded for our benefit to offer us both a pattern and the power that we need in answering the tempter. Therefore, on the basis of this Biblical account, we will do well to look at the matter of

Temptation: His and Ours

- I. Tempted to distrust.
 - A. Satan encourages distrust.
 1. Jesus was encouraged to distrust that God the Father would provide for his physical needs.
 2. We too are tempted by Satan not to trust our Heavenly Father.
 - a. We give in to despair over inflation and unemployment.
 - b. We fall prey to get-rich schemes, lotteries, etc.
 - B. Jesus answered Satan and turned temptation away.
 1. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3.
 - a. He stops Satan's attack, at least for the moment.
 - b. He reminds Satan and Himself that one must put God first.
 2. In following Jesus' pattern, we too can find the power to shun temptation.
 - a. Satan and temptation even today cannot stand against God's Word.
 - b. The Word reminds us to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt 6:33).
- II. Tempted to trust falsely.
 - A. Satan encourages false trust.
 1. Jesus was encouraged by Satan to tempt God.

2. Satan puts many things before us too that would cause us to challenge God's lordship in our lives.
 - a. We tempt God by taking a fatalistic attitude.
 - b. We trust improperly when we fail to use our God-given talents and abilities.
- B. Jesus answered Satan and turned temptation away.
 1. Jesus uses Deuteronomy 6:16. He confronts Satan with the truth. It is not that God could not do what Satan said, but we are not to test Him in such a foolish manner.
 2. We too should recognize that we are not to tempt God.
 - a. We are to seek to lead our life in ways that glorify God.
 - b. We are to trust God's care for us, knowing that He will not allow anything to separate us from His love.
- III. Tempted to misplace trust.
 - A. Satan encourages misplaced trust.
 1. Jesus was encouraged to remove his trust from His Father and to place it in Satan.
 2. Satan regularly places tempting scenes before our eyes and invites us to misplace our trust.
 - a. We are tempted by power and prestige.
 - b. We are tempted by the glitter and glamour of the world.
 - B. Jesus answered Satan and turned temptation away.
 1. Jesus uses Deuteronomy 6:13.
 - a. Jesus confronted Satan in the knowledge that the world which he offered was not his to give, for there is only one Lord and God.
 - b. Jesus knew that only in God can one find true life and purpose in living.
 2. Like Jesus we should affirm God's lordship in our life.
 - a. There is no substitute for God. All other things will pass away.
 - b. Our service and worship should all be directed toward Him who is our Creator and Redeemer.

Conclusion: Jesus, with God's Word, turned Satan and his temptations away. Equipped with that same Word of God, we too can say, "Satan, be gone."

Wm. G. Thompson

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

John 4:5-42

March 18, 1984

The account of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well in Sychar is an eloquent expression and exposition of the antiphon for this day: "Remember, oh Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old." Though He asserts the primacy of the Jews in the extension of salvation, Jesus excludes no one from salvation. The smoldering antagonism between Jew and Samaritan

and the vulnerability of an unaccompanied rabbi speaking to a woman—a Samaritan woman no less—are surmounted by the Savior's purpose "to seek and to save the lost." The Jews often spoke of the thirst of the soul for God and of quenching that thirst with living water. The promise given to the chosen people was that they would draw water with joy from the wells of salvation (Is 12:3; Ps 42:1; Is 44:3; Is 55:1). Jesus was stating that He was the Anointed One who would bring in the new age in which His people would "not hunger or thirst" (Is 49:10).

Introduction: Our thoughts and experiences resonate to the longing articulated by the psalmist: "As a deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:1-2a). This is a longing for eternity which God has put in man's soul. It is a thirst which only Jesus Christ can satisfy. In the text before us Christ offers living water and promises a well of water springing up to give us eternal life. As our Lord dealt with the Samaritan woman so He deals with us, ever creating the desire for the living water, reminding us of what or whom the living water is and dispensing that living water freely to us and through us to others.

Living Water

I. Living water desired.

A. Jesus takes the initiative.

1. An unexpected step (v9).

a. Mutual antagonism existed between Jews and Samaritans.

b. Rabbis did not talk with women under such circumstances.

2. A step typical of Jesus: He had come to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19:10), eating frequently with tax gatherers and sinners (Mt 9:11).

