

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

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1984

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

A CONVOCATION FOR PASTORS AND LAYMEN

**Sponsored by
THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER
OF LUTHERAN CONFESSIONAL STUDIES**

**Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana
January 30-February 1, 1985**

450th ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATISE ON THE POWER AND THE PRIMACY OF THE POPE

THE SCHEDULE:

Wednesday, January 30, 1985

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1:00 | Introduction |
| | "THE TREATISE REVIEWED" |
| 1:05 - 1:30 | "Ministry Crisis in the Lutheran Church" Dr. David P. Scaer |
| 1:40 - 2:40 | "A Roman Catholic Assessment of the Treatise"
Dr. George H. Tavard |
| 2:40 - 3:00 | Coffee Break |
| 3:00 - 3:40 | "Early Church's Views on Biblical Passages Traditionally Taken
as References to the Antichrist" Dr. William C. Weinrich |
| 4:00 PANEL | "Contemporary Agreements and Differences Between Lutherans
and Roman Catholics"
Drs. Robert Preus, George Tavard, Eugene Klug, David Scaer |
| 6:00 | Dinner |
| 7:30 | Confessions Symposium Choral Vespers |
| 8:30 | Reception in the Commons |

Thursday, January 31, 1985

- 9:30 - 10:15 "An Assessment of LCMS Polity and Church Practice on Basis of the Treatise" Dr. George Wollenburg
- 10:15 - 10:45 Coffee Break
- 10:45 - 11:45 "Traditions in Ministry" Dr. James Pragman
- 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch
- 1:15 - 2:00 Choral Service
"Synod or Congregation: Historical or Doctrinal Differences"
- 2:30 - 3:15 "Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod"
Prof. em. Carl Lawrenz
- 3:30 - 4:15 "Confessionalism in the Missouri Synod: Its History and Doctrine"
Dr. August Suelflow
- 6:30 Banquet - Speaker: Prof. Kurt Marquart

Friday, February 1, 1984

"AN ECCLESIOLOGY FOR TOMORROW"

- 9:00 - 9:40 "The Evolving Polity of the 'New Lutheran Church': A Comparison with the Treatise" Dr. Eric Gritsch
- 10:00 - 10:45 "The Place of the Pope in Modern Protestant and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology" Dr. Richard Neuhaus
- 11:00 - 11:45 Discussion
- 12:00 Lunch and Adjournment

The Speakers

Dr. James Pragman
Associate Professor of Theology
Concordia College
Seward, Nebraska

Dr. Eric W. Gritsch
Professor of Church History
Director, Institute for Luther Studies
Lutheran Theological Seminary
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Dr. Carl Lawrenz
Professor, former President
Wisconsin Lutheran Theological
Seminary
Mequon, Wisconsin

Dr. Richard Neuhaus
Lutheran Theologian and Author
Former Parish Pastor in
Brooklyn, New York

Dr. August Suelflow
Adjunct Professor of Historical Theology
Concordia Seminary
St. Louis, Missouri

Professor Kurt E. Marquart
Professor of Systematic Theology
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dr. Robert D. Preus
President
Concordia Theological Seminary
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Dr. David P. Scaer
Academic Dean and
Professor of Systematic Theology
Concordia Theological Seminary
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Dr. George H. Tavard
Professor of Theology
The Methodist Theological School in Ohio

Dr. William C. Weinrich
Professor of Historical Theology
Early Church and Patristics
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dr. Eugene Klug
Chairman and Professor of Systematic
Theology
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dr. George Wollenburg
Fourth Vice-President, LCMS
Pastor, Christ the King Lutheran Church
Billings, Montana

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registrations are due January 10, 1985. Please enclose payment with your registration.

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Registration fee for spouse (includes one banquet ticket): \$15 per person

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Meal Plan (tickets for Wednesday supper, Thursday breakfast and lunch, Friday breakfast): \$15 per plan.

Banquet ticket only - \$12 per ticket

Transportation from public carriers available at \$10 per trip with 48 hours advance notice.

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Authority in English Theology from the Oxford Movement to the Present

John Stephenson

The Second Reform Bill having passed through the House of Commons in the September of 1831, the prime minister, Lord Grey, was hopeful that this measure, which entailed the suppression of the pocket boroughs and a modest extension of the franchise to the middle classes, would shortly receive the approbation of the Upper House. Grey was to be disappointed, for on October 8 the House of Lords threw out the Reform Bill by forty-one votes. The bishops of the Church of England accounted in 1831 for a much greater proportion of the members of the Upper House than they do today; so that the distribution of their votes materially affected the fortunes of the proposed legislation. For a variety of reasons, six bishops abstained; two Whig prelates voted in favour; and the Archbishop of Canterbury, joined by no fewer than twenty of his episcopal colleagues, voted against the bill. Thereupon the wrath of the enraged lower orders fell upon the Upper House. The secular peers were able to withdraw to relative safety on their estates, but, by the nature of their profession, the bishops were obliged to appear in public. For several months, there was little fun in being a bishop. The palace of the Bishop of Bristol was burned down by an angry mob; most prelates were grossly insulted, and even encountered physical violence, in the streets; and on November 5 of 1831, the date of the annual celebration of the happy deliverance of His Late Majesty King James I from gunpowder treason, the customary national indulgence in Romophobia was waived for a season as the bishops of the respective dioceses won from Guy Fawkes and the pope the honour of being burned in effigy atop village bonfires up and down the land. This outburst of popular discontent with the dignitaries of the Established Church must be seen in the context of the repeal, in recent years, of restrictive legislation against Dissenters, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike, which

had its origin in the turmoil of the 1670's. From 1828, Protestant Nonconformists could once again sit in parliament and hold municipal office; and the same liberties were extended to Roman Catholics, in both Great Britain and Ireland, in the following year. A resurgence in the political influence of Protestant Dissenters was inevitably followed by a restoration of their centuries-old assault on the entrenched privileges of the Church of England. Although Protestant Nonconformists were permitted freedom of worship after 1689, until almost the middle of the nineteenth century the Anglican clergy enjoyed a monopoly of Christian marriage and burial within England. The enormous revenues of the higher clergy conspired with such vexatious anomalies to make the Established Church seem very vulnerable to parliamentary attack at the time of the Reform legislation.

To the foe who bared his teeth without must be added the enemy within the gate. As the traditionalist-minded Anglican clergy and laity waited for the Dissenters newly admitted to the House of Commons to do their worst, they were horrified to read blueprints of reform penned by latitudinarian clergymen of the English Church, pamphlets full of suggestions for the suppression of traditional Anglicanism and for its replacement by a comprehensive, all-embracing, dogma-less national church. Thomas Arnold, the Head Master of Rugby School (1795-1842), published in 1833 his *Principles of Church Reform*. Arnold proposed that the Thirty-nine Articles should no longer be binding on the clergy and that the Church of England should be broadened to include those who had left it in the seventeenth century. Such latitudinarianism was anathema to those who cherished the Prayer Book and the Articles and whose chief spokesmen were to be found in the University of Oxford. Arnold's published views led to his losing the friendship of John Keble, Fellow of Oriel College and Professor of Poetry in the university, a man who was shortly to quit Oxford for the remote country parish of Hursley in the Diocese of Winchester. Around the same time, Keble was greatly agitated over some ecclesiastical legislation then before parliament. Despite its huge Roman Catholic majority and substantial Presbyterian minority (especially in Ulster), Ireland possessed a complete Anglican Establishment, headed by no fewer than twenty-two archbishops and bishops who drew revenues totalling 150,000 pounds per annum. Such a top-heavy Establishment was ridiculously disproportionate to the number of Anglican souls

in need of pastoral care; so that parliament proposed to reduce the number of sees to twelve as bishops died or retired, freeing the revenues thus saved to boost the livings of the poorer clergy of the Church of Ireland. Such state interference in the life of the church was too much for John Keble, who had been brought up to cherish *iure divino* episcopacy. Chosen as university preacher before the Judges of Assize, on July 14, 1833, from the pulpit of St. Mary the Virgin, Keble denounced the proposed legislation as a "direct disavowal of the sovereignty of God." His sermon was speedily published under the heading of "National Apostasy." A parenthesis in Keble's introduction is worthy of note. Speaking of the legislature of England and Ireland, he reflects as follows on the recent abolition of religious tests: "the members of which are not even bound to profess belief in the Atonement."

In suppressing bishoprics, parliament touched a tender spot in the Anglican conscience. The incipient Oxford Movement now leapt to the defence of the bishops, in their person and in their office. Owen Chadwick writes that, "A rising wave of affection for Archbishop Howley [of Canterbury] swept over the country clergy of England."¹ Howley, one of the most incoherent bumbleres ever to sit on the Chair of Augustine, was later to cause acute discomfort for Queen Victoria at her coronation by jamming an excessively tight ring of office on her finger and by plumping (and twisting) too vigorously the crown on her head. One of his best remembered remarks is the opening vocative of an address he gave at the Speech Day of a girls' school: "My dear young female women." In 1834 a loyal address was presented to Howley with the signatures of some seven thousand clergymen. At the same time, John Henry Newman, Vicar of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, penned the first of the *Tracts for the Times*, the series of theological pamphlets which gave the Oxford Movement the name of "Tractarianism." Here Newman rested the clergy's claim to authority not on the state's establishment of the church, nor on the superior social status of the clergy, but on their so-called "Apostolical Descent": "Exalt our Holy Fathers, the Bishops, as the Representatives of the Apostles, and the Angels of the Churches; and magnify your office, as being ordained by them to take part in their Ministry." Newman conceives of episcopacy as necessary not only for the *bene esse*, but for the very *esse* of the church. Only a bishop standing in the apostolic succession can validly ordain; hence: "we must necessarily consider none to be *really* ordained who

have not *thus* been ordained." N. F. S. Grundtvig, on one of his visits to England, was little amused when apprised of this fact by an eager advocate of the Oxford Movement. Another remark of Newman's concerning the bishops of the 1830's, while plainly funny to succeeding generations, affords us an indication of the temper of the times: "we could not wish them a more blessed termination of their course, than the spoiling of their goods, and martyrdom."²

For the remainder of the 1830's, Newman was the chief spokesman of the Oxford Movement. A distinctive contribution of his was the notion that Anglicanism should see itself as a divinely favoured *via media*. This idea was not in itself new, but whereas in the seventeenth century the Anglicans had thought of their middle way as passing between the Scylla of Romanism and the Charybdis of Anabaptism, Newman now plotted the *via media* between Rome on the one hand, and continental Protestantism, Lutheran and Reformed, on the other. And Newman taught that the middle way could best be charted with the aid of the Vincentian Canon: one must go to Christian antiquity and there discover what has been held "everywhere, always, and by all," and one will lay hands on an objective measure and criterion of belief which will ward off Roman and Protestant error. Having to a great extent set the tone of the programme for the Oxford Movement, Newman joined the Church of Rome in 1845. Even though he thus spent the rest of his life outside the English Church, at the end of his days and in the ensuing century the influence of John Henry Newman has been strongly felt in the resolution of the great theological issue which is the topic of this paper.

In the generally accepted opinion of contemporary Anglicans, Edward Bouverie Pusey is very much the eminently forgettable "ugly sister" among the three chief fathers of the Oxford Movement. John Keble continues to be celebrated for his devout life (while his theology is conveniently forgotten), and John Henry Newman is customarily treated with an extreme form of hyperdulia on account not only of his prose, but also of his enunciating several seminal ideas which cause many to see in him the father of the Second Vatican Council. Pusey (1800-1882) is meanwhile left in obscurity. A confessional Lutheran is apt to find Pusey the most interesting figure in the Oxford Movement, and perhaps in the entire English religious scene of the nineteenth century. The grandson of an earl, in his late twenties Pusey studied extensively in Germany, becoming

intimate with the Pietist Tholuck. On his return to England, Pusey engaged in literary controversy with a fellow clergyman, Hugh James Rose (who was later to be his co-worker in the Oxford Movement) who had in some Cambridge sermons delivered four peppery *Discourses on the State of the Protestant Religion in Germany*. Rose told a bleak tale of wholesale apostasy, trusting to instil such horror in his readers as would afford an antidote against England's taking the same path. Now Rose was no expert on post-Reformation German Protestantism, and his sweeping wholesale generalisations irritated the better informed Pusey. In two studies, which appeared within a couple of years of each other, the youthful Pusey sought to set the record straight. He concurred with Rose in excoriating the rationalist Neology that had devastated German Protestantism, but diverged from Rose in detecting favourable signs of a restoration of a more substantial theology. And, unlike Rose, Pusey dug back deeper than the eighteenth century in seeking the roots of Protestant Germany's virtual apostasy. During his stay in Germany, Pusey had been told by Neander that the rigidity of Lutheran Orthodoxy must bear some of the blame for the later lurch in the opposite direction. Accordingly, Pusey highlighted the putative excesses of what he termed Lutheran "orthodoxy" as an albeit unintentional grandparent of rationalism. In addition, notwithstanding his great (and, incidentally, enduring) admiration for Spener, Pusey argued that Pietism must be considered the immediate parent of liberalism. Later on, Pusey was to think more kindly of Lutheran Orthodoxy, especially of Johann Gerhard. At the time of writing on the theology of Germany, though, Pusey was playing a double game. Not only was he endeavouring to discharge his debt of friendship to Tholuck by rectifying Rose's inaccuracies, but he was also intent on sounding certain caveats to his English co-religionists. Now when he first wrote on the theology of Germany, Pusey was yet a layman. He deemed it improper for a mere layman to speak too plainly to his spiritual superiors. Allegory must therefore take the place of straightforward discourse. Pusey sensed that the rigidity of the so-called high and dry churchmen and the sentimental superficiality of the English Evangelicals might become the unwitting sponsors of a local lapse into rationalism, and he endeavoured to get this point across through the characters of Lutheran "orthodoxy" and German Pietism. On one point Pusey was later bitterly to regret what he wrote in the late 1820's. In the work on German Protestantism, Pusey

tended to conceive the scope of biblical inspiration as extending largely to the impartation of saving doctrine, with the result that he failed to assert the absolute inerrancy of all the historical and geographical statements of Holy Scripture. The Bishop of London and Keble expressed their reservations in private correspondence, and within a few years Pusey himself developed into the foremost English nineteenth-century advocate of plenary inspiration and absolute inerrancy. His opponents were apt in later years to taunt him with being a turncoat and to point with glee to his statements of the late 1820's. Such tactics invariably produced from Pusey public expressions of contrition. Interestingly, in these statements Pusey would customarily give an account of his view of the proper relationship between Scripture and tradition. The Bible for him is always supreme, the evidence of antiquity playing an ancillary role as the prime witness to an exposition of Scripture which must needs be more authentic than the arbitrary interpretations of the moderns. The Vincentian Canon, then, had a different function in Pusey's theology from the one it exercised in Newman's. Along with Keble, Pusey is the most biblically anchored of the fathers of the Oxford Movement.