B. Jesus' words are misunderstood.

1. Although He uses a way of speaking which is common in the Old Testament, the woman at the well takes the words literally (v11).

2. She makes virtually a jeering jest in response (vs 11-12).

C. Jesus pierces the heart.

1. He brings the woman to an awareness of her sinful state (vs 15-19).

2. He sees a heart estranged from God.

a. Restless and unsatisfied.

b. Trying to "play games" with God.

3. He arouses the proper thirst: "Give me of the water" (v15).

II. Living water defined.

A. Jesus Himself is this living water.

1. Jesus makes the Messianic claim (vs 25-26).

2. His life and ministry is the fulfillment of the Messianic promises (Mt 11:3-5).

3. The climax of His work was reached at Calvary and the empty tomb.
 - B. This living water alone satisfies spiritual thirst (v14).
 - C. This living water is the fountainhead of refreshment and blessing-forgiveness, eternal life, peace, well-being, power to serve, meaning to life (v14).
- III. Living water dispensed.
- A. Jesus gives the woman living water.
 1. She knew "Messiah cometh"; and Jesus said, "I am He" (v25).
 2. She confesses Jesus as the Messiah (vs 19, 29).
 3. She is assured of adoption as a child of God (v23).
 4. She is enabled to worship in the fullest sense (i.e., "in spirit and truth") the God of her salvation.
 - B. Living water is dispensed through her to others.
 1. In confidence in spite of her past (vs 17-18).
 2. In boldness (vs 39-42).

Conclusion: Almighty Father, who has so formed man for Thyself that his heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee: by the ministry of Thy church and the lives of those who humbly love and follow Thee daily, convince the world that Thou art the sure refuge of all who are weary and distressed in mind and life, the safe harbor to all who are restlessly seeking certainty and peace of heart, and the eternal salvation of every burdened soul; so that coming to Thee they may find and possess that peace which Thou givest in Thy Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Norbert H. Mueller

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

John 9:13-17, 34-39

March 25, 1984

It was common belief, promulgated by the Pharisees, that affliction was a direct result of a person's sinfulness and that suffering was an expiation for sin. But in this instance the man was born blind. Who therefore sinned, the man or his parents? It is not surprising that Jesus and the Pharisees came to conflicting conclusions. When Jesus restored sight to the man born blind, the Pharisees were confronted with a dilemma: on the one hand, how could Jesus be from God if He broke the Sabbath law; on the other hand, if He were a sinner, how could He perform such signs? The miracle, though a sign of the dawning of the Messianic kingdom (Is 35:5), only made the Pharisees more adamant in their unbelief. The familiar phrase "Son of Man" (v35), drawn from Daniel, was a Messianic title familiar to the Jews at Jesus' time. Jesus' very presence in the world constituted a separation between those who believed in Him and those who rejected Him. Those who lack the light shall have it as a free gift of the Son of Man; those who refuse the light shall have the darkness which they have loved as God's judgment on their unbelief.

Introduction: The familiar proverb, "None are so blind as those who will not see," articulates a truth and warns of a danger to which all of us are susceptible. Though born "blind," through the waters of Holy Baptism the Holy Spirit has given us "spiritual sight." Yet we are constantly bombarded with ideologies, claims, and counterclaims that purport to be "light" which dispels the "darkness." These often challenge our faith and affect our relationship with Christ. Thus, the introit for today sounds the admonition, "my eyes are ever on the Lord." On the basis of the text before us this morning we focus our attention upon

Jesus a Prophet, But More than a Prophet

- I. Jesus is truly a prophet.
 - A. The relation of sin to suffering is explored (vs 1-3, 34).
 - B. The identity of Jesus is questioned (v16).
 1. The miracle could not be denied or explained away.
 2. The Pharisees were in a dilemma as to the origin of Jesus.
 - C. Jesus is a prophet (v17).
 1. The simple testimony of him to whom Jesus restored sight was forthright.
 2. The man knew who healed him, but he did not know Him fully.
 3. This miracle was but another "sign and wonder" showing the fact that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the prophet sent from God (Is 35:3).
 4. The man, because of his confession, was ridiculed, insulted, and thrown out of the synagogue (v34).
- II. Jesus is more than a prophet.
 - A. Jesus confronts the man whose sight He restored (v35).
 1. He seeks him out (v35).
 2. He asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (v35).
 - a. Who does signs and wonders.
 - b. Who is the Suffering Servant (Mk 8:27-31).
 - B. Jesus is confessed and worshiped.
 1. "Lord, I believe" (v38), said the man.
 2. The man worshiped Jesus (v38).
 - C. Jesus, as the Son of Man, is the watershed of humanity.
 1. Those who "see" become "blind" (v39).
 2. Those who are "blind" are made to "see" (v39).
 3. "Lord, I believe help thou my unbelief" (Mk 9:24), says the Christian.