I would fain demonstrate this last point through a brief reference to Pusey's work on sacramental doctrine. Among the theologically more substantial *Tracts for the Times*, a place of honour might well be found for Pusey's "Tract on Holy Baptism." A full-blown biblical and patristic realism is espoused here, with some apposite quotations from Luther thrown in for good measure,³ to the great consternation of the Anglican Evangelicals who, then as now, liked to think that Luther was, deep down, really a good Zwinglian. And in the 1840's and 1850's, Pusey was instrumental in restoring the historic Real Presence doctrine to the Church of England. His defence of the Lutheran formularies against the charge that they teach "consubstantiation" remains well worth reading, and he displayed great respect for Johann Gerhard. A passage from Pusey's biography by his disciple, Henry Parry Liddon, will demonstrate that Pusey is an interesting figure:

It had been possible for some divines of an earlier age to write of the Person and work of Christ almost in the language of St. Athanasius and St. Cyril, while they discarded the Sacraments in the tone of Calvin and Zwingli. But this inconsistency was becoming less and less practicable when the operation of theological principles,

whether conservative or destructive, was more clearly apprehended, both from internal analysis and in the light of history. It was clear to Pusey that if the solvents which were applied by Zwingli to those great texts of Scripture which teach sacramental grace were also applied to those other texts which teach the Divinity and Atonement of our Lord, the result would be Socinianism; while, if the Baptismal and Eucharistic language of the New Testament was understood in the literal and reverent sense in which serious Christians read the texts that illustrate our Lord's Godhead and His Sacrifice for the sins of the world, the Zwinglian and even the Calvinistic theories of the Sacraments would be no longer possible. The popular Protestantism was really, if unconsciously, on an inclined plane; and if attachment to such positive truth as it still held did not lead it to ascend to a point where all would be safe because consistent, it would, at no distant time, be forced downwards by the irreligious criticism of the day into an abyss where any faith would be impossible.⁴

In 1828, Pusey was appointed, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, to the Regius Chair of Hebrew in the University of Oxford, a professorship of which he was to enjoy a marathon fifty-four year tenure until his death in 1882. This half century was to witness an increasing harrassing of the views which Pusey held on the nature of Holy Scripture. Specifically, 1860, the year after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, saw the issue of a volume of essays by six clergymen and one layman, entitled *Essays and Reviews*. The two best known essayists were Benjamin Jowett, of Balliol College, Oxford, and Frederick Temple, Head Master of Rugby School and a future Archbishop of Canterbury, one of whose diversions would be to indulge in pig-farming at Lambeth Palace. In brief, the authors of *Essays and Reviews* somewhat gingerly embraced what would later be called the historical-critical method; one of them indicated that Genesis and geology do not belong in the same ball-park and that the literal interpretation of Genesis must therefore be eschewed; while another clearly denied that Holy Scripture can be equated with the Word of God. An uproar speedily ensued. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, pronounced that the authors could not "with moral honesty maintain their posts as clergymen of the established church."⁵ What could be done? Within a year, Archbishop Sumner of Canter-

bury, speaking for all the bishops, pronounced that one could not maintain such views as those propounded in *Essays and Reviews* and remain with integrity in the Anglican ministry. Difficulties arose with the demand that censure turn into discipline. For the bishops must prosecute putative heretics in the civil courts, and the previous decade had seen two long contests in the cases of a country clergyman prosecuted by his bishop for denying baptismal regeneration and of a West Country archdeacon with a martyr complex who obliged his bishop to bring charges against him for teaching the *manducatio impiorum*. Civil judges were apt to interpret the Anglican formularies according to the letter, not the spirit, so that convictions for heresy were notoriously hard to come by. Accordingly, the Archbishop of Canterbury was skeptical that any good could come from prosecutions in the civil courts. Archiepiscopal reservations were overruled, however, and two of the essayists were cited by their bishops before the Court of Arches. The judgment given by the dean of the court was confusing: guilty on some counts, innocent on others. The mixed verdict was widely interpreted as a virtual acquittal, so that the traditionalists were obliged to appeal yet higher to the judicial committee of the Privy Council. The majority of the committee acquitted the two indicted clergymen, and the minority dissenting verdict of the two archbishops went unheeded. Since the state refused backing for ecclesiastical discipline, the only recourse left was a series of joint statements and declarations. In 1864 *Essays and Reviews* was condemned by the Convocation of Canterbury, and around the same time the Tractarians and the Evangelicals came together in alliance. The guiding spirit was Pusey. Danger of modernism brought about a resumption of cordial relations between Pusey and his cousin, Lord Shaftesbury, a leading Evangelical layman, who, as a cabinet minister for ten years under his indifferent father-in-law, Lord Palmerston, filled the bench of bishops with conservative Evangelicals. Pusey's declaration maintained the inspiration and divine authority of the Bible "without reserve or qualification," and taught (against F. D. Maurice) the everlasting duration of the punishment of the cursed and the bliss of the saved. The declaration was signed by 10,906 clergymen of the Established Church.

Pusey's right hand man, Henry Parry Liddon, countered the new theological trends in his justly acclaimed Bampton Lectures of 1866 on *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

This work is a tragically neglected classic of English theology, a storehouse of devoutly applied biblical and patristic scholarship. Meanwhile, Pusey applied himself with enormous erudition to such topics as the authorship of the Book of Daniel. In the long run, Pusey and Liddon were doomed to lose. Already in 1869, Gladstone, during his first term of office as prime minister, recommended Frederick Temple for the See of Exeter. The royal *congé d'élire* prevailed over the inevitable outcry; Pusey wrote stupendously long letters to the *Guardian*, complaining that Temple's appointment made a farce of Convocation's condemnations of 1864 and opining that the only remedy was the disestablishment of the Church of England. With Temple's elevation to the episcopate, the modernist takeover of the upper echelons of the Church of England had begun. An interesting footnote can here be recorded from the life of Pusey. In the 1860's, the great cathedrals were beginning to be used for evangelistic purposes, and Dean Stanley of Westminster Abbey conceived the idea of running a series of Sunday afternoon sermons featuring the greatest preachers in the land. Stanley was a disciple of Thomas Arnold and a fervent supporter of *Essays and Reviews*. Pusey politely and encyclopaedically turned down Stanley's invitation to occupy the abbey's pulpit. Yes, he would gladly have the opportunity of reaching thousands of hearers, he wrote, but to appear in the same chancel as Stanley would convey the mistaken impression that he regarded Stanley as an orthodox clergyman and might lead people to suppose that the differences between them were of less than fundamental importance. Pusey understood the theological *res* underlying the business of unionism.

The year 1889 represents a decisive caesura in the ongoing history of the Oxford Movement, as the year in which the principles of modern critical biblical scholarship were first publicly embraced by the rising young men of the Anglo-Catholic party.⁶ Under the editorship of Charles Gore, Principal of the newly established Pusey House in Oxford, the symposium volume *Lux Mundi* was published. Gore's own forty-seven page contribution, on "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration," is a good indicator of the temper of the volume as a whole. Most of Gore's essay is nothing more than a conventional and edifying treatment of the person and work of the Third Person of the Trinity, but in the final sections he began to tread on explosive ground. Gore's distinctive theses boil down to the contention that a certain amount of criticism ought to be permitted on the contents of the

Old Testament books. The first eleven chapters of Genesis, along with the history of Jonah, the Davidic authorship of certain Psalms, and the authorship and dating of Daniel might calmly be surrendered to the higher critics without forfeiting a single ounce of Christian dogma. With an eye to Liddon's Bampton Lectures of 1866, Gore had to reconcile these concessions with the plain fact that the Christ of the Gospels is, to all intents and purposes, embarrassingly pre-critical. Gore solved this problem by adopting a Kenotic Christology: a putative self-limitation of the divine omniscience made it possible for Gore (in his own opinion at least) to combine creedal orthodoxy with critical principles. In his Kenoticism, Gore was followed by the luminous Congregationalist theologian, Peter Taylor Forsyth. Significantly, Gore held that the criticism that should now be permitted in certain parts of the Old Testament might under no circumstances be suffered to invade the New. On reading Gore's essay, Liddon, now a Canon of St. Paul's, suffered spasms of disgust. He turned his face to the wall, dying within a year, having first expressed the opinion that Gore had betrayed everything for which the Oxford Movement had stood. Ironically, Gore never materially changed the positions which he outlined in 1889, so that as a bishop in the 1920's he stoutly waged holy war against clergy who denied the virginal conception or the bodily resurrection of our Lord. When the Modernist Crisis hit the Church of England after the First World War, Gore was in the vanguard of those demanding the harshest ecclesiastical penalties. His last years were spent penning volumes of Christian apologetics, including defences of the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles. Even at the end of his life, it never occurred to Gore that he himself might share part of the blame for sowing the whirlwind of apostasy that has swept through some sections of the English Church in the present century.

In his essay of 1889 Gore appealed to a then recent writing of John Henry (now Cardinal) Newman in support of his recension of the doctrine of inspiration. Back in 1884 the newly elevated prince of the Holy Roman Church had published two articles on the subject of biblical inspiration.⁷ Towards the end of his second essay, Newman takes issue with one of his conservative Roman Catholic critics by pointing to the prevalent opinion that Holy Scripture is not verbally inspired. Newman can always be used as a trusty barometer of the Spirit of the Age. His aim was

to make a winsome apology for Christianity in its Roman Catholic form. Noting that the Councils of Trent and the Vatican had spoken of inspiration as covering what the Bible has to say concerning faith and morals, Newman concludes that faith and morals form the scope of inspiration. Holding this to be true on the authority of the papal teaching office, Newman goes on to suggest that the Scriptural narratives might contain "incidental statements" — "*obiter dicta*" — which have nothing to do with faith and morals and which might just happen to be inaccurate. Newman fastens on 2 Timothy 4:13 as affording a model instance of an "*obiter dictum*," asking what difference it would make if the apostle had suffered a lapse of memory and had left the cloak for which he asked not with Carpus at Troas, but with someone else at another place.

Perhaps Newman should not be given too much blame for the tidal wave of unbelief that has swept across some sections of Anglican theology in this century, but it is arguable that a volume which he published in 1845 has been a contributory factor in the theological developments that led to the publication, in 1977, of the blasphemously entitled symposium volume, *The Myth of God Incarnate*. For the partial lapse of English theology into apostasy has not been the result merely of Bultmannianism crossing the English Channel. Rather, two parallel assaults have been waged in the twentieth-century against the English Church. Certainly, the torch of the Modernists of the 1920's passed to the ambivalent R. H. Lightfoot, who introduced form criticism to England, and from him to his pupil, Dennis Nineham — and, incidentally, when the "Final Report of the Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue in the U.S.A." brackets Dennis Nineham together with Ernst Kaesemann,⁸ the latter has good reason to feel affronted. In addition to this development, we must consider the partial collapse of English patristic scholarship in recent decades as a lively contributor to believing theology. It can be no accident that one of the contributors to *The Myth of God Incarnate* was Maurice Wiles, the present Oxford Regius Professor, who arrived at his radical conclusions in the course of his patristic researches. And although he did not contribute to the volume, the late Cambridge Regius Professor, G. W. H. Lampe, was closely associated with the authors, and, towards the end of his life, in his *God as Spirit*, repudiated Trinitarianism altogether. But

what has all this to do with Newman? As he struggled his way from Canterbury to Rome in the 1840's, Newman had to do some serious thinking on the application of the Vincentian Canon, which lay at the heart of his conception of the Anglican *via media*. In his work of 1845, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman blew to smithereens the Anglican understanding of the Vincentian Canon, by demonstrating that the unanimous consensus on fundamental doctrines which he had earlier supposed to be palpably demonstrable in the case of the Ante-Nicene Church simply never existed. Anglican patristic scholarship has caught up with Newman's insight in the last hundred and forty years; and the revelation that the fathers too have feet of clay, added to the uncertainties brought about through the higher criticism of the Bible, has produced among some scholars the sense that Troeltsch was right after all. Lest a false impression be conveyed here, let me subjoin that the theological nihilism associated with Nineham and Wiles *et hoc genus omne* is characteristic of England's elderly and middle-aged theological scholars. A swing in the opposite direction is apparent in certain of the younger men at the major universities.

The main problem area in English theology, then, lies in questions relating to the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures. For our own part, confessional Lutheran Christendom currently enjoys, so far as human eye can see, a temporary respite from internal controversy on this issue, for which we do well to be thankful. A critical question emerges, though, when we consider the ancillary authority of the patristic tradition. Realisation that the Vincentian Canon is a shaky foundation for the whole theological enterprise is not the same as urging a Baptist rather than a Lutheran understanding of *sola scriptura*. The infiltration of a Protestant mentality into our church could very well result in the displacement of the Lutheran *sola scriptura*, which includes those features of the Christian tradition which are not at odds with the material principle of the Reformation, by the fundamentalist Protestant *sola scriptura*, which recognises no hermeneutically authoritative tradition between the ancient text in a disgusting translation and the enthusiast in the pew. Our sixteenth-century fathers demonstrably appealed to the ancient fathers as senior members of the same church who continue to offer a vital contribution to the thought of

Christendom. Do we presently run the danger of forfeiting the confessional perspective on the Christian past, and should this perspective be lost, can the confessional substance be maintained?

FOOTNOTES

1. Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966, I, p.76.
2. J. H. Newman, "Thoughts on the Ministerial Commission Respectfully Addressed to the Clergy," in *Tracts for the Times by Members of the University of Oxford* (London: J. G. and F. Rivington, 1839), I, pp.1-4.
3. E. B. Pusey: "Scriptural Views of Holy Baptism, as Established by the Consent of the Ancient Church and Contrasted with the Systems of Modern Schools", in *Tracts for the Times by Members of the University of Oxford* (London: J. G. and F. Rivington, 1840), II: II, pp. 393. See especially p. 122: "Such was the ancient view: and it is satisfactory to find in the founder of that branch of the foreign Reformation, which retained the ancient doctrine of Baptism, the clear perception that the putting on of CHRIST, which is His gift in Baptism, must precede the putting Him on in life, that we must first be by Him conformed to Himself, in order that we may afterwards seek to imitate Him. Would that they who extol Luther's clearness on the doctrine of justification by faith, would lay to heart their master's teaching as to justification through Baptism."
4. H. P. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie pusey* (London: Longmans and Green, 1893-1894) I, p. 348.
5. Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, II, p. 78.
6. The tale is told very much from Gore's point of view by Geoffrey Rowell in his *The Vision Glorious. Themes and personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism* (Oxford University press, 1983).
7. J. H. Newman, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, J. Derek Holmes and Robert Murray, eds. (Washington: Corpus Books, 1967).
8. *The Report of the Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue. Second Series, 1976-1980* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement publications, 1981), p. 18.

Jonathan Edwards: A Case of Medium-Message Conflict

Klemet Preus

Jonathan Edwards, the great Calvinist theologian, in the waning years of Puritan influence in America attempted to bring people to a conviction of his message by employing revivals as his primary medium. While successful initially, the ultimate results of his effort were his own dismissal from his parish, the gradual decay of strict Calvinism as a theological force in America and the popularization of the revivals as a distinctively American phenomenon. Edwards' lesson for theologians and preachers of today is that a theological message of doctrine is often subject to limitations which its medium places upon it. The doctrinal message of any given church is undermined if placed into media which are inconsistent with it. Most churches, in order to survive, have developed media appropriate to and consistent with their particular doctrinal stance.¹

Edwards' tragedy was his inability to recognize that revivals and strict Calvinism were culturally and inherently incompatible.

The message which Jonathan Edwards preached tenaciously and inexorably for twenty-five years of ministry (1726-1751) at Northampton, Massachusetts, was the doctrine of strict Calvinism. Edwards inherited both his theology and his ecclesiastical predilections from the strict Puritans who came from England to establish a theocracy in the "Promised Land" of the new world. Theirs was a world view in which the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty permeated all of theology and all contemporary thought and life. The doctrines of man, sin, grace, faith, salvation, Christ, the means of grace, eternal election, and eternal life are all the necessary results of an intensely logical system of theology which refuses to compromise or vitiate the immutable sovereignty of God. It is difficult for the twentieth century mind to appreciate fully the manner in which a man like Jonathan Edwards applied the doctrine of God's sovereignty to everything he encountered. His extensive readings in mathematics, Newton's astronomy, geography, and especially the philosophical works of John Locke were all integrated into his theology.²

Unlike his theological descendants he would not divide his thinking into various schools or disciplines. Edwards was first, last, and

always the theologian who wished to glorify the sovereign God. He was, claimed Perry Miller:

The last great American, perhaps the last European, for whom there could be no warfare between religion and science or between ethics and nature. He was incapable of accepting Christianity and physics on separate premises. His mind was so constituted . . . that he went directly to the issues of his age, defined them and asserted the historic Protestant doctrine in full cognizance of the latest disclosures in both psychology and natural science.³

God had preeminence over all the knowledge or discoveries of men, and these achievements must be viewed only in the context of the unapproachable, incomprehensible, absolute, arbitrary, unimpressable, sovereign God.

Although the depravity of man seems to be the emphasis for which he is best known, to Edwards sin was an empty concept if divorced from the sovereignty of God. God's purpose in the creation and preservation of this world was that certain people would honor Him and acknowledge His sovereign decrees. When mankind sinned and transgressed God's laws, the human race was plunged into the "innate sinful depravity of the heart."⁴ This innate wickedness is all the more profound, and man's guilt all the more "heinous," since the absolute infinite and sovereign God is the offended party. Man's fall is damnable, firstly, because God's purposes in creation were apparently thwarted, and, secondly, because "there is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment."⁵ So dishonorable towards God is our sin and so repugnant to Him that His spokesman, Edwards, could rail against the wickedness of mankind with fierce eloquence:

And there is actual wickedness without number or measure. There are breaches for every command, in thought, word, and deed; a life of sin; days and nights filled up with sin; mercies abused and frowns despised; mercy and justice and all divine perfections trampled on, and the honor of each person in the Trinity trod in the dirt. Now if one sinful word or thought has so much evil in it as to deserve eternal destruction, how do they deserve to be eternally cast off and destroyed, that are guilty of so much sin!⁶

Edwards' Calvinistic soteriology is likewise predicated upon a belief in God's absolute sovereignty. According to an immutable decree God atoned for those whom He "from eternity had designed to save."⁷ Out of infinite mercy God sent His Son Jesus Christ to bear the humility of our race, to condescend to us in His passion and death as well

as His incarnation and birth. This condescension, which is God's part of the covenant, makes Jesus more approachable and worthy of our acceptance. Such affectionate acceptance or faith is our part of God's covenant. "What are you afraid of," queried Edwards, "that you dare not venture your soul upon Christ? . . . Are you afraid that He will not be able to stoop so low as to take any gracious note of you? . . . Behold Him hanging on the cross! Do you think that He that had condescension enough to stoop to these things, . . . will be unwilling to accept you if you come to Him? Christ's love commends the Savior to us as merciful, Who, if we accept and trust, will save us." Such trust is the condition for salvation. "If you come, you need not fear but that you will be accepted."⁸ "He will be united with you, if you accept Him."⁹

Faith, the condition of salvation on the part of mankind, was, however, purely a creation and gift from God. Only those who from eternity had been predestined to salvation could expect to come to faith, regardless of their best intentions or efforts at self-conversion:

Some hope by their striving to obtain salvation of themselves. They have a secret imagination that they shall by degrees work in themselves sorrows and repentance for sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God.¹⁰

God arbitrarily predetermined some to salvation and some to damnation, He arbitrarily atoned for the sins of only those who were elect, and He arbitrarily worked faith in their hearts but not in the hearts of the reprobate. On behalf of His elect God fulfilled both His part of the covenant and also the part of the sinful people. But for the reprobate God fulfilled neither His part nor their part.

The strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God coupled with man's inherent wickedness led Edwards to state, in as radical a manner as possible, the utter dependency of mankind upon God:

We are more apparently dependent on God for holiness, because we are first sinful, and utterly polluted, and afterward holy . . . So we are more apparently dependent on free grace for the favor of God, for we are first just the objects of his displeasure, and afterwards received into favor.¹¹

Even in such terrifying homiletical efforts as "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Edwards' primary concern was neither to drive people to suicide,¹² nor to bring them only to the point of despair. His intention was to create in them the despondence which, according to his theology, was essential to their religion. God was portrayed as offended, wrathful, and jealous but somehow staying His

just retribution:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked . . . he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; . . . and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment . . . And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning. but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.¹³

As long as the fires of hell were held at bay, the horror-stricken sinner had some faint hope and was forced to cast his complete dependence upon God. The gist of Edwards' sermonistic rhetoric was stated clearly in his philosophical writings:

The nature and contrivance of our redemption is such, that the redeemed are in every thing directly, immediately and entirely dependent on God: They are dependent upon him in every way.¹⁴

Edwards' theological consistency also forced him to adopt the Calvinistic view that God is sovereign over His Word. He believed that, while the Word of God could bring a person to an intellectual understanding and acceptance of the Gospel, only by a sovereign act, irrespective of the preaching of the Word, would God bestow upon an individual "a divine and supernatural light." Faith was not worked by the Word, but was "immediately the work of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵ The Word, claimed Edwards, "conveys to our minds these and those doctrines, . . . but not the sense of the divine excellency of them in our hearts . . . but that due sense of the heart wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God."¹⁶ Some scholars have suggested "that Edwards joined that line of Puritan theologians who inclined away from outward means of grace by emphasizing the internals of grace in the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit."¹⁷ But Edwards was merely repeating the teachings of his mentor, John Calvin, on this point.¹⁸ Both men held to this doctrine, not out of any latent mysticism, but because of the desire to protect the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Conrad Cherry summarized, ". . . this is Edwards' principal point of the subject—God has sovereign disposal over the means (i.e., the Word) and the striving attached to them. It is the power of God alone which decides the efficacy of the means."¹⁹

The Calvinistic doctrine of God's sovereignty encroached upon the Puritan views of God's covenant and God's covenant people. According to early Puritans, such as John Winthrop, John Cotton and Richard Mather, God had covenanted with the New England Puritans that He would be their God and He would establish His kingdom in the New World.²⁰ "We shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us," warned John Winthrop while his company was still in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean aboard the *Arbella* in 1630. Similar to God's covenant people of the Old Testament the people of New England perceived themselves as a people set apart to establish a theocracy and teach the future generations of the New World God's immutable dictates. According to the Puritans, God's covenant of grace resulting in individual salvation was fulfilled on man's part by personal faith wrought by the Holy Spirit.

The social and ecclesiastical covenant was another story.²¹ Individually and corporately all the people were to fulfill the ecclesiastical and social aspects of the covenant or expect the removal of God's care from the entire body. "Any unpunished individual breach of the covenant would be considered by God as a sin by the whole community and the entire covenant would be punished. If the volume and character of the sins committed by an individual should warrant, God would withdraw from the covenant leaving society to flounder helplessly in a natural state."²² The fragile nature of the covenant forced Puritans to adapt certain means to protect it. Rigorous suppression of sin as well as constant and dire predictions of gloom and doom were the duties of Puritan preachers since the preservation of the covenant required not only strict moralism but also uniformity of doctrine, purpose, and spirituality. In order to preserve the spiritual uniformity Puritans expected conversions to occur according to predictable patterns and developed what Edmund Morgan has called a "morphology of conversion." He describes conversion as expected by Puritan churchmen:

First comes a feeble and false awakening to God's commands and a pride in keeping them pretty well, but also much backsliding. Disappointments and disasters lead to fitful hearkenings to the word. Sooner or later true legal fear or conviction enables the individual to see his hopeless and helpless condition and to know that his own righteousness cannot save him, that Christ is the only hope. Thereafter comes the infusion of saving grace, sometimes but not always so precisely felt that the believer can state exactly when and where it came to him. A struggle between faith and doubt ensues, with the candidate careful to indicate that his assurance has never been complete

and that his sanctification has been hampered by his own sinful heart.²³

Any true convert was required to testify to having received or experienced this "infusion of grace." The possession of the "supernatural light," as Edwards dubbed it, qualified one for full entrance into the ecclesiastical covenant. The Covenant was further protected by the admonishment and even dismissal of any pastor who departed from the theology of Calvinism.²⁴

Over the years a crisis arose within Puritan society which created the type of situation in which revivals were a likely occurrence. Theologically, the corporate uniformity among Puritans was precluded by the theology of Calvinism itself. Since God was sovereign over the Word in Calvinist thought, there was no way for its power and effect to be predicted or marshalled among subsequent generations of Puritans. The first generation of Puritans all claimed, with Winthrop in 1630, to have experienced the "divine and supernatural light" immediately bestowed by the Spirit. But second and third generations had to claim the same level of spirituality in order to maintain corporate uniformity. While all second generation Puritans possessed an intellectual understanding of the Gospel, a sizable number could not claim the experience of the "Excellency of Christ" or to have undergone the conversion pattern expected of them. These "unsaved Puritans" maintained ties both socially and ecclesiastically with those who had been impressed with Christ's Excellency. Their presence in the Puritan community had a potential rupturing effect on the covenant community. By the 1660's the problem of unsaved Puritans had reached crisis proportions.

The Puritan response to this crisis further prepared the people for the revivals. Theologically the problem posed by "unsaved Puritans" could not have been solved without damaging the Puritan concept of the covenant. To forbid this growing number of people any entrance into the church would have been an admission that God had forsaken His remnant by causing apostasy in their children. But to grant admittance would have undermined the entire Calvinistic system of theology which insisted that historical faith was simply not enough for entrance into a covenant relationship. The solution was the establishment in 1662 of the "Halfway Covenant." According to the "Halfway Covenant" those people who had not been rightly saved could not attend the Lord's Supper or be given voting privileges, but they could be considered "partial members" and have their children baptized, a privilege heretofore afforded only to "true believers." It was hoped that such a compromise would not diminish the number

of the "full" members, nor create apathy among the "partial" members. Actually, neither hope was realized.²⁵

The results of the Halfway Covenant were manifold. One immediate effect was further to "rend the uniformity of New England thought."²⁶ Not only had there existed a wide disparity among the people but now the clergy itself had become divided over the entire concept of a Halfway Covenant. Many believed it to be unbiblical and thought that God's presence would certainly be withdrawn after this compromise action. A second result was that most of the congregations in New England were suddenly comprised of a majority of people who were in need of conversion and salvation. The preacher's job was suddenly changed from that of feeding and sustaining his flock to converting the pagans within the fellowship. The recognition that congregations were made up of unbelievers also created the need for a converting agent within the congregations themselves. Significantly, the Halfway Covenant created a class of people which could not rightly be called either in the covenant or out of it. These people eventually were considered neither totally depraved nor completely regenerate. The existence of this large group of people made the doctrine of total depravity extremely difficult to maintain.

The ambiguities of the "Halfway Covenant" were resolved in two different ways. The first, was to broaden the definition of "saint" and so erase the distinction between members of the covenant community. This resolution was practiced by Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards' grandfather and predecessor at the Northampton parish. In the 1680's Stoddard commenced the practice of allowing full church membership rights with the reception of the Lord's Supper to all who professed mere intellectual assent to the Gospel.²⁷ By so doing he delivered the church from the unhappy arrangements of the "Halfway Covenant" but also led his people into a rejection of the logical implications of Calvinism. By insisting that "historical faith" was sufficient for salvation, Stoddard had made the special "divine and supernatural light" of strict Puritans irrelevant. More significantly, he had inadvertently questioned God's role as solely responsible for salvation. Since man could arrive at historical faith on his own, according to Puritan thought, Stoddard had robbed God of His sovereign prerogatives in salvation. While the full implications of Stoddard's decision were not realized for almost half a century, synergistic forces had been activated which could not easily be thwarted.

The second way to circumvent the implications of the "Halfway Covenant" was simply to attempt a return to the strict understanding of the earliest Puritans. This was the goal of Jonathan Edwards. He retained the narrow definition of "saint" as one who had experienc-

ed the "supernatural light," while also repeating the theme of his forefathers that the New England Puritans were the covenant people of God. In order to do this, rather than allowing the "Halfway" group easy entrance into the Kingdom of God, he worked tirelessly for their full conversion. Insisting upon an unconditional acceptance of Calvinistic doctrine he railed ruthlessly against any theology which questioned or denied the sovereignty of God and man's complete dependence upon Him. Against the synergistic Arminian doctrine of man's free will Edwards produced some of his best known works, *Freedom of the Will* (1754) and *The Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (1757). Coupled with his refusal to compromise the Calvinistic covenant doctrine was Edwards' identification of New England as the site of Christ's great and glorious second, millennialistic advent:

And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America. . . . And if we may suppose that this glorious work of God shall begin in any part of America, I think, if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must need appear the most likely of all American colonies, to be the place when this work shall principally take its rise.²⁸

Obviously, it was necessary for Edwards to convert the New Englander if God's glorious work was to take place. The most successful medium in effecting the conversion experience was the revival.

The revival initially was perceived simply as a time when large numbers of people gained entrance into the covenant. Gradually revivals assumed a more narrow definition. They were religious events in which the message of "salvation" was attended with specific and well defined evangelistic and rhetorical techniques. The first "Great Awakening" occurred in 1734 and, whatever its causes, was probably the only revival which genuinely surprised both pastor and people. Jonathan Edwards viewed the revival as a spontaneous work of God's sovereign grace. The hundreds of people who were "savingly wrought upon" also considered the events as a "surprising work of God." Edwards claimed with truth and amazement that "Scarcely a single person in the whole town was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal Word."²⁹ On one Sunday over 100 people were brought as members into the Northampton parish. The news of the revival, at first greeted with skepticism by neighboring churches, soon began to bear the same fruits outside of Northampton. Edwards claimed that all but two of the towns in the Connecticut River Valley had experienced significant conversions during 1735 and even one of these two almost doubled its size during the six months of the revival.³⁰

The New England confidence in the sovereignty of God did not allow the people to consider causes of the revival which might be slightly more mundane. Actually New England and especially Northampton "had been obscurely tending toward revival for a hundred years."³¹ Stoddard had claimed five small "harvests," the most recent in 1718. The existence of the "halfway" community had necessitated a novel homiletical form so that "by 1730 a type of sermon designed for communal response was almost a perfect literary form, waiting only for someone to take it in hand."³² Latent fears and uncertainties within the collective mind of society further prepared Edwards' people for the revival. Opportunities for wealth through human endeavor due to land speculation, opening trade relationships, and population growth led to prideful ambition and success. But disease, Indian raids, and a host of other daily dangers reminded the people of God's sovereign control and enabled Edwards to rebuke their ambitious pride.³³ An "uncommonly impressive"³⁴ homiletician, Edwards, armed with a "perfected sermonic form" and an authoritarian countenance, brought the people to such an "agitated state of anticipation" that the expected conversion experiences were almost a foregone conclusion.

While more dramatic than those of a half a decade earlier, the revivals of 1740-1741 were a surprise to few Puritan leaders. Revivalists soon learned that the rhetorical techniques of revivals could be marshalled and the results therefore predicted. Since divine predictability was a precious commodity for the preservation of Puritan society, revivals achieved widespread use. The most crucial factor for the success of these revivals was Edwards' publishing in 1737 of *A Faithful Narrative*, which was a glowing account and defense of the revivals of 1734. While subsequent revivals differed from the first in many ways, the conversion experiences of 1734 recounted by Edwards "became firmly fixed in the popular mind."³⁵ The success of the 1741 "awakening" was guaranteed by other factors. This time George Whitefield traveled from London to New England and conducted the revival for thirty carefully planned days. Less rigid and logical in his sermonizing than the clergy of New England, Whitefield appealed almost exclusively to the emotions of the audience. His eloquence was acknowledged by both supporters and detractors. The revivals lasted only a couple of days at each parish, after which Whitefield was off to other "harvests," leaving the local clergy to care for the souls which had been won. Critical evaluation was precluded. His itinerancy was so successful that the clergy of New England gladly emulated the foreigner. Ola Winslow asserted that the New England "ministry was all on horseback during the summer 1741, with ser-

mons in their pockets for any emergency invitations.”³⁶ The *modus operandi* was to precede the coming of the revivalist with liberal and often exaggerated claims of his homiletical prowess, high spirituality, and past successes at the salvation of men’s souls. Following the revival, reports would be sent to other towns which contained such pertinent data as “the size of the audience, the distance many had traveled to hear him, the fact that they had stood in the rain, or assembled at five a.m., that many had fainted, that the outcries of the repentant had drowned the voice of the speaker, and that the collection plate had not been large enough for the offerings poured into it.”³⁷ The local newspapers also published primers with “directions on how to hear sermons preached by the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield.” Another factor which contributed to the success of the revivals of 1740 was the constant exhortations and prayers of the local clergy and especially Jonathan Edwards to return to the now dormant zeal of 1734. These elements led to revivals so successful that they became the norm, at least in outward appearances, for subsequent revivals.