Conclusion: As we continue our Lenten pilgrimage, keeping our eyes clearly focused upon the crucified and risen Christ, we follow the exhortation and the admonition of the gradual, "Oh, come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (He 12:2).

Norbert H. Mueller

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Matthew 20:17-28

April 1, 1984

Dwight Moody used to say that it was always a problem for him why none of the disciples seemed to understand that Christ was going to die in the manner in which it happened. On five separate occasions (Jn 2:18-22; Mt 16:21-23; Mt 17:22-23; Mt 20:17-19; Mt 26:1-5) the Lord had revealed this future event to them, yet they never fully accepted what He was saying. The text for this Fourth Sunday in Lent is a case in point. Despite His plain words to them on the way to Jerusalem for the final showdown with His adversaries, the disciples were still hoping that Jesus was on the threshold of establishing an earthly Messianic kingdom. With that in mind, Salome, speaking for her sons, James and John, approached the Lord with the request that her offspring (perhaps because they belonged to the inner circle of three apostles distinguished from the rest by Jesus Himself), be accorded a place of special honor in this kingdom. With great patience, the Lord deals with this misguided request. Instead of chiding them, Jesus uses their question to teach His followers the important truth that the way to greatness in His kingdom lies along the path of suffering and service. And it is to Himself that He points as the supreme example of what it means to suffer and serve when He says, "even as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Introduction: "Going to Jerusalem" is a game children sometimes play. In our text Jesus and His disciples were going to Jerusalem, not to play games, but to engage in a most serious mission. It was there that Jesus would accomplish that for which He had been sent by the Father. On the way He teaches His followers a much-needed lesson on true humility and service.

Going to Jerusalem

- I. Going to Jerusalem requires suffering.
 - A. Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing full well the fate which awaited Him (vs 18-19).
 1. He would be delivered to the chief of priests and scribes that we might be delivered from sin, death, and the power of the devil.
 2. He was despised that we might be revived.
 3. He was crucified that we might be justified.
 - B. Suffering is the fate of Christ's followers: "...you will drink My cup..." (vs 22-23a).
 1. His disciples would become partakers of Christ's suffering through persecution and martyrdom (1 Pe 4:13).
 2. As Christ's followers today, we must be ready and willing to suffer for Christ's sake.
- II. Going to Jerusalem results in satisfaction.
 - A. Through Christ's substitutionary death and glorious resurrection in Jerusalem God the Father received satisfaction.

1. By His death Jesus paid a ransom for the world that was sufficient and acceptable to God (Ep 1:7; He 10:5-10).
2. By rising from the dead we are assured that God was "satisfied" with the sacrifice of His Son for the redemption of the world (Ro 1:4; 4:25).
- B. As we are buried with Christ through baptism, so we shall receive satisfaction both now and in eternity.
 1. We walk in newness of life (Ro 6:4).
 2. We have certain hope of eternal life (Ro 2:10).
- III. Going to Jerusalem involves service.
 - A. Jesus is the supreme example of one who served (v28).
 1. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve (e.g., Jn 13:1-17).
 2. He gave His life willingly and voluntarily as a ransom for many.
 - B. Christ's disciples are called to follow in His footsteps of service (vs 26-27).
 1. Christ-like service is not motivated by sinful pride or the hope of temporal reward (vs 20-25).
 2. Christ-like service puts others first and self last.

Conclusion: "Behold, we are going to Jerusalem," Jesus says to us. The journey will not be easy. It will mean sacrifice of time and willingness of service. It will mean bearing the cross and drinking from the bitter cup. It will mean laying aside pride and walking in humility. But the journey is possible because Jesus is with us. In Him we have forgiveness. From Him we receive strength. Because He gave His life for us and rose again we know our final destination. What a privilege to go to Jerusalem, sharing in His suffering and serving Him!