The revivals of 1740-1741 impressed certain expectations and ideas on the collective soul of New England so as to preclude the maintenance of Calvinistic theology. The theology of revivalism was a type of Americanized Arminianism; its primary emphasis was on man’s innate ability to effect his own destiny and salvation.³⁸ That such a theology should be associated with revivalism is not a mere accident of history. Though promoted by Calvinists, revivals were both culturally and inherently Arminian in nature.

Named after the Dutch theologian, Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), Arminianism attacked Calvinistic doctrine at almost every crucial point. It taught that salvation was not the result of God’s sovereign decree of election, but of man’s free choice. The natural condition of man was not depraved, as Edwards and Calvin taught, but each man was a free moral agent and the master of his own destiny. The “means of grace” were dependent for their power, not upon God’s sovereign decree, but upon the arbitrary choice of the people who heard these means. The final result was a view of the relationship between God and man in which the roles had been reversed from Calvinistic theology. God, no longer the arbitrary Sovereign who damned and saved as He pleased, had, in Arminian theology, lost His divine prerogative and spent His existence responding to the whims and choices of His creatures.³⁹ A final aspect of Arminianism worthy of note was its emphasis on the role and responsibility of the individual, often irrespective of corporate involvement and commitment. Uniformity, in Arminian thought, was not a virtue. While Arminianism in New England was not formally taught as a system of theology, by

Edwards' time it had nevertheless become entrenched among both clergy and laity. It was a popular and "native American variety of human self-sufficiency which expressed itself within the forms of Covenant theology."⁴⁰

George Whitefield, tended to make revivals culturally incompatible with Calvinistic theology. Whitefield, like almost all churchmen of his day, claimed to be a Calvinist. His loyalty, however, was not to any doctrinal system and his preaching often assumed an Arminian flavor. Salvation, to Whitefield, was given to whomever desired it. His "whosoever will" emphasis, while well received on American soil due to its democratic overtones,⁴¹ was an explicit denial of Calvinism. Whitefield's sermons placed the responsibility for conversion upon man. An example is his sermon, "Abraham's Offering Up His Son Isaac." A winsome masterpiece of oratorical skill, he narrated the sacrifice of Abraham and related it to the sacrifice of God's Son. But in his conclusion he spoke of unfeigned faith as though its existence were the responsibility of the believer rather than God:

But if you are only talking believers, have only a faith of the head and never felt the power of it in your hearts, . . . unless you get a faith of the heart, a faith working by love, you shall never sit with . . . Jesus Christ in the kingdom of heaven.⁴²

Statements like "unless you get a faith . . .," outwardly returned the people to the Puritan fold, but also inculcated in them ideas that their salvation was, to some degree, their own achievement. Ola Winslow explained the effect Whitefield's preaching had upon the lost sheep of New England:

Under his impassioned preaching each hearer felt himself alone in the whole world pursued by God. If he were to escape damnation and obtain the key to heaven, *he must do it today*.⁴³

The most popular revivalist of all time had changed the theology to which his audience was accustomed. Later revivalists such as James Davenport, Tennant, and Charles Finney in the nineteenth century were more extreme in their Arminianism. A second factor from a cultural perspective, which made Calvinism and revivalism inconsistent was the necessity of human impetus for the success of the revival. No true and consistent Calvinist could ever plan salvation; only God could undertake such a venture. Yet the revivals of 1740-1741 and all subsequent revivals were painstakingly planned to the smallest detail before they commenced. Whitefield's American tour was announced in both press and pulpit. The preachers encouraged people to expect some great work of God through the efforts of the revivalist.⁴⁴ Such planning gave the impression that the normally feeble efforts of mankind had now tapped the awesome powers of God. Edwards himself,

during the years between the two "Awakenings" at Northampton, was not reluctant to chide the people for losing the fervor of 1735.⁴⁵ These chidings, as well as his constant exhortations to repeat the experience, laid the responsibility for "the surprising work of God" upon the shoulders of His creatures. Even the end of the 1735 revival was the result of human activity. On June 1, 1735, Edwards' uncle, Joseph Hawley, killed himself by slitting his own throat. While Edwards blamed the action on the rage of Satan,⁴⁶ and attributed Hawley's actions to "the disease of melancholy,"⁴⁷ this suicide proved to be the turning point in the religious excitement that had possessed the town for months.⁴⁸ Not only were the revivals commenced by man, but their conclusions were often effected by distinctively ungodly forces. Further evidence that human impetus caused the success was the itinerancy to which revivals became so closely associated. In Calvinist theology God is not bound to a visiting clergy, but this innovation became a mark of the revival after 1741 because it had worked so successfully for Whitefield.

Revivals were also culturally inconsistent with strict Calvinistic theology because of the interpretation Jonathan Edwards placed upon them relative to the millennialistic fervor of the age. Edwards identified New England as the site which God had chosen to bring about His second glorious rule of Christ on earth.⁴⁹ He also interpreted the success of his revivals as proof that his millennialistic interpretations were accurate. But since the revivals were dependent upon man for their commencement, continuance, and recurrence, it was easy for New Englanders to think that the ushering in of the kingdom of God was their own responsibility. Until the time of Edwards most theologians believed that the millennium would be preceded by an age of great trials and apostasy.⁵⁰ By challenging this view Edwards not only established himself as America's first post-millennial thinker; he also opened the door for the liberal, and decidedly Arminian, view that America was the master of her own destiny. "The encouragement it [his doctrine] gave to the efficacy of human effort made it a natural ally to the new doctrine of human ability which already had begun to make inroads on the older Calvinism."⁵¹

The Connecticut Valley revivals of Edwards and Whitefield did not have to involve itinerant preachers, employ Arminian theologians, prepublicize the acts of God, or even stress Edwards' post-millennialistic views. Edwards' first revivals of 1735 lacked all such incidentals. The Northampton pastor was the first to understand that many of the outward manifestations of the revivals neither proved nor disproved their validity. In his famous apology for the New England revivals, *The Distinguishing Marks*, he listed nine such phenomena. Things like

the unusual manner in which conversions took place, actions of an imprudent nature, errors of judgment, the backsliding of many converts, or too much "hellfire and damnation" proved nothing to Edwards.⁵² What Jonathan Edwards did not discount were the actual revivals themselves. To his chagrin most criticisms of the revivals during the 1740's centered in the propriety of these incidental factors which Edwards himself conceded were no proof of the Spirit's activity. Men of less moderation such as James Davenport managed to obfuscate the whole issue by insisting on promoting the type of hysteria that even Edwards could not abide.⁵³ The value of the revival, divorced from many of its excesses, was never discussed. It was this type of revival which Edwards defended. In his estimation it resulted in many spiritual blessings such as a thirst for Scripture, a higher esteem for Jesus, and a love for God and man. "These marks are sufficient to outweigh a thousand such little objections, as many oddities, irregularities, and errors in conduct, and delusions and scandals of some professors."⁵⁴ But had these factors been absent in the New England of 1740, the revivals would still have conflicted with Calvinism, for the two are inherently incompatible.

Calvinism and revivalism were inherently contradictory because Calvinism, in principle, cannot bind God to a medium through which spiritual blessings are guaranteed. Edwards' mistake in his positive evaluation of the revivals was that he identified the work of the Spirit too closely to a specific medium. He effectively bound God to the revival, a medium over which, by Calvinistic definition, the Almighty had to be Sovereign. Edwards' reasoning, in *The Distinguishing Morals*, was essentially syllogistic:

- A. The Work of the Spirit results in (1) higher esteem for Jesus, (2) decreased desire for worldly things, (3) higher interest in the Scriptures, (4) increased ability to discern the things of the Spirit, and (5) love of God and man.⁵⁵
- B. The revivals most assuredly demonstrate these spiritual signs.⁵⁶
- C. Therefore the revivals are from the Spirit.⁵⁷

Such reasoning, though logical, ignored the essential Calvinistic doctrine of God's sovereignty. A pure Calvinistic syllogism would have been:

- A. The Work of the Spirit results in (1) higher esteem for Jesus, (2) decreased desires for worldly things, (3) higher interest in the Scriptures, (4) increased ability to discern the things of the Spirit, and (5) love of God and man.
- B. These signs of the Spirit are apparent today.
- C. Therefore the Spirit is working today.

Calvinism draws no conclusions about the revival. It is a means through which God may or may not work. All the Calvinist knows is that the Sovereign God works. Questions of how and when are left to His impenetrable discretion. Edwards' defense of revivalism demonstrates a weakness in orthodox Calvinism. Human nature simply cannot tolerate a God whose revelation and work are so inscrutable. People react to the unknowable God of Calvinism with either Arminianism or attempts, such as Edwards, to know God or identify His actions through some medium. Either way is a denial of Calvin's doctrine and both are ultimately an exaltation of human prerogatives over the divine. If Jonathan Edwards could not resist the temptation to bind God to a means, certainly his parishioners could fare no better.

The second reason for which Calvinism and revivalism are inherently incompatible is that revivalism necessarily stressed the relationship of an individual to God irrespective of the religious community. Puritanism, of course, rested upon an understanding of God's covenant in which all the people of the church were collectively involved. The task of the Puritan preacher was simply to bind the people together. Uniformity was good. Deviance was bad. Revivals, their universal appeal and occurrence notwithstanding, tended to isolate the individual spiritually from others in the group. There may have been a commonly expected experience, but how it occurred varied with the individuals.⁵⁸ For example, sin, in revivalism was not primarily the collective guilt inherited from Adam.⁵⁹ Rather sin is perceived almost exclusively as overt, individual sinful actions. One of the signs of the revivals was deliverance from such overt and actual sins. Among the five positive and beneficial results of the revival, to Edwards, no virtue which speaks of the cohesion of the religious community was listed. All five "marks of a work of the Spirit of God" apply to the individual.⁶⁰ Theoretically, a New Englander could have been saved and exhibit all the necessary signs without any commitment to the corporate covenant. Edwards, of course, tried to incorporate the converts into his congregation, but even he grew more enamored with the individual conversions within his flock than with the effects of

the revivals upon the assembly as a whole.⁶¹ Edwards exalted the individualistic nature of conversion so much that in his *Faithful Narrative* the two conversion experiences which he recounted, by his own admission, were the least typical.⁶² The message of Calvinism was corporate uniformity. The result of revivalism was individual deviation. Edwards was able to maintain the Calvinistic doctrine and still promote the revivals. His own parishioners⁶³ and the rest of New England saw the conflict more clearly with a decided preference for the revivals.

Perhaps the most significant factor which contributed to the inherent incompatibility of Calvinism and revivalism is the difference between exhortational preaching and didactic preaching. In the Calvinistic system preaching was primarily didactic. This style is consistent with Calvinistic theology. Since people are unable to convert themselves, no advice or imperative would be of any benefit. Instead God, through His spokesman the preacher, speaks to the people, teaching them of His anger and love. The people are passive, as all Calvinists must be, and God, through the preacher, is active. This is not to say that Calvinists were not exhortational on occasion. All the Puritans including Edwards encouraged their people to righteous living and the maintenance of the covenant. But since all good in the people was ultimately traced to God, persistent harangues to choose the right or to decide upon the righteous course were relatively rare. In Edwards' most celebrated sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," preached at the revival's peak in 1741, as well as his sermons which sparked the revival in 1734, he contented himself with presenting the doctrines of the Bible as he understood them. His almost morbid depiction of God's anger contains not a single imperative for the audience to follow. He breathes not a single word of exhortation except that the people "hearken" to his warning.⁶⁴

The revivals necessarily turned the roles around. Revivalistic preaching was viewed by the people as exhortational even if intended by the preacher to be didactic. Even so, Whitefield, Tennant, and almost all subsequent revivalist preachers of note regardless of theology have been predominantly exhortational in homiletical style. The revivalist preacher was not God's spokesman, but one of the people himself exhorting others to change their minds and so alter God's decisions by theirs. Edwards, of course, never wanted to assume this posture but his revivals implicitly forced the preacher into a less authoritative role and the hearers into an increasingly active position. Whitefield's sermon on Abraham serves as an appropriate example. In it his primary focus is not upon the mysteries of God, but upon the actions of Abraham. The sermon is not void of doctrinal content,

but it is lacking compared to its strong exhortational elements.⁶⁵ People came to the revivals not to be changed but to change, not to be "brought through," but to come through to salvation. Even if Calvinistic dependence upon God was preached, the revivalistic exhortations to believe implied, to the hearer, a natural ability to come to faith. Edwards could define the revivals as a "surprising act of God," but the people, for the first time in their lives were no longer passive in their religion. During the early revivals this may not have been apparent, but as more obviously Arminian revivalists continued to have success, it became clear that the doctrinal content of the revivals was purely secondary.⁶⁶ The sole purpose of revivals was "conversions," not doctrine. Preaching brings about the morphology of "conversion" when it exhorts, not when it teaches.

Conclusion

The tragedy of Jonathan Edwards shows that certain media are unsuitable for the propagation of certain messages. Revivalism was culturally and inherently unsuitable for Calvinism. Edwards could not have been expected to realize the implications of revivalism for Puritanism or for America. To him the revivals were sent by God as a means to reclaim the lost and as a proof of his theology. For Edwards to have opposed the revivals would, in his own mind, have been a denial of his own principles. In reality his support of the revivals was a denial of his Calvinistic doctrine. Revivalism, as a religious medium, stressed man's autonomy and free will and emphasized man's role in salvation. Calvinism, as a spiritual message, taught the total depravity of man, his dependence on God, and the sovereignty of the Almighty. The medium led man to plan his salvation. The message taught man his inability to plan. The medium inculcated individualism, an independent spirit, and the responsibilities of each man singly. The message promoted corporate culpability, federalism, and dependence on the mass of people for spiritual and social identity. The medium exhorted to faith. The message taught doctrine. Revivalism became an American religious institution and the necessary medium for the promotion of American Arminian Protestantism. Puritanism died in America. America's "Great Awakening" was Calvinism's "Great Wake."

FOOTNOTES

1. For example, Baptists, synergistic as they are, employ an altar call as a medium for their doctrine of conversion. Pentecostals find that the medium of "prayer and praise" meetings accommodates the propagation of their message. To them prayer and praise are vehicles of the Holy Spirit and means of grace. Lutherans have a particular affinity toward structured worship. This medium is consistent with the Lutheran doctrine that Word and sacrament are inherently and predictably powerful.
2. William Brigance, ed., *History and Criticism of American Public Address*, I (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1943), pp. 220-221.
3. Perry Miller, "The Objective Good," in *Jonathan Edwards: A Profile*, ed. David Levin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), p. 163.
4. Jonathan Edwards, *Selections*, ed. Clarence Faust and Clarence Johnson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1935), p. 317.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
6. *Selections*, p. 116.
7. Brigance, p. 221.
8. *Selections*, p. 124.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
10. Jonathan Edwards quoted by Conrad Cherry, "Conversion: Nature and Grace," in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards*, ed. William Shieck (Boston: G. K. Hall and Company, 1980), p. 80.
11. *Selections*, p. 95.
12. Robert Oliver, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
13. *Selections*, pp. 164-165.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
17. Conrad Cherry, who refers to Douglas Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 147. Cf. also Brigance, who says "that there runs through Edwards' sermons a more pronounced strain of mysticism and pathos than is found in the works of most of his orthodox predecessors," p. 220.
18. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beridge, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), I, pp. 240ff.
19. Cherry, p. 80.
20. Robert Oliver, pp. 6-7.
21. Cf. Eugene White, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-71.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
23. Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, New York, 1965), p. 91.