Ronald Irsch
Rochester, Michigan

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

John 11:47-53

April 8, 1984

The text for this Fifth Sunday in Lent follows immediately upon the Lord's miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead. The result of this miracle was that many believed on Him (v45)-but not all! Blinded by selfish pride and the desire to perpetuate their position of power in the Jewish community, the majority of the Sanhedrin reacted in a spirit of retaliation. Jesus must be eliminated.

Introduction: Do good deeds ever backfire on you? Did you ever help someone only to be criticized for interfering? Take heart! Jesus faced similar problems. After miraculously bringing back to life His friend Lazarus, His enemies, the ruling priests and Pharisees, instead of glorifying Him, plotted to get rid of Him. But God used their evil scheme to bring about the greatest good for all mankind.

Evil Turned into Good

- I. The world will often reject the good in favor of the evil.
 - A. The ruling priests and the Pharisees rejected Jesus and the good He was doing (vs 46-47).
 1. They resented His popularity and the influence He was having on people (vs 47-48).
 - a. They regarded Him as a threat to their position of power (v48).
 - b. They feared the destruction of their nation (v48).
 2. The enemies of the Messiah sought to do evil to Him.
 - a. They took counsel against Him (vs 48-50).
 - b. They proposed to kill Him (v53).
 - B. People today also reject Jesus despite the good He can bring to their life.
 1. They do so when they live in the false hope that their own goodness is sufficient for salvation.
 - a. They refuse to recognize and acknowledge their depravity (Ps 51:5; Ro 7:18).
 - b. They are blind to the fact that their own works do not merit God's favor (Eph 2:8-9; Tt 3:5).
 - c. They do not look to Christ as the only hope for eternal life (Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12).
 2. They do so when they live with the mistaken fear that by following Christ their life will be stifled.
 - a. They are afraid that He will take all the "fun" out of life.
 - b. They are afraid of being rejected by friends and associates.
 - c. They are afraid they cannot survive in business, which too often operates by unchristian principles.
- II. In the hands of God evil can be transformed into good.
 - A. The evil action of the ruling priests and the Pharisees was used by God to accomplish His good purpose.
 1. It was God's eternal plan that "one man should die for the people," namely, His only-begotten Son (2 Tm 1:9).
 2. Through Christ's death, plotted and carried out by His enemies for an evil purpose, the world was reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-21).
 - B. Throughout history God has turned evil into good.
 1. The story of Joseph in Egypt provides a meaningful example.
 - a. His brothers sought to do Joseph evil by selling him into slavery (Gn 37ff).
 - b. The Lord turned their evil action into good for many people, both Egyptians and Israelites (Gn 45:1-15; 50:15-21).
 2. We have the Lord's sure promise that He will continually bring good from that which we perceive as evil (Ro 8:28, 31).

- a. Pain alerts us to sickness.
- b. Sickness can lead to a deeper understanding of the purpose and meaning of life.
- c. Death for the follower of Christ becomes the gateway to eternal life.

Conclusion: As people of God we can live in the confidence that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." As the hymn puts it,

Beloved, "It is well!"

Though deep and sore the smart,

The hand that wounds knows how to bind

And heal the broken heart.

Ronald Irsch

PALM SUNDAY: SUNDAY OF THE PASSION

Matthew 27:11-26

April 15, 1984

Introduction: Holy Week, which begins today, brings us face to face with the most decisive and important event in all of human history. We witness a trial which in every respect, from arrest of the accused to His execution, violates every law of equity, justice, and right. From that standpoint alone, it is a landmark case, amazing in every respect. Behind its facade, however, are the dynamics of higher justice, which are even more amazing, as they combine in the resolution of crime and conflict, debt and failure between man and God. All is centered in one person, Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who is taking the place of everyone who ever came into the world or shall come till the end of time. We are directly involved. Therefore, we look most intently at

Amazing Justice in the Trial of Jesus

- I. The evidence at hand demanded an acquittal.
 - A. The testimony of Jesus in answer to Pilate's question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" was a direct reply: "It is as you say."
 1. He was so identified in prophecy.
 2. He was thus revealed and thus acclaimed by the people.
 - B. The testimony of the priests and elders brought many accusations against Him.
 1. They were all unsubstantiated accusations.
 2. In silence Jesus negated their validity and fulfilled Isaiah 53:7.
 - C. Pilate's wife offered testimony in His favor.
 1. She pointed to His innocence: "that just man."
 2. She revealed special warnings received in a dream that very day.
 - D. Pilate himself gave clear indications of His innocence.
 1. "I find no fault in Him," he said after lengthy examination.