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24. Charles Jones, "The Impolite Mr. Edwards: The Personal Dimension of the Robert Breck Affair," in Schieck, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-33.
 25. Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 12. This volume contains most of Edwards' publications on revivals in America, as well as an excellent introduction by the editor. Cf. also White, p. 54.
 26. White, p. 54.
 27. Goen, p. 15, and White, p. 59.
 28. *The Great Awakening*, pp. 353,358.
 29. Ola Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards: 1703-1758*, (New York: Collier Books, 1940), p. 155.
 30. Goen, pp. 22-23.
 31. Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, (Toronto: William Sloan and Associates, 1949), p. 134.
 32. Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 135.
 33. Goen, p. 31.
 34. Winslow, p. 146.
 35. Goen, p. 27.
 36. Winslow, p. 178.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.
 38. Goen, p. 10.
 39. Goen, pp. 5-18. *Selections*, pp. xxxix-xliii. Oliver, p. 37.
 40. Thomas Schafer, "Jonathan Edwards and Justification by Faith," *Church History*, 20 (1951), p. 55, cited by Goen, p. 10.
 41. Edward Collins, "The Rhetoric of Sensation Challenges the Rhetoric of Intellect," in Dewitte Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
 42. *Selected Speeches from American History*, ed. Robert Oliver and Eugene White (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1966), p. 19.
 43. Winslow, p. 167 (emphasis mine).
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
 45. Goen, p. 48.
 46. *The Great Awakening*, p. 109.
 47. *Ibid.*
 48. Goen, p. 46.
 49. *The Great Awakening*, p. 358.
 50. C. C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology" in Scheick, p. 156.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
 52. *The Great Awakening*, pp. 228-248.
 53. Goen, *The Great Awakening*, p. 52; cf. also Collins *op. cit.*, pp. 98ff.
 54. *The Great Awakening*, p. 358.
 55. *Ibid.*, pp. 248-258.
 56. *Ibid.*, pp. 260-270.

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57. *Ibid.*, pp. 270ff.
 58. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106, 308; cf. also Winslow, pp. 169-170.
 59. Edwards' theology reflects Calvin's doctrine of the imputation of Adam's guilt to all men collectively; cf. *Selections*, p. 316.
 60. *The Great Awakening*, pp. 240ff.
 61. Winslow, pp. 156-158.
 62. *The Great Awakening*, p. 191.
 63. Winslow, pp. 200-210.
 64. *Selections*, pp. 155-172.
 65. Oliver and White, pp. 9-19.
 66. Collins, pp. 109-112.

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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

Theological Observer

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Ninth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament took place in the ancient university town of Salamanca (28 August – 2 September 1983) under the patronage of His Majesty, Juan Carlos, King of Spain. The convocation was preceded by briefer reunions of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, the International Organization for Masoretic Studies, and the Society of Biblical Literature (in the case of the latter, the first European session of an essentially American organization). It was the first occasion on which the IOSOT had convened in Spain, and the serene site of the oldest Iberian university (founded around 1215, junior only to Bologna and Paris)¹ provided a picturesque and supposedly appropriate setting. In some respects, however, the stage seemed somewhat inappropriate to this scholarly spectacle.

The majestic monuments to medieval and renaissance architecture which comprise the academic quarter of Salamanca heard very few echoes of any theology antedating the “Enlightenment” and the rise of rationalism. A partial exception to this general rule was the inaugural lecture delivered by the president of the IOSOT, Luis Alonso Schoekel, amid the regal splendor of the ceremonial hall constructed by the “Catholic Monarchs,” Ferdinand and Isabella. Noting the grandeur, not only of the buildings of Salamanca, but also of her past professors, Professor Schoekel observed, “We can easily be satisfied with the result of our historical-critical method and can sweep the scholars and writers of the past under the carpet on which we have been walking.” Choosing Fray Luis Ponce de Leon (d. 1591) as a representative example of pre-critical scholars worthy of contemporary consideration, Professor Schoekel proceeded to make an enjoyable excursion into the life and work of this Augustinian monk, poet, and professor of Old Testament exegesis in sixteenth century Salamanca.

On other occasions, too, there was the moderating influence of British and Spanish scholarship attempting to apply the brakes to the wilder wheels of the more radical German and American critics, especially in the case of theories suspected of Marxian provenience. Such an atmosphere was evident, for example, in the evaluation of the so-called Mendenhall-Gottwald hypothesis of ancient Israelite origins. George E. Mendenhall of the University of Michigan described it as “reasonably certain that ancient Israelite society and ideology were a *response* to the destruction of civilization at the end of the Late Bronze Age, not the cause”—a position, in other words, directly contrary to the picture painted by the Book of Joshua. “The entire historical context of the early Israelite Federation is the Early Iron Age, and therefore the formation of the Twelve Tribes is to be placed not much before 1150 B.C.” In the most eloquent address of the congress, J. W. Rogerson of the University of Sheffield provided a trenchant critique of the use of sociology in Old Testament studies.

Advocating a "deliberately British" approach, Professor Rogerson warned sociological exegetes against confusing reportage of data with attempted explanations of the data and against forgetting the "quasi-experimental nature" of such sociological explanations. "It is not enough to show that a given model *may* explain the data," argued Professor Rogerson. "The preferred model must be justified against other possible models." Nevertheless, the essential validity of higher criticism was the common assumption of almost all the participants in the congress. There were, of course, some papers of a neutral character by virtue of their subject matter (textual criticism, history of exegesis, etc.). And William S. LaSor, to be sure, delivered a lecture on the interpretation of apocalyptic literature in which he affirmed the divine nature of the Old Testament and denied the presence therein of *vaticinia ex eventu* ("prophecies from the event" — referring, of course, to the critical concept of "prophecies" which are not really predictions of future events, but are actually descriptions of past events — descriptions which were ascribed by the unknown men who wrote them to supposed prophets of an earlier age in order to convince their contemporaries of the divine authority of their fraudulent productions).² These propositions, however, served only to disqualify his presentation from serious consideration by his audience (the fallibility of Scripture being, after all, the very cornerstone and *sine qua non* of higher criticism).

Clearly, moreover, there was considerable anxiety about the interrelationship between the various categories of higher criticism, fostered by the practitioners of one "criticism" clashing with those of another, or, at least, ignoring the work of comrades-in-arms. Already in his inaugural call for perennial dialogue on "methods and models," the president of the IOSOT saw the continual appearance of new methods as producing a sense of insecurity in those accustomed to the use of older critical approaches. Thus, a number of papers emphasized the mutual interdependence of all the "criticisms" and proposed the integration in one way or another of historical criticism, literary criticism, rhetorical criticism, structural criticism, canon criticism, etc. And, in reality, as stated previously, the validity of higher criticism was the least common denominator in the positions of almost all the participants in the IOSOT congress, regardless of which particular "criticism" may have been the specialty of each. In a study, for example, of Joseph's final exchange with his brethren (Gen. 50:15-21), Walter Brueggeman sought to do justice to both "the 'internal dynamics' of a literary kind" emphasized by Gerhard von Rad and "the 'external function' of the text in the Pentateuch" stressed by Martin Noth. Describing many statements in Genesis 50 as deliberately ambiguous, Professor Brueggeman saw the account as a picture of "family relations in a conflict situation" in an exilic context—in other words, some twelve or more centuries later than the setting specified by the text of Genesis 50 itself. More importantly, this reconstruction, like critical exegesis generally, resists seeing the point of the Joseph story as God's preservation of the people from whom, according to prior promise, the Savior of all men was to come.

An intriguing example of the way in which theory is built upon theory in the critical house of cards was provided by Wilson Chang of Hanshin University in Seoul. His paper, "John Milton and the Yahwist," compared the personal

circumstances of a historical figure whose biographical data is profuse and "the Yahwist," of whom Professor Chang acknowledged that we know little. Not to put too fine a point on it, indeed, the very existence of "the Yahwist" is a hypothesis—and one deduced only from supposed implicit evidence in the Pentateuch which runs counter to the explicit testimony of the document itself in its present form (as the critics are quite prepared to admit)³ as well as all external sources of ancient times, including statements made by our Lord and His apostles (e.g., John 5:45-47).⁴ Nevertheless, Professor Chang could describe the Yahwist as a man living in the Davidic-Solomonic period who "may have wanted to compose the national epic of Israel emanating from the call of Abraham," but whose involvement with the court politics of his day broadened his perspective and caused him to project his scheme all the way back to the origin of the cosmos.

The theological nihilism of higher criticism was pressed to its logical extreme by Imre Mihalik of Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. His lecture, "Elohim and Monotheism," argued that in their original forms the supposed J and E sources of the Pentateuch (Yahwist and Elohist) were not using different names for the one God of Israel, but rather were extolling two different gods. One was Yahweh, a particular Hebrew tribal god, and the other was El, the father of the gods in the Canaanite pantheon as he is described in the Ras Shamra tablets. While the Pentateuch, however, was passing through various editions over the course of the centuries, so too was Israelite monotheism gradually developing from the polytheism inherited from the ancestors of Israel. Thus, "D" decided to merge the two gods Yahweh and El into one, and "P" sought to defuse any tension between the gods of "J" and "E" by introducing Yahweh in Exodus as a new manifestation of El and by using the name "El" before that point and "Yahweh" afterwards. Professor Mihalik suspected the final grand redactor of the Pentateuch of attempting (as a result of his thoroughgoing monotheistic bias) to eliminate the name of the ancient Canaanite deity El from his sources by mechanically replacing it with "Elohim." In its pre-final form, however, the Pentateuch was "a covenant document for two worshipping communities," emphasizing the unity of their originally distinct gods. Professor Mihalik was, indeed, merely drawing the logical conclusion from the historical-critical method of exegesis when he observed, "A kind of 'ecumenical' attitude toward extinct religions seems to be a prerequisite for this task."

Notes

1. Editorial Escudo de Oro, *Toda Salamanca y su Provincia* (Barcelona: Editorial Escudo de Oro, 1983), p.3.
2. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, tr. Peter Ackroyd (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), p. 520, summarizes the general critical position on the Book of Daniel in this way: "But when the book came to be dated between 167 and 163, this carried with it at the same time the

recognition that only the proclamation of the imminent coming of the end-time was genuine [although supposedly erroneous] prophecy. Otherwise the book provides *vaticinium ex eventu* and the description of the distress preceding the end does not extend beyond the Seleucid period...." Eissfeldt argues, in typical fashion, that in chapter 9:29-39 the second campaign of Antiochus IV against Egypt (167) "is so exactly 'prophesied' that we here clearly have *vaticinium ex eventu*...."

3. Robert Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1941), for example, makes this assertion, pp.133-134: "There is no reason to doubt that the Pentateuch was considered the divine revelation to Moses when it was canonized about 400 B.C. ...The Deuteronomic Code, found in the Temple in 621, was officially accepted at once as the transcript of a divine revelation to Moses. The author of this code would not have incorporated in his prophetic oracle of Moses current civil and ritual laws unless he had reason to believe that their Mosaic origin would not be questioned. The Pentateuch is only an enlarged edition of the Deuteronomic Code."
4. Thus, Eissfeldt states without any note of concern, p. 158: "The name used in the New Testament clearly with reference to the whole Pentateuch— *the Book of Moses* —is certainly to be understood as meaning that Moses was the compiler of the Pentateuch."

Douglas MacCallum Lindsay Judisch

Homiletical Studies

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Mark 11:1-19

December 2, 1984

Mark records Jesus' words, "a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat," which echo the old Testament requirement (Nu 19:2; Dt 21:3) that for sacred purposes unused animals had to be selected. Accordingly Jesus rode on the colt, the foal of the donkey, although, as Matthew indicates, both the donkey and its foal were brought to Jesus. There was nothing of ostentation in the animal upon which Jesus sat. The donkey was regarded as inferior to the horse. Only the eye of faith could see in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David, Israel's King. The need for the colt, the use of it, the fact that it had to be borrowed are all elements in the lowly state of Jesus. Yet the people instinctively greet Him with the words of the 118th Psalm (vv 25-27) which are part of the great Hallel intoned during the feast of the passover and of the tabernacles when the people walked around the altar with branches of the palm and other trees (Lv 23:40). "Hosanna" is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew "Hosianna" meaning: Help the Son of David, may He succeed. While the people confessed Him as the Savior they did not realize the significance of their own words. They were greeting Jesus as sovereign in the kingdom of their dreams. Not even the disciples understood these things. Yet Jesus accepted this homage.

Introduction: The visit to a city of a prominent and famous person is an important event. But infinitely greater and more important is the visit to us of the Lord of heaven and earth. Once He came to redeem the world. Now He comes to reclaim it for Himself. He will one day come in power and glory to judge the world. On this first Sunday in Advent we celebrate Jesus' coming to us in the new Church Year.

JESUS IS COMING TO US

I. How does He Come?

A. In meekness.

1. There was no royal pomp or display when He rode into Jerusalem.
2. He comes to us in the lowly appearing means of grace to assure us that He does not despise any of us.

B. In omniscience.

1. He knew where the donkey and its colt were and what the owner would say.
2. He knows every situation and every person, also us as we really are.

C. In Power.

1. He helps us as only God can ("in the name of the Lord").
2. He delivers us from our sins and from eternal death.

II. How is He to be received?

A. By acknowledging Him as our Savior.

1. In repentance over our sins.
2. In reliance on His victory (symbolized by the palm branches).

B. By serving Him as our King.

1. In willing obedience (v 4).

2. By cheerful giving when "the Lord has need" (v 6).
3. With songs of praise (v 10).

CONCLUSION: How great it is that again in this new Church Year Jesus is coming to us! Let us receive Him as our Savior-King. He will one day receive us into His Kingdom of Glory.

Gerhard Aho

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Mark 1:1-8

December 9, 1984

The opening verse of the text is the superscription of the whole Gospel of Mark. The word gospel is used in its original sense as the glad news of salvation, the glad news which tells about Jesus Christ. In v 2 Mark mentions only Isaiah in quoting from the Old Testament, although the first part of the quotation is from Malachi. Malachi says the same thing Isaiah says, but Isaiah words the prediction more concisely (v 3). In v 4 the word Mark uses in the Greek for preaching denotes announcing clearly and distinctly what his superior, in this case God, has ordered him to announce. Mark summarizes the Baptist's message as "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," which means that the baptism John proclaimed and administered was connected with repentance and resulted in forgiveness. In vv 7 and 8 John announces the divine greatness of Jesus whose power exceeded anything the people saw in John. John is as nothing compared to Him because He (Christ) is God's own Son. In v 8 the point is not that the Holy Spirit was absent from John's baptism but that the Messiah would bring a full outpouring of the Spirit (Ac 1:5).

Introduction: Mark begins his Gospel by announcing: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." A beginning suggests continuation. There is a sense in which the Gospel begins continually and thereby makes possible new beginnings in the lives of people. We become aware of this continual beginning of the Gospel when we note Mark's emphasis on

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

I. With the fulfilling of prophesy.

- A. The Gospel began with the fulfilling of the prophesy in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 regarding the work of John the Baptist.
 1. John's work was to prepare people for Jesus by directing them to their need of repentance (v 2b-5b).
 2. John's work was to prepare people also by pointing them to Jesus as the God-sent Savior (v 7).
 3. John's work was carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit whose full outpouring would come with Jesus (v 8b).
- B. The Gospel begins anew in the ongoing fulfilling of prophesy concerning the Spirit's work.

1. For instance, Joel 2:28 (quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17) is being fulfilled today wherever men and women come in contact with the word about Jesus the Savior.
2. Likewise, Joel 2:32 (quoted by Peter in Acts 2:21) is being fulfilled today wherever people come to believe in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel continues to make possible new beginnings for us and for others.

II. With preaching of good news.

- A. The Gospel began with the preaching of good news centering on forgiveness in Jesus Christ.
 1. Christ earned forgiveness for us by assuming our place and taking our sin (Mk 1:9-11).
 2. Christ secured our forgiveness by suffering and dying for us.
 3. Christ proved our forgiveness by rising from the dead.
- B. The Gospel begins anew in the ongoing preaching of Jesus Christ.
 1. This preaching is accompanied by the administering of baptism by which Jesus and His forgiveness are brought to the individual (v 4).
 2. This preaching, properly done, focuses not on the preacher but on the forgiving Savior (v 7b).