2. He knew that the Jews had delivered Him to him because of envy.

All the evidence required the acquittal of Jesus. Pilate should have acquitted Him, but amazingly he did not. He was afraid of Jesus, but also of the people. Neither Pilate nor the people knew that they were unwittingly playing a role in the process of a higher plan, the justification of all mankind (Is 53:4-6; 2 Cor 5:21).

II. Amazingly Pilate sought to circumvent justice and a clear decision.

A. Pilate remembered the amnesty arrangement associated with the Festival of the Passover.

1. A political prisoner was to be released.
2. The people had the privilege of choice.

B. Pilate set up a choice between Jesus, a good and innocent man and Barabbas, a revolutionary murderer.

Pilate thought that he could escape a decision and make the people responsible through their choice. He felt that they would choose Jesus, not the evil Barabbas. But no one, not even Pilate, can escape a clear decision for or against Jesus.

III. The amazing verdict and sentence was unjust, yet just!

A. The people decided against Jesus (Jn 1:11).

1. They chose Barabbas, the murderer.
2. They rejected Jesus, demanding His crucifixion.

B. Pilate differed in his verdict.

1. He found Jesus innocent: "What evil has He done?"
2. He tried to place the guilt on the people by washing his hands.

C. The amazing sentence was, however, strange justice.

1. On the part of Pilate, who freed Barabbas and sentenced Jesus to death.
2. On the part of the people who accepted the guilt of this injustice.
3. On the part of God, who willingly gave His Son for the sinful world.

Amazing justice, indeed-but more amazing is the fact that this whole trial occurred according to God's eternal plan, combining divine justice and divine love. Jesus had chosen to take the place of Barabbas and all of sinful mankind. God punished his Son for the sins of the world. God made Him to be sin for us so that His blood may cleanse us from all sin. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Thus, the most amazing trial of all time was and is the most blessed for all who believe in the one accused in it. The blood is for those who believe a cleansing from all sin, but for those who do not believe a judgment.

Edwin A. Nerger
Fort Wayne, Indiana

MAUNDY THURSDAY**John 13:1-17, 34****April 19, 1984**

Introduction: Maundy Thursday, the night in which Jesus was betrayed, the night in which He established a new sacrament and gave the commandment, "Remember Me," is also the night in which He gave His own the pattern of service. Through the holy sacrament of His body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus established a bond and a communion with His own. Jesus loved them to the end and loves them to the moment of His final coming into the world that they might be His own and live as He lived for them and serve as He served them. We are His people and the sheep of His flock purchased by His blood. In a troubled and perverse world we need to be strengthened in this relationship which we have with Him. Through the Sacrament of Holy Communion we receive power and life so that we may follow Jesus in service and love. He gives us Himself that we may live as He has given us an example. Thus, we see Him both in the sacrament which He has established and in the pattern of service clearly set forth in

The Master's Service to His Servants**I. To fulfill His mission.****A. He knew the hour had come.**

1. Which His Father had appointed in the plan of redemption.
2. Which would accomplish a full atonement for the sin of the world.

B. He loved with the pure love of God.

1. Which motivated Him to complete self-sacrifice.
2. That all who believe might be saved.

His mission was clear; His purpose was unswerving. He knew what He had come to do, and He was determinedly moving that very night to do it. But He wanted His disciples to know and to benefit. Therefore, He demonstrated clearly the purpose of His service, which was

II. To cleanse His servants.**A. By His humiliation, indicated by His willingness to be a servant.**

1. Shown by washing the disciples' feet, as slaves would do.
2. Shown, above all, by His dreadful and shameful death on the cross.

B. By His cleansing of the whole person through His blood.

1. Peter naively wanted to be washed all over.
2. Jesus has, in fact, cleansed us from all sin by means of His atoning blood.
3. This cleansing is offered to all; unfortunately many reject it (v10).

Simply and beautifully Jesus uses this occasion to set forth the true cleansing of His servants, a cleansing from sin by the merits of His suffering, humiliation, and death. His service for the forgiveness of sins is sealed to us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. But also in the service that He, the Lord and Master, renders His servants, then and now, He gives the example of a life of service which flows from cleansing. Thus, His service was

III. To give an example of the new life to His servants.

A. That they might humbly serve one another.

B. That they might be bound together in holy love.

1. Through His self-sacrifice, sealed by the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

2. Through oneness with Him and each other.

3. With love manifested in peace and service.

In remembrance of all that Jesus has done for us and given us, we can summarize in prayer: Come then, Lord Jesus, and seal us to Yourself through Your greatest service, the shedding of Your blood and the sacrifice of Your body for us; and grant that we may have the same mind which was in You, that cleansed from our sin we may love and serve one another and so fulfil Your commandment of love and service, until, by Your grace, we come to share in Your exaltation forever.

Edwin A. Nerger

GOOD FRIDAY

John 19:17-24

April 20, 1984

Introduction: The text is a portion of John's report of a most awesome event. It is his account of a creature (man) putting to death the only true God, who had created him. It is the account of the almighty King, whose power was infinite, being unjustly put to death by those who were His subjects. It is the account of the only human being who has ever kept the law of God perfectly being put to death in a most shameful way, as a hideous criminal. With few adjectives and no superlatives John reports the event in keeping with the dignity and the majesty of the King who is the subject. I am irresistably drawn into the picture as I discover again today that it was

My King Crucified

I. He was crucified in my stead.

A. Jesus, a true human being, is crucified.

1. It was the termination of a life lived under God's law. In contrast to Adam and Eve, He, our King, kept the law perfectly, even under adverse circumstances (Mt 4:1-11). Our King, under the law, was fully human (Php 2:7, 8) and He was fully obedient. What a King!

2. In His crucifixion He endured God's wrath and the punishment of hell. He paid the wages of all sin. He suffered God's judgment upon the sins of all humanity. What a load! What a King!

B. Jesus, true God, is crucified.

1. His perfect life was of infinite value. From Him I receive my righteousness. God's word to me is, "Not guilty!" What God says I believe. I act on this conviction. Thus, I am free of guilt, free to serve God in gratitude and joy. There is righteousness aplenty for every person in the world. "The Lord laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6). What a message for a sin-sick world! What a King!
2. His suffering and death counts for me and all. As we see in Him our Savior there is no more need to live in fear of God's wrath and His just punishment of sin. His life and death took away the sin of the world. What a King!

II. Though crucified, He is my King.

- A. He was the King of those who crucified Him (v19). They did not put Him to death as a helpless victim. As King He chose to give up His life to redeem them. Although they rejected Him as their King, He was their King nonetheless. Their every move was a fulfilment of Scripture and of God's plan (vs 23, 24). He was majestically in control.
- B. He rules His church now. He rules by grace through His word. His people serve Him because they love Him. They know Him as King and Redeemer and are grateful. In their offerings of money and service they respond to His offering of Himself. What a King!
- C. He rules all the world with His omnipotent power. Though crucified, He is not dead but lives and reigns to all eternity. As then, so today most people fail to recognize Him as their King. They continue to gamble and scramble after material things (vs 23, 24). But He continues to reach out to them in forgiving love. What a King!

My King was crucified. But my King lives, victorious over sin, death, and the devil. His victory is mine as I accept Him with a grateful heart as my Redeemer and King.

Audolph Haak
Cambridge, Minnesota

Book Reviews

THE ORIGIN OF PAUL'S GOSPEL. By Seyoon Kim. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982. Paper. 391 pages. \$14.95.