Conclusion: The continually beginning Gospel makes possible new beginnings for us. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit daily draws us to Christ and comforts us with the good news of forgiveness in Christ.

Gerhard Aho

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 16, 1984

General Introduction to Advent III and IV

Advent is a season rooted in "logical contradiction" or paradox. Our King has come . . . yet, we await His arrival! Heaven is ours . . . yet, we press on to make it our own! "See you King comes to you," majestically proclaims the Advent gradual (Lutheran Worship, p. 11). Yet, reading further from Zech 9:9 leaves us with this paradox: "humble and riding on an ass."

Orthodox Christianity's insistence that reason serve revelation appears especially paradoxical to the modern mind. The rationalistic Eve of Gn 3:6 personifies a certain discomfort we experience when making our minds captive to the Word of God. The Advent III and IV Gospel lessons provide the preacher with excellent opportunities to engender a "reason-in-service-of-revelation" mindset within listeners. John the Baptizer and the Virgin Mary are living, breathing, flesh-and-blood personalities who illustrate the trial and triumphs (i.e. "through the cross to the crown") of Advent living.

Please note the use of paradox in the following two sermon titles and themes. Rational thinking finds great delight in analogy—ascending to the heavens by reasoning from the known to the unknown. Paradox forces us to grab hold of God's revealed

Word in the face of life's absurdities and logical contradictions. Meditation on such passages as Ro 11:33-36, I Cor 2, and 1 Tim 3:16 will assist the preacher in perceiving and proclaiming the Advent paradox.

Advent III Insights

John the Baptizer seemingly intrudes upon the evangelist's lofty discussion of *Logos*. Thus, it appears that the very structure of Jn 1 lays before us a "lesson in contrasts." In addition, such contrasts as *skotia* and *phos*, *logos* and *anthropos*, the dialogue between the Pharisees and the Baptizer, and, perhaps, John's baptism and Christ's baptism (see *Luther's Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 175-181 . . . for opposing view, see Lenski, *The Interpretation of John*, pp. 113-117) present themselves in and about the text. The preacher might also muster support for the "contrast thesis" from the other Advent III Scripture lessons. "Inclusiveness over exclusiveness" (Is 61:1-3, 10-11), "future invading present" (1 Th 5:16-24), and "exalting the humble" (Lk 1:46b-55 . . . the "Series B" psalmody for Advent III) provide parallel exegetical support for a contrast of paradoxical treatment of the Gospel lesson.

Introduction: We hold "great expectations" this holiday season . . . but are they really that great? John's picturesque comparison of himself to Jesus (v 27) climaxes a series of contrasts in our text, showing how utterly different from mere human expectations is God's mode of action. What an appropriate message for our age! No wonder depression runs rampant during the holiday season. Is it that we expect too much from Christmas . . . or, too little! Maybe, just maybe, the hopes and expectations we attach to the secular celebration of Christmas are not worthy to untie the thong of our coming Savior's sandal! (Note: Try introducing this message by confronting the hearer with some of the secular Christmas goals and values that don't necessarily contradict, but fall short of, Christianity's faith and life goals . . . e.g. happiness, prosperity, popularity, etc.).

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

- I. It is "natural" ("reasonable") to hold such "great expectations!"
 - A. Just such expectations surround the ministry of John the Baptizer.
 1. Some must have expected him to be God! (Jn 1:8, 20-21, 25; Ac 19:1-7)
 2. Others expected him to be some king of reincarnation! (Jn 1:21, 25).
 - B. What kinds of "great expectations" do we hold? (Note: Here stress the disparity between "great expectations" and God's revealed way of acting.)
 1. There exists unsubstantiated optimism/pessimism regarding our lives. We are tempted to become mired in sin or sanctimony.
 2. There exist unsubstantiated notions regarding God, e.g. "I can't believe in a god who would . . ." or "My god is a god who . . ."

Transition: "Great expectations" reverse the creation process. We create God in our image by expecting Him to conform to our feelings, notions, plans, etc. Great are the expectations aroused by John . . . totally different is the fulfillment realized in Christ Jesus (see Jn 1:27; Mt 11:11). Great are our "reasonable" expectations . . . greater still are the unexpected actions of God which transcend our "reasonable" expectations!

- II. It is "supernatural" ("beyond reason") to expect the unexpected!
 - A. It is beyond reason as a darkened world to expect Light (Jn 1:7, 9-11).
 1. Yet, Jesus Christ comes as the Light for all! (Jn 1:7)
 2. Jesus Christ comes illuminating our lives with His forgiveness and life! (Jn 1:4)

B. It is beyond reason for an unstable world to expect the *Logos*! (Jn 1:1—Here the etymological and Biblical meaning of *Logos* can be utilized.)

1. Yet, Jesus Christ comes as God's "final word" to a shifting, uncertain world! (He 1:1-2)

2. Jesus Christ comes bringing the certainty of God to our uncertain lives.

Transition: Paul giving voice to the most unexpected, incomprehensible truth of all! (Ro 5:7-8—The "unexpecteds" reach their climax here with the atoning death and Easter resurrection of our Savior!)

Conclusion: Are our "great expectations" being fulfilled? Perhaps the hopes and expectations we attach to our Christmas celebration are not worthy to untie the thong of our coming Savior's sandal! The Gospel in Advent teaches us to expect the unexpected.

Thomas R. Ahlersmeyer
Boca Raton, Florida

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Luke 1:26-38

December 23, 1984

We find divine activity and human receptivity central to the Advent IV scripture readings. Both the Old Testament and Epistle lessons (2 Sm 7:8-11, 16; Ro 16:25-27) show God acting. Recipients of His grace can only respond in praise (see 2 Sm 7:18-29 and Ro 16:27). King David foreshadows the Virgin Mary's annunciation emotions when he exclaims: "Who am I . . . that thou hast brought me this far? What more can David say to thee? . . . for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken" (2 Sm 7:18, 20, 29).

We turn to Luke's Gospel to see these qualities in sharper focus. Perhaps no Scriptural character, with the notable exception of our Lord, illustrates divine activity (Lk 1:35) and human receptivity (Lk 1:38) as much as the Virgin Mary. In her we see an incarnation of our paradoxical Lutheran "theology of the cross." Time spent reading Luther's commentary on the Magnificat (American Edition, Vol. 21) will yield rich rewards and reveal how this trusting Galilean maid informed the Reformer's theology. Luther writes: "God is the kind of Lord who does nothing but exalt those of low degree and put down the mighty from their thrones, in short, break what is whole and make whole what is broken" (Vol. 21, p. 299). Luther also suggests Ro 12:16 and 1 Pe 5:5 as helpful parallel passages.

The annunciation's juxtaposition of lowly and majestic, the ordinary and extraordinary, brings a fresh perspective to the harried, activity-ridden preparations preceding Christmas. Gabriel's "no *hrema* shall be impossible" (v 37) and Mary's "let it be to me according to your *hrema* (v 38) point the way to a "religious experience" amidst the rush of Christmas 1984. Presents, pageants, postage, and pious platitudes must give way to a renewed and receptive listening to God's *hrema*. The ordinary becomes extraordinary when God so designates it. A study of the annunciation episode can assist us in being receptive to such designations.

Introduction: A journalist has stated, "A fact is like a sack . . . it only stands when filled with something." Can our ordinary lives, harried and rushed with pre-Christmas preparation, be filled with extraordinary meaning? The experience of Mary in our text answers with a resounding "Yes!" She shows us what happens

WHEN THE ORDINARY BECOMES EXTRAORDINARY

- I. The ordinary becomes extraordinary when God conceives! (Note: This message begins with a strong statement of God's Gospel presents.)
- A. God conceived Jesus Christ in the mystery of the incarnation (v 31). Where religions often deal in prescription, here is a description of God coming to us!
 - B. God conceived the Gospel message of undeserved love and salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 2:9). Where religions often appeal to logic, here is true divine logic "passing all understanding!"
 - C. God conceived in Holy Scripture a record of His love in Jesus Christ (2 Pe 1:21; 2 Tm 3:16). Where religions often place truth beyond grasp, here is God giving to us His very Word!

Transition: The Virgin Mary experienced the total activity of God. She, a humble Galilean, became bearer of all mankind's hope and dreams, "conceived by the Holy Spirit." The Virgin Mary also illustrates the wonder of receiving and exalted privilege in her "insignificance, lowliness, poverty, and inferiority" (Luther). So,

- II. The ordinary become extraordinary when God enables us to receive what He conceives!
- A. The temptation exists for us to wallow in the ordinary. (V 34—Mary's innocent question sometimes becomes our jaundiced, skeptical approach to God's activity.)
 1. We sometimes want to turn God's gifts into our meritorious achievements.
 2. We sometimes want to define God's gifts according to our standards. (Note: Here might be an appropriate place to exalt sacramental theology.)
 - B. Recognition of the extraordinary lies in an attitude of acceptance (v 38).
 1. The coming Savior's rescue mission shows the extraordinary length He travels for His people (v 37).
 2. The coming Savior gives the words which fill our lives with the meaning of His rescue mission (v 38).

Transition: Does God still turn the ordinary into extraordinary? Simple water, bread and wine, words, in a book, flesh and blood . . . these are all ordinary things made extraordinary by God.

Conclusion: The angel Gabriel's words, "With God nothing shall be impossible" still hold true in December 1984. Can God fill our ordinary lives with His extraordinary meaning? In Jesus Christ, the answer is "Yes!" . . . yesterday, today, and forever. Our contribution to this miracle? the joyous response of faith which exclaims, "Let it be to me according to your word!"

Thomas R. Ahlersmeyer
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CHRISTMAS DAY

Luke 2:1-20

December 25, 1984

Introduction: We have again heard with joy the angel announce, "for unto you is born this night . . . a savior which is Christ the Lord." "A savior". A simple, yet profound announcement. The incarnation of Jesus Christ set in motion that great

redemptive act of God planned even before the foundation of the world. Jesus, true God, became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He became so like us that He was made to be sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. No wonder we have picked up the song of the angels and echoed and reechoed it ever since it was first sung that first Christmas Day.

We participate in the elect of God's corporate response to God's announcement, joining together in the unity of faith to make our confession in song. We together with all the saints of God proclaim our Spirit-wrought understanding and confession of God's revelation of Himself and His saving purposes in the gift of His Son.

From this Christmas service we must go back to everyday life with its duties and responsibilities, its problems and opportunities. Can the song and its joy go on? What does the angels' announcement of a Savior have to say to the circumstances of everyday life? Our text holds two suggestions. In our excitement they are usually overlooked. They are individual responses, one of Mary and one of the shepherds. Let's focus on

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS

as a message we are meant to keep and as a message we are meant to share.

- I. Meant to keep.
 - A. The birth of Christ is an event of lasting meaning.
 1. Important events, as time goes on, become increasingly meaningful and important to us.
 2. The birth of Jesus Christ is such an event.
 - B. It was an event among the "all these things" that Mary kept in her heart.
 1. She was one of "the faithful in Israel" who looked and longed for the coming of the Messiah (Lk 1:28,46-55).
 2. Among "all these things" were some unusual occurrences:
 - a. The announcement of the angel Gabriel (Lk 1:26).
 - b. The visit of Elizabeth (Lk 1:39).
 - c. The visit of the shepherds. The story they told of angel announcements, heavenly choruses, the message of the Messiah's birth (vv 8-14).
 - C. Mary kept these things in her heart.
 1. The Lord was strengthening and preparing her for the future (Lk 2:35).
 2. The time would come when He of whom the angels sang would be despised, rejected, crucified, and buried (Lk 18:31-33).
 - D. Pondering the significance is essential for us (lit. "Bringing together"; comparing and weighing of facts). (v 19)
 1. God desires us to take the message to heart.
 2. Through it God strengthens our faith.
 3. The incarnation and birth of Christ and the purpose of His coming God makes to be our defense against temptation and sin, our fortress in time of trouble and distress, comfort and hope in sickness, death, and bereavement, wellspring of life that enables us to serve, to give, and to work in our Lord's church in our Savior's world.
 4. The Christmas message "unto you is born a savior" is a message to keep.
- II. Meant to share.
 - A. The shepherds told the message to all whom they saw, for the Savior was a gift intended for all (v 17).
 1. The universal application "for all the people" and God's intended goodwill to the world (v 10,14).

2. All who heard the message were amazed (v 18).
- B. A message of significance you cannot lose by giving it to others.
 1. You don't diminish or lose love by sharing it.
 2. You don't become less happy because you make others happy.
 3. You don't lose Jesus Christ by sharing His message of life and salvation with others. The Christmas message is one we are meant to share.

Conclusion: In sharing the Christmas message with others, we will be "keeping it" for ourselves. That's the way God does things. Blessed Christmas.

Norbert H. Mueller

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Luke 2:25-40

December 30, 1984

Introduction: The Christian lives out his life between the two comings of Christ. Even while we still celebrate the birth of our Savior, we consider its impact as it relates ultimately to His second coming. In this we find identity with Simeon and Anna, representatives of the "faithful in Israel" who looked for "the redemption of Jerusalem" and found it in the twenty-one-day old Jesus.

SIMEON AND ANNA ARE MODELS FOR US

of what it means to be "faithful" and to "look for" redemption in that same Jesus who is coming again.

I. The models described.

- A. Simeon was "righteous and devout." "By the Spirit" indicates the spiritual condition of one who walks with God rather than a special divine impulse (vv 25,27).
- B. Simeon was looking for the consolation of Israel (v 25).
- C. The Holy Spirit upon him (v 25).
- D. Anna was fasting, praying, and praising continually (v 30).

II. The models in action.

A. Expressing conviction.

1. Believed Jesus to be the salvation of Israel (v 30).
2. Gave thanks to God for the fulfillment of His promises (vv 28,38).
3. Remained convinced despite:
 - a. The apostasy of many.
 - b. The Savior's humble birth (Lk 2:7).
 - c. The Savior's humble submission to his human parents.
 - d. The Savior's ultimate rejection by so many in Israel (v 34).
 - e. The Savior's ultimate crucifixion and death (v 35).

B. Confessing their faith.

1. That in Christ we are "manumitted" - ransomed from slavery (v 29).
2. That Christ is indeed the glory of the people of Israel (v 32).
3. That in Christ we are assured of a blessed life and victorious death (vv 29,30).

C. Witnessing to others.

1. That Jesus is the Light (not simply a lamp) to all non-Jews as well as the glory of the people Israel (v 32).

2. Speaking of Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (v 38).

Conclusion: The people of God, while they wait, are people of conviction, people of confession, and people of witness.

Nobert H. Mueller

EPIPHANY

Matthew 2:1-12

January 6, 1985

Introduction: Matthew talks about "wise men." what academic degrees did they have? What had they discovered? What problems had they solved? Nothing is said about their educational accomplishments. Yet these men obviously occupied the upper echelons of the learned and enlightened of that day.

That nothing is said of their worldly knowledge emphasizes that fact that they possessed a wisdom not gained in this world's schools. They possessed a different kind of wisdom that made them truly wise. We can be like them.

WE ARE AMONG THE TRULY WISE

- I. When we seek Jesus.
 - A. The wise men, as many today, could have sought only worldly knowledge, riches, power, glory.
 - B. But they sought a King who frees from spiritual bondage, brings people into a spiritual kingdom, and reigns over them in love.
 - C. This Jesus the world needs today. We are truly wise when we seek Him no matter what it costs and what difficulty we must endure.
- II. When we allow God to guide us to Jesus.
 - A. Many seek Jesus but never find him.
 1. Because they look for Him where He cannot be found.
 2. Because they rely on their own wisdom or human philosophies.
 - B. God alone can lead us to Jesus.
 1. The star led the wise men first to the prophetic word and then to Christ.
 2. We have a still brighter star that leads us—the Old and New Testament Scripture. When we follow God's guidance in the Word, we will surely find Christ.
- III. When we worship Jesus.
 - A. The wise men "fell down and worshiped Him" (v 11).
 1. They acknowledged Jesus as their Savior-king despite His poverty and humble circumstances.
 2. We in faith worship Him and confess Him as our Lord.
 - B. "Opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts" (v 11).
 1. They gave cheerfully and generously.
 2. We open for Him our treasures.

Conclusion: We are truly wise when like the wise men we seek Jesus, follow God's guidance, and worship Jesus.

Gerhard Aho

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Mark 1:4-11

January 13, 1985

Introduction: What is the meaning of Christ's baptism? The Law of Moses did not require baptism. Baptism was not just a pious custom. According to Matthew, Christ was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15). Mark, however, omits these words of Christ and focuses simply on what occurred at Christ's baptism. What Mark is emphasizing in connection with Christ's baptism may be expressed as follows:

CHRIST'S BAPTISM MEANS THAT GOD IS WELL PLEASED WITH US

- I. Because at His baptism Christ began His work of saving us.
 - A. Christ didn't need to save Himself for He was sinless.
 - 1. He had no need to confess His sins as did those who were baptized by John (v 5b).
 - 2. John admitted that he wasn't worthy even to untie Christ's sandals (v 7b), and that he needed to be baptized by Christ (Mt 3:14).
 - B. Christ began saving us by taking our sins and the sins of the whole world upon Himself.
 - 1. The payment for these sins fell due in Gethsemane and Calvary.
 - 2. As the Lamb of God Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice for sin.

It is because Christ at His baptism began His saving work, which He also completed, that God is now well pleased with us.

- II. Because at His baptism God accepted Christ for this saving work.
 - A. God showed He accepted Christ's work by letting the heavens open (v 10a).
 - 1. Heaven was closed to us because of sin.
 - 2. Because of what Christ did we now have an open heaven, free access to God.
 - B. God showed He accepted Christ's work by anointing Him with the Holy Spirit with power to carry out His work (v 10b, Ac 10:38).
 - 1. Because Christ received the Spirit He confers the Spirit on us.
 - 2. Our baptism is now an effective means of regeneration by the Spirit.
 - C. God showed He accepted Christ's work by calling Christ His "beloved Son" (v 11).
 - 1. In Christ we are God's beloved children.
 - 2. After our baptism we too are led into the wilderness of temptation. Yet God will not forsake His children but will support us with His angels (Mk 1:12-13).

It is because God at Christ's baptism accepted His saving work that God is well pleased with us.

Conclusion: Christ's baptism is important not only for Himself but for us. Because Jesus was baptized for our salvation we are baptized into salvation in His name.

Gerhard Aho

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**John 1:43-51****January 20, 1985**

Introduction: While interviewing a missionary to Latin America, I asked, "What is the greatest need of people in your territory?"

"The People of Latin America, especially young people, need the message of Jesus to integrate their personalities. Without it there are so many conflicting theories and fads which tear apart the souls of our people," he said.

When we say "people find themselves," we mean that they discover a new integration of their personalities, a new motivation for work. In a new context the old saying that "a person is what he does" becomes true. People can find themselves when they orbit into helpful activity which is oriented toward others in a secure faith-relationship to God.

If people lose touch with themselves they also lose touch with others and lose sight of God. When threatened with the destructive consequences of losing touch with man and God.

JESUS HELPS PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES

- I. Jesus helps people find each other.
 - A. Jesus found Philip (Jn 1:43).
 1. The initiative in the whole "finding" process comes from Jesus. Whenever it is mentioned that "I found it," we have to recall that Jesus first loved us and found us.
 2. When the relationship was established, Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me."
 - a. Following Jesus meant the mature development of knowledge of and faith in Jesus to the point of committed discipleship where the follower says to others, "come and see (Jesus)" (Jn 1:39).
 - b. Modern evangelism training has urged training of new converts in "fellowship" to the point where they have profound commitment to Jesus expressed in prayer, worship, Bible Study, a sanctified life, and witnessing.
 - B. Jesus found Nathaniel by means of Philip.
 1. The Holy Spirit leads others to Christ through us as instruments.
 2. We witness most persuasively when we consider the potential of prospective Christians.
 - C. Jesus finds us through witnesses.
 1. We express appreciation to these witnesses who led us to Jesus (parents, sponsors, friends, pastors, etc.).
 2. We praise God for those who keep finding us when we lose touch with God.
 3. We aspire to find others who can be reached for Jesus.
- II. Jesus helps people find God.
 - A. Jesus helps us discover the humanity of God ("Jesus of Nazareth").

Jesus is historical, as prophesied, fitting into a family lineage ("son of Joseph").

 2. Jesus is personal, bearing family conditioned personality traits which enable us to understand his concrete embodiment in our human situation.
 - B. Jesus helps us discover the supernatural side of God.
 1. We find the divine side of God revealed in Christ in the term, "Son of God." (Jn 1:49-50).

2. We find the divine side of the Christ-revealing God in the term, "Son of man" (Lk 18:31), a term pointing to the divine Messiah who will come again at the end of time.
3. We discover the divine side of Christ in the term, "King of Israel" (Jn 1:49). He is Lord of our destiny and the King of our lives.

Conclusion: When Jesus finds us, we find through Him a sound relationship to God and others.

Jesus also helps us find ourselves in service to others.

We have a model of "followership" which helps us find ourselves. This "followership" not only secures our identity and task-oriented action, but also crowns our lives with the highest joy.

Harold H. Zietlow

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Mark 1:14-20

January 27, 1985

Introduction: Rapid change challenges the security and meaning of our jobs. Those who have plotted likely trends in the future say that the trend to consider second and third careers will accelerate. Our own change in attitudes also pushes us toward another career. As we mature and develop skills and deeper wisdom we seek careers which provide greater challenge and more profound satisfaction.

Whether we are open to complete change in our source of income or not, Jesus offers us challenge and fulfillment as he persuades us to

CONSIDER A NEW CAREER

- I. By listening to Jesus' prophetic preaching.
 - A. Jesus calls us to repentance.
 1. Our sinful habits contribute to our self-destruction.
 2. Repentance makes possible a new beginning (Zacchaeus, prodigal son).
 - B. Jesus invites us to believe in Him.
 1. To believe means to surrender to the healing power of God as the woman with the flow of blood who touched Jesus' garment to whom He said, ". . . your faith has made you well" (Lk 8:48).
 2. To the paralytic Jesus spoke the healing gospel: "Your sins are forgiven," or, "Rise, take up your pallet and walk" (Mk 2:9).
 3. Believing in Gospel has been so helpful to us that we want to participate in a career of witnessing to others of Jesus.
- II. By learning from Jesus' teaching.
 - A. Regarding the time being fulfilled.
 1. In the fullness of time God revealed His intense love for us in the birth of Jesus (Ga 4:4).
 2. The prophecies of the past are fulfilled in the events of Jesus' life, demonstrating God's control over the flow of history.

- B. Regarding the kingdom of God being at hand.
 - 1. The present course of events is under the judgment of God.
 - 2. The future will follow the pattern of Jesus' resurrection and reign, for we will be raised from the dead and live with Jesus in God's everlasting kingdom.
- III. By leaning on Jesus' reaching.
 - A. Follow me (Mk 1:17).
 - 1. To follow Jesus means to let Him hold us in His arms long enough that we know His love and feel secure in discipleship.
 - 2. While following Him we know that as the shepherd reaches out to keep his sheep from disastrous straying so He will daily help us put to death the old man of sin and raise the new person forgiven and encouraged.
 - B. I will make you become fishers of men (Mk 1:17).
 - 1. Witnessing, like fishing, is an enjoyable experience.
 - a. We enjoy our vacations and retirement when fishing.
 - b. Pastor and laity alike have testified of the deep joy they have experienced when those to whom they witnessed came to faith and joined the church.
 - 2. Like the Greeks, the unchurched of our time are dissatisfied with shallow philosophies and are demanding, "we wish to see Jesus" (Jn 12:21).
 - a. Like the elderly lady in Wendy's ad, the unchurched "fish" of our time are asking, "Where's the beef?" because they want to see the persuasive luring power of law and gospel.
 - b. We witness to the power of the law and gospel best when we lean on Jesus' reaching through us with His death and resurrection for forgiveness and life everlasting.

Conclusion: While I was writing this outline I went to my mailbox and enroute met a second-career seminarian who was unloading boxes of clothing at the clothing bank which can be used by needy seminarian families.

"Did some send the clothing with you?" I asked.

"No, our family won't be needing it in the warm climate where we're going," he said.

"Where?" I asked.

"Nigeria," he said.

His family's commitment to become fishers of men reminded me of the on-going persuasive power of Jesus' preaching, teaching, and reaching in each generation, throughout the world.

Harold H. Zietlow

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Mark 1:21-28

February 3, 1985

Introduction: In politics, industry, education—whatever field of endeavor one prefers—modern man recognizes the need to determine the power base of any institution; that is, if he intends to climb to the top, to succeed. The thrust for power in our world is overt, relentless. It is the hallmark of the achiever in the things of

this world. Our text speaks of power, both demonic and Christ's. It speaks of Christ's victory over Satan and his minions; it speaks of His power for our lives. It points us to

THE POWER BASE

- I. The prince of this world has power.
 - A. Satan willed to be God himself.
 - 1. He and his angels rebelled against the person and the power of God (pride).
 - 2. He lost his bid to replace God and lies under the eternal judgment of God forever (accountable).
 - B. Satan turned his rebellion against God's creation.
 - 1. With God's sufferance he led our first parents—Adam and Eve—into rebellion against God.
 - 2. Our first parents came under judgment and lost their special relationship with the Creator. Sin now infected the world and death through sin.
 - 3. We and all mankind now lie under Satan's power and are instruments of his rebel will. In us there is no help and no hope. Satan bears us away with himself to stand before the eternal condemnation of the just Judge.
- II. The prince of heaven came to overthrow Satan's power.
 - A. Jesus came to our world to confront Satan and his minions.
 - 1. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, came to defeat Satan and rescue the world from sin, death, and the power of hell.
 - 2. Jesus Christ is the sole hope for man. He alone is the Champion capable of overcoming the evil power of Satan and returning creation forgiven to the Father.
 - B. Christ meets Satan in a battle for a man's soul.
 - 1. Satan's "angel" in possession of a man's body recognized Jesus: "Jesus of Nazareth!" He recognizes the divine power of the Son of God and His person.
 - 2. The evil spirit is seized with fear; he knows the power of Christ and is rightly afraid. With all his power base Satan is no match for the Son of God.
 - 3. The spirit's cry, I know who You are—the Holy One of God, is an admission of the power and victory of God's Son.
 - C. Jesus casts out the demon and brings salvation.
 - 1. Jesus rebukes the demon. The demon leaves his victim and flees from the presence of the only authentic power base in time or eternity. The man is convulsed; the demon does not want to give up; he would destroy the man if he could rather than see him freed by Christ.
 - 2. Christ alone can seize the world from slavery to Satan and free men to be children of God.
 - 3. By His death on the cross and His resurrection Jesus completely and finally crushed Satan and His kingdom. He appeased the wrath of God and cancelled out mankind's guilt, freed all men from slavery to Satan and sin, and gave eternal life to all who believe in the Christ.
 - D. Our lives now reflect His power in our hearts.
 - 1. The people in the text see the reality of Christ's victory over Satan. We too are to know that power from the Christ and trust in Him alone for our salvation Christ's actions and words demonstrate His person and power (faith).

2. We live in confidence and joy at the complete victory our Savior has over Satan's kingdom. We seek ever to live by Christ's power and as His children (life style).
3. His power is in His Word. As we grow in His Word, we grow in His power. In times of stress and trial we depend on Christ; He never fails us (growth).

George Kraus

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Mark 1:29-39

February 10, 1985

Introduction: Unless we are professional "beachcombers" or "bowery bums," we have a purpose for our lives; or at least God intends that we do. Of all the questions man asks, perhaps the question Why is the most important. Why are we born? Why are we on this earth? Why does this happen? This list is endless. Our text speaks about the purpose and meaning of life, the life of our Lord. He did not come into our world on a travel tour. He was not here in order to "go slumming" with the lower unfortunates. He came with a purpose, divine and definite. He came to deal with sin and the effects of sin in the lives of people. Mark in our text gives an answer to

THE BIG QUESTION, WHY?

- I. Suffering humanity shows sin's effects.
 - A. Sickness is one of the effects of sin in our world. We often speak of death and condemnation, but illness, famine, war, etc. are all the fruits of sin. The illness of Peter's mother-in-law is a sign of a sinful world. Our world is filled with these signs.
 - B. The disciples petitioned Jesus for help.
 1. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. His purpose for living on our earth was to overcome the effects of sin and sin itself. He came to deal with the disease, not just the symptoms. He came to destroy Satan and his works.
 2. Jesus responded by healing the woman. God is compassionate toward His people. He has come to rescue and redeem.
 - C. The Church today must proclaim that same message and Savior we find in the text.
 1. The proclamation of the Gospel is the power of redemption that frees people from Satan's power. It is the Church's prime mission.
 2. The assistance to those who suffer is a sign of our compassion and a sign of the final "healing" at the end of time, the day of judgment.
- II. Christ's dependence on the Father foretells sin's doom.
 - A. Jesus Himself "kept in touch" with the Father. His life and ministry were one of prayer and communion with the heavenly Father.
 1. Clergy and laity alike need a healthy spiritual life if they are to serve in the mission of God's Church effectively. Our success at ministry depends on God, not us. We must be in constant contact with His Word.

2. With the difficult demands of ministry the child of God must be prepared to meet these difficulties successfully with God's Word and prayer.
- B. As Jesus' life of communion with His Father was a signal of success in His battle against the Evil One, so in our lives, our dependence on the Word is a strong signal that we are prepared to carry on Christ's mission in a demon-filled world, a hurt world.
- III. Christ's acts show Him as the victor over sin.
 - A. His fame brings many sick and demon-possessed to Jesus. His fame has spread as a "miracle-worker." His ministry "forces" attention on Himself.
 1. Sin's evil effects are evident in Christ's time and ours. Sickness, accidents, handicaps, death are all signs of sin's presence and power in this world.
 2. Demon possession—here is the source, the well-spring of death and sin. Satan and his angels are evident in their possession of people. Demon possession is ignored in our technological culture, but its reality is there.
 - B. Only Jesus Christ heals the sick and casts out demons. His ministry demonstrates His victory over Satan and sin. The enemy lies defeated and crushed under the foot of the Son of God.

George Kraus

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Mark 9:2-9

February 17, 1985

The central thought of the text is that Jesus encourages the confused disciples by revealing Who He is in the Transfiguration. The goal of the sermon is that hearers appreciate Jesus' identity as Lent begins. The problem is that, like the disciples, we have much "raw data" on Jesus but we fail to "add it up" and see its true import. The means to the goal is that Jesus shows Who He is more clearly than ever in the Transfiguration—and goes to the cross.

Introduction: It's almost Lent. "Finally!" says the layman. "At last the preacher will talk about roosters, nails, and thorns, not high-blown theology." But if Lent is only about those things, is it about God at all? We need to consider

THE GOD OF LENT

- I. Is revealed in Jesus Christ.
 - A. In no one and nowhere else.
 1. During Lent, if we only stress the physical sufferings of Jesus—if we do not see "God forsaken by God" (Luther—cf. FC SD VIII 44)—our meditation is, at best, mere sentimentality.
 2. If our piety is stuck on such a low level in spite of better instructions (catechism, sermons, hymnody), no wonder we don't think of the Church or ourselves as possessing the dignity of representing God in the world.
 3. If we do not see God in Christ, no wonder we are reluctant to "give up" things for Lent. These are our gods (LC I 2-3), or perhaps diversions to keep our minds off an awful God.