This is another republished Ph.D. dissertation from one of the students of F.F. Bruce, whose influence among conservative and evangelical scholars continues to increase even after retirement from the University of Manchester. An endorsing forward by Martin Hengel of Tuebingen, with whom the author also worked, indicates that this is a work of the highest critical calibre. Kim, now returned to his native Korea, addresses his research to determining where Paul learned his message. Rather than finding this question answered in the mystery and gnostic religions, the author's research leads him to the conclusion that the Damascus Road experience was the central originating point of his theology. The final effect of this study is Pauline Christology with special attention given to Jesus as the image of God. This thoroughly impressive study of Pauline theology deserves the rave reviews which it has received from scholars of opposing persuasions. The author is to be commended for tracing this theology from the Christophany of the Damascus Road, but regretfully it forces him to overlook any direct instruction from the original apostles and any indirect influence from the early Christian communities. This becomes evident in his handling of Philippians 2:6-11 and 3:20-21 as original Pauline material rather than material adopted from the early Palestinian church, a more commonly held view. Paul wants his apostleship to be understood as given directly by Jesus, but on the other hand he wants his theology, especially on the Lord's Supper and the resurrection, to be understood as catholic, i.e., common to all the apostles and not uniquely originating with him.

David P. Scaer

LUTHER: A LIFE. By John M. Todd. Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 1982. Cloth. 396 pages. \$17.50.

LUTHER: WITNESS TO JESUS CHRIST. By Marc Lienhard. Translated by Edwin H. Robertson. Augsburg Publishing Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1982. Cloth. 412 pages.

LUTHER'S LAST BATTLES. By Mark U. Edwards, Jr. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. Cloth. 254 pages.

One of these three monographs ought to satisfy the palates of nearly every Luther admirer and there would be no better way to commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the reformer's birth than setting aside several evenings for all three. Todd's *Luther: A Life* is the least technical of the three and, as the most readable, it is directed to a broad audience. The seventeen chapters provide a narrative of the reformer's life from birth to death. Todd has done his research and his biography of Luther is interspersed with longer quotations from the reformer himself and some of his contemporaries, but done so that the smooth flow of the story is uninterrupted. Those sometimes intimidating footnotes are not included so that the reader can read the account without conscience problems that he might be missing something really important in the smaller print at the back of the chapter. Nothing is lacking in research and detail and the reader can feel that he has become Luther's contemporary. A great book for

refreshing the memory, it is that one book than can be enthusiastically recommended for those Lutherans who still know his doctrine more than they know the man himself.

Lienhard's *Luther: Witness of Jesus Christ* may be recognized as one of the most important theological contributions on Luther in this anniversary year. Saying that Luther's theology centered in Christ is a *cliche*; Lienhard's survey provides depth to the *cliche*. This study is both chronological and thematic. Six chapters cover the development of Luther's Christology from his commentary on the Psalms before 1517 up until the Galatians commentary of 1531. A final three chapters relate his Christology to the early church, divide it dogmatically, provide conclusions and perspectives. Since Luther was totally dedicated in his theology to Christ, Lienhard not only takes the reader into the soul of Luther, but presents Christ Himself to the reader by doing this. It seems impossible that the Lutheran pastor will not enrich his faith and preaching through this volume. In speaking of the relationship of Jesus to the Father, Lienhard points out that, for Luther, He is the Son who interposes Himself between the Father's anger and sinful man and, at the same time, He is a reflection of the Father's love. The Son loves the Father and, in turn, the Son is a reflection of the Father's love for Him and all humanity (p. 110). While Luther saw the impropriety of Christians making a sacrifice of the sacrament, he did say that "by our praise, our prayer, and our sacrifice, we ask Christ and give him a reason to sacrifice himself in heaven for us and to sacrifice us with him." Ample footnotes, bibliography, and index are provided for those who feel compelled to probe deeper. On every page the reader will be edified and informed.

Edwards' *Luther's Last Battles* tackles the perennial nasty problem of whether the reformer from 1531 until his death in 1546 had become a different man. This becomes a more pressing issue, since his uncomplimentary remarks about the Jews are already receiving a disproportionate amount of attention. (*The New York Times Book Review* in its lead feature for December 26, 1982, saw it necessary to single out this aberration for special attention.) Edwards does hold that Luther was a different man due to the historical circumstances and his own aging. The Reformation had gone into a mature period and with the principles in place Luther's pen was less prolific. Though affected by age, Luther remained constant in his theology. Luther's vitriolic remarks must be understood within the context of his time. This simply was the genre of his time and his opponents often excelled him, though Luther was always brilliant in the foray. Edwards has included the political cartoons for which Luther wrote the verse. This was standard procedure for that day, and we can hardly hold them to account when we treat our own leaders with no more respect. Of the three books this one has the narrowest focus, but in a sense is the most intriguing. From time to time this reviewer has found himself put on the defensive by the reformer's more unsavory remarks. Edwards has provided some relief for the predicament. It is somewhat pretentious to be embarrassed by and for Luther. It is like being embarrassed by one's parents. At times I caught myself in reading Luther with total amusement. He certainly was not stuffy. Luther in the final analysis was probably less discriminatory than most, since he had choice words about all, including his fellow Germans. Luther was earthy, and there is little that any of us can do about it now.

David P. Scaer

HUMANIZING AMERICA'S ICONIC BOOK: Society of Biblical Literature Centennial Publications. Edited by Gene M. Tucker and Douglas A. Knight. Scholars Press, Chico, California, 1982. Cloth, \$29.10. Paper, \$17.50. 169 pages.

A special program of speakers commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the Society of Biblical Literature at its 1980 meeting in Dallas. The title for the commemorative book is adapted from the lead essay, "America's Iconic Book," by Martin Marty. Of the eight essays this is the wittiest, making the valid point that in our culture since the beginning the Bible has been more adored than read. Frequently its adorers were also the most ignorant of its content. It is regrettable that Marty's essay, which will amuse, provoke, and perhaps even call to repentance, is found in an anthology surrounded by a prohibiting price wall of either \$29.10 or \$17.50.

Also noteworthy is Hans Kueng's "To What We Can Still Cling: A Christian Orientation at a Time Lacking in Orientation." Kueng, a priest without portfolio for nudging the pope's mitre, finds that all human beings, old and young, the church and society, need fundamental principles by which to operate. For Kueng this orientation is supplied by Jesus of Nazareth. "As confirmed by God in the resurrection he represents for us the abiding, reliable ultimate standard of being human." The Society of Biblical Literature with its near 5,000 members is perhaps the largest professional society of religion on this side of the Atlantic. With its chief interest in historical-critical exegesis, it has often seemed without direction. Kueng, though of radical reputation, made a clear call for direction at a meeting at which over 3,000 gathered. In the past the society has prided itself in its objective stance towards the Bible in the midst of the iconolatrous nation. As Marty says, in the next generation or so even that weak support might disappear.

David P. Scaer

THEOLOGICAL WORDBOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. R. Laird Harris, Editor; Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, Associate Editors. Moody Press, Chicago, 1980. 2 volumes, 1124 pages. \$39.00.

This philological work is designed to parallel W.E. Vine's *Word Studies* in the New Testament and the major *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT) which will run into at least nine volumes, possibly even more. The latter is written from the historical-critical perspective and, therefore, often misrepresents the facts and data of the Old Testament because of the hermeneutical presuppositions with which it begins. This is not the case with the volumes under review. This workbook approaches the matter from a practical and less exhaustive viewpoint than TDOT. Harris states in his introduction: "The busy pastor or earnest Christian worker who has neither time nor background for detailed technical study should yet have a tool for the study of the significant theological words of the Hebrew Bible" (p. iii).

Forty-six scholars were employed in the production of this Old Testament theological wordbook. Most of the contributors were evangelical scholars, most American; there were only two from Europe who were asked to participate — Donald Wiseman, the Assyriologist, and Cleon Rogers of Seeheim, West Germany. No Lutheran Old Testament scholars were involved.

The wordbook has a three-page introduction, which will help the user to know what to expect in the two volumes, and five pages on how to use this interpretative tool. The editors warn: "Word study does not lead to a total understanding of the Old Testament text or any text. Words must always be taken to

context. They have an area of meaning; thus 'amar may sometimes mean "speak," sometimes "command." Thus, it overlaps with *dabar* on the one hand and *tzawah* on the other. Also, the etymologies of words are not always determinative of meanings" (p. iii). The work is organized alphabetically, it contains all the vocables found in *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs. "Those judged for one reason or another to be of theological significance are given easy type definitions. The rest, on which there is no disagreement or theological question, are given one line definitions, usually following Brown, Driver, and Briggs." Volume 2 has been supplied with a numerical index which correlates the numbers given to Hebrew words in Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible* with the numbers given to roots and derivatives in the wordbook.

The reader will find discussions of key concepts together with excellent bibliographies, incorporating not only books but also important journal articles. Here one finds another of the many excellent Old Testament study helps which have been provided theological students, pastors, and professors in the last twenty-five years.

Raymond F. Surburg