B. Especially in the Transfiguration.

1. He is God.

- a. His garments glistened as only God could make them (v 3).
- b. Elijah and Moses—God came to both and spoke with them on Mt. Sinai. Now they come to speak with Jesus. But Jesus is not merely one of the prophets (cf. 8:28, 9:5-6). He is the One to be heard (v 7; cf. Dt 18:15).

2. He is Man. The divine glory was shown by His human body (*genus maiestaticum*—see Trench's discussion of *metamorphoun*, *synonyms*, pp. 263-65. Compare *morphe theou*, Php 2:6).

3. He is God's Son (v 7), the King and Suffering Servant (cf. Ps 2:7; Is 42:1). God went to the cross for us!

II. For the comfort of His followers.

A. The Transfiguration was for the disciples' benefit.

1. Note the focus on them in vv 2, 4, and 7 (though this event is not what Jesus spoke of in 9:1—see Mt 16:27-28).
2. They usually missed the point, not catching the implications of what Jesus said and did. This is a special lesson for them.

B. It benefits us today.

1. It prepares us for Lent. "Jesus is God and Man" is nothing new, but it is the presupposition behind all He did.
2. It prepares us for Easter (v 9). The Man Who is also God cannot stay dead. In the Transfiguration, we also get an idea of what a glorified body is like.
3. It prepares us for Judgement Day, showing us the glory with which Jesus will return. But we need not fear (like in v 6).
4. It prepares us for living until then, focusing our attention on God as He has revealed Himself—in His Son (v 7; cf. Jn 1:18), the Savior. Then the roosters and nails take on renewed meaning (see Koeberle, *Quest for Holiness*, pp. 158-60).

Conclusion: Jesus told them to keep this quiet until He rose (v 9). He has risen. Now is the time for us to tell about Him, knowing that we are telling about God.

Ken Schurb
Columbus, Ohio

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Mark 1:12-15

February 24, 1985

The central thought of the text is that Jesus is the One Who overcomes Satan and rescues people from the devil's dominion by His Gospel. The goal of the sermon is that hearers realize that the decisive battle against Satan has been fought and won. The problem is that we are such easy prey for Satan. The means to the goal is the Gospel message itself, which drives Satan out as it brings Jesus in.

Introduction: Who won? Mark tells us Jesus had a desert showdown with the Enemy, but gives no details and does not say who won. Of course, the outcome is implicit throughout Mark, especially in 3:27 where Jesus utters an axiom which sums up the theme of our text:

TO THE VICTOR BELONGS THE SPOILS

I. Jesus is the Victor (see vv 12-13).

A. We sinners are not and never will be, without Him.

1. In our own experience.

- a. When we are tempted we "play around" with sin for a while instead of offering immediate resistance.
- b. Soon we find ourselves taking "short cuts" around God's will. We do not do what we want (Ro 7:15ff.).

2. In the struggle between Satan and God.

- a. The stakes are much higher than a few moral or immoral acts. Satan wants us. He is the Enemy.
- b. Lurking behind every temptation is the temptation to unbelief. When we do not believe, Satan has us.

B. But Jesus was, from the very beginning of His ministry.

1. In Him, God took the initiative to confront Satan (vv 11-12).

2. He withstood "being tempted" (v 13).

- a. To disobey the will of God (Mk 8:11, 10:2, 12:15), esp.
- b. To take a "less costly" way (Cranfield; cf. MK 8:32f; 14:32-42). The way He took led to the cross (Mk 10:45).

3. He put Satan in his place. From 1:13 on, Jesus was clearly in charge of every encounter He had with the demonic, just as He had the last word over His own death (Mk 16:6-7).

Transition: Like the college president who seizes faculty attention by firing two staff people in his first month, Jesus let Satan know right away that He was in charge. But He exercises His subsequent rule by His work of grace.

II. He claims His spoils (vv 14-15).

A. He preaches the Gospel (v 14).

1. The Gospel is well-nigh synonymous with Christ Himself (Mk 8:35; 10:29; also 13:10; 14:9), just as Christ was the focus of John's preaching (Mk 1:7).
2. In the Gospel, Christ brings His Satan-defeating power to people. It is the "one little word" that can fell the devil.

B. His message (v 15):

1. The *kairos* is fulfilled—after the era of Messianic expectation, He is finally on the scene to bind Satan.
2. The kingdom of God is near—because Jesus and the Gospel are near. He snatches us away from Satan's rule (see the discussion in LC III 51-56; also LC II 27, 31).
3. Repent and believe the Gospel—durative, for turning from sin to forgiveness is the heartbeat of an ongoing relationship with Jesus (cf. Ro 8:31-39).

Conclusion: People are easily led. Walk into a room full of strangers and announce that you are in charge—it's amazing how far you can get. But Jesus, the Victor, is truly in charge, as opposed to Satan and all the thought of men. His Gospel is not an empty claim. It extends His work to us and makes us His. To the Victor belongs the spoils!

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT**Mark 8:31-38****March 3, 1985**

Mark 8 provides a turning point in Jesus' ministry. Having revealed Himself as Messiah through His miracles in fulfillment of the signs in the prophet Isaiah, Jesus now begins to teach His disciples what kind of Messiah He is. Immediately following Peter's bold confession at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus in this text offers the first of three passion predictions to alert the disciples to His Suffering Servant role which will lead to the cross. After exposing Peter's rebuke as coming from Satan and human reason, Jesus identifies the disciple as a suffering servant involved in taking up the cross and losing his life for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus moves on to the Transfiguration and then heads for an appointment with Calvary outside Jerusalem.

Introduction: So much of our Christian practice today is superficial, including our yearly observance of Lent. We pay lip service to Jesus Christ and express discipleship by attending church a little more frequently and putting a few extra dollars in a special envelope. In our text Jesus begins to introduce the disciples to His real purpose for coming and to the real meaning of discipleship. It comes across also to us as

A HARD LENTEN TEACHING

- I. About the Son of Man's suffering and death.
 - A. Jesus makes clear His role and mission as Suffering Servant. (vv 31-32a).
 - B. Jesus rebukes Peter's satanic misunderstanding (vv 32b-33).
 - 1. Peter wanted a popular Messiah who worked miracles. Peter needed the rebuke.
 - 2. We often need a rebuke also because we want a Messiah who is popular and takes care of all our needs.
- II. About the disciples' cross-bearing (vv 34-38).
 - A. Jesus calls us to lose our lives for His sake.
 - B. Jesus exposes our desire to save our lives and reveals the consequences.
 - C. Jesus went to the cross to save our lives so that we might lose them.

Conclusion: A hard teaching about suffering, rejection, and death in a hopelessly sinful, self-absorbed world, but a hard won victory for the risen Son of Man.

A hard teaching about cross-bearing and losing one's life for the sake of the Gospel in a wicked world, but salvation and a consistent power for living through His hard won victory.

Stephen J. Carter

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**John 2:13-22****March 10, 1985**

Last week's Gospel presented a hard Lenten teaching of Jesus regarding His suffering and death. This week's Gospel unleashes a bold Lenten cleansing by Jesus. Zealous

for the Father's honor, Jesus becomes incensed by the temple trade in animals and money. Whipping the offenders out of the temple and overturning the money-changers' tables, He comes into sharp conflict with the temple authorities. With His own authority challenged by demands for a sign, Jesus tells a riddle predicting both judgment upon the temple and its leaders and His own death and resurrection on the third day. Later the disciples understand His words and believe.

The sermon intends to help the hearer admit the need for cleansing because of disregard for both the Father's honor and the Son's authority so that the cleansing of the crucified and risen Savior might be received.

Introduction: Can you imagine standing in the darkness of a coal mine wearing a white suit? While in the dark, everything might seem fine, but when you return to the surface in the light of day, you become painfully aware of the need to have your suit cleaned. Many times we live in the darkness of sin and fail to see our need for cleansing. This morning in our text we see Jesus bringing us into the light as He enters the Jerusalem temple and initiates.

A BOLD LENTEN CLEANSING

- I. Jesus cleansed the temple of mammon-lovers.
 - A. The Jewish leaders disregard His authority by demanding a sign and raising a skeptical question.
 - B. The disciples fail to understand the meaning of His reference to the temple of His Body.
 - C. Jesus predicts the cleansing death and resurrection of the temple of His body with the disciples later believing His Word.
- II. Jesus cleanses us by His death and resurrection.
 - A. We often question Jesus' authority to challenge us and cleanse us or fail to understand His words.
 - B. Jesus points us to the cleansing death and resurrection of the temple of His body with the result that we believe His Word.

Conclusion: In a soiled white suit exposed to the light of God's Word, having flagrantly disregarded the Father's honor and the Son's authority, we accept the cleansing of Jesus whose temple was destroyed and built up again in three days. A bold Lenten cleansing indeed!

Stephen J. Carter

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

John 3:14-21

March 17, 1985

When John 3:16 is part of the sermon text, the temptation arises to keep it and toss out the rest. However, this Gospel kernal has an important context which contributes to its beauty. There is Nicodemus who was struggling with being born again and so asks: "How can this be?" (v 9) There is the Messianic type of Christ in the brass serpent Moses raised up to deliver the snake-bitten crowd. On top of that, the congregation will more than likely expect grand preaching on their favorite text. This

is an opportunity to let them have it with the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel.

Introduction: Have you ever taken a walk in Rattlesnake country? If you have, you know how important it is to keep one ear cocked for the sound of ominous rattle of a snake. Should you happen to hear one, expect your heart to jump in you throat and stay there until you're safely out of its reach. If the snake happens to bite you, you will need help promptly or you will die. Jesus referred to this situation in his conversation with Nicodemus. Just as people who are bitten by a poisonous snake need help, so Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler, needed help too. To make his point, Jesus recalled the experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness when God sent poisonous snakes to bit the disobedient people. Moses made a snake out of brass and by God's direction, set it up in the camp. Whoever was bitten, could look at the snake and be saved. Needless to say, the people gladly looked at the brass likeness and were saved.

In like manner, God moves to save man from his predicament of sin. We want to listen to Jesus today and let His love draw us to salvation and a God-pleasing life. How can this all happen?

GOD SO LOVED US

- I. He sent His Son to be lifted up.
 - A. Mankind generally is like the children of Israel in their danger.
 1. We aren't plagued by snakes, of course.
 2. But we are plagued by sin, which causes death.
 - B. God sent Jesus.
 1. He came into the middle of our world, the snake pit, if you will.
 2. God lifted Him up on a cross. By His stripes we are healed (Is 53:5).
 3. John 3:16 captures God's plan. He so loved us that He sent His Son to be lifted up for us.
- II. He gives everlasting life to believers.
 - A. In the Old Testament wilderness, anyone who looked at the brass serpent was saved.
 1. They were given the invitation to be saved. No one forced them to look.
 2. Those who did were saved from the fiery venom.
 - B. Likewise, Jesus promises that those who believe have everlasting life.
 1. This is a gracious invitation to know who Jesus is, give assent to His grace, and trust Jesus to do what He promises. No strings attached.
 2. Believers have life now. It was as close to Nicodemus as the information and invitation Jesus gave to him. Believers have in their hearts right now the assurance that they are saved. God so loves us that He gives us eternal life.
- III. He draws people to believe in Jesus.
 - A. People are drawn to Jesus through Jesus.
 1. He came as a light to people in darkness. People are by nature in the dark; there is no self-created light. Jesus gives light to people who love the darkness because they were doing wrong.
 2. Believers are a lot like bugs who settle around the porch light at night during the summer. We have seen the Light of Jesus Christ and have been drawn to it. When we saw Jesus, He revealed our sins, then forgave our sins, and now in His light God sees us as righteous.
 3. God did not send Jesus into the world so that the end result would be

that people are ashamed, scared, and guilty. Rather He came so that we might have life through Him.

B. You can tell if God's love is drawing you.

1. How do you feel when you read: "Everyone who does wrong hates the light and will not come to the light. . .?" (v 9) Do you feel a need to stop doing what is wrong, let God straighten it up for you? That's God's love drawing you.
2. When we read: "God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (v 16), do you get a feeling of relief down deep in your soul? That's God's great love drawing you.
3. Let it draw you. Don't be like a nightcrawler who comes out at night after a rain. When the light hits them, they zip back down into darkness. God does not want to harm you; He wants to save you. He has sent His Son so that by faith in Him we can live.

Now, come on!

Lowell F. Thomas
Fort Myers, Florida

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

John 12:20-33

March 24, 1985

Introduction: Have you ever noticed how ugly most buildings are when they are under construction? Everything seems cluttered up, the unfinished material sticks out all over, the ground about it is all chewed up from machinery and materials. We wonder if it will ever look nice. Eventually, the mess is cleaned up and work is done, revealing a truly fine, beautiful structure. The obvious lesson is that the thing of beauty could not have been made without the messy ugliness.

The same is true in the spiritual Kingdom of God. We often talk about the love, joy and peace which we enjoy by faith. That which preceded what we enjoy today was as ugly as anything could be. The path that led to our salvation and to the greater glory of God was paved with blood, pain, sorrow, and hell. Jesus walked that road by Himself for all people. The result is an unexpected glory for God and Jesus Christ which they share with us. Think about this with me:

WE SHARE THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S CROSS

I. God's glory was the dominating purpose of Christ's life.

A. The time for glory was there for Jesus (v 23).

1. Before this, the time was not ripe. "Mine hour is not yet come. . ." (Jn 2:4).
2. The life of Jesus was arranged so that He could reveal the glory of the Father by word and deed, and then seal that glory by His sacrifice.
3. Jesus prayed for this and received an immediate answer (v 28).

B. The glory that was to come to Christ and the Father is many sided.

1. God receives glory every time He reveals Himself to us. It started in Old Testament times through the promise of the Savior. The glory of

God is evident from the good things said about God, especially that He is merciful.

2. When Christ was born, the heavens were filled with angelic voices praising God (Luke 2).
 3. In His ministry, Jesus directed the credit to His Father in heaven. What He said and did was always to give God glory.
 4. The revelation of the glory of God was inclusive. (Cf. the Greeks, vv 20ff.)
 5. When the Bible talks of the glory of God and Christ, it is talking of God's righteousness, mercy, love, along with the total of all His attributes.
- II. It was Christ's cross that produced His glory.
- A. He despised the cross.
 1. He was a man. According to His human nature, Christ did not look forward to the dreadful sacrifice. Listen to His personal struggle in v 27.
 2. Jesus knew that His death would not be peaceful. Because the Father would forsake Him, because He would be suffering for the sins of all, His death was a frightfully depressing prospect.
 - B. However, Jesus knew that this cross had to be experienced to bear the fruit of His glory.
 1. He likened Himself to a seed that must be planted (v 24).
 2. Jesus admits that this is why He came into the world (v 27b).
 3. He permitted Himself to be "lifted up" from the earth.
 - C. This sacrifice accomplished major items for God's glory.
 1. The salvation of all men. "I will draw all men to myself" (v32 Cf. again the Greeks).
 2. This sacrifice says the most about God: His righteousness, His mercy; everything that needs to be said about God was said when Christ died. That's glory!
- III. By faith we share the cross and the glory.
- A. We share the same attitude toward this life that Christ had, illustrated in the paradox (v 25).
 1. He who loves life will lose it.
 2. He who hates life will keep it unto eternal life.
 3. This is a life that is lost in Christ—lost as far as the world is concerned.
 - B. Such a life will bring honor to us (v 26).
 1. The glory we share as slaves of the Master is a gift.
 2. The heaven prepared for us is the same one Jesus occupies (Jn 14:1ff.).

The glory God has and shares with us could not have happened without the cross. The cross is gory; but it is the stuff of which lasting glory is made.

Lowell F. Thomas
Fort Myers, Florida

PALM SUNDAY—SUNDAY OF THE PASSION

Mark 14:3-9

March 31, 1985

Introduction: The question that stands before us is, what can we do for our Lord on the eve of the week when He did everything for us? What can we do as we retell, relive the passion of the Christ? Can we go back in history and undo what was done?

Can we wake the three disciples and explain to them the import of the hour? Can we seek out Peter in the courtyard and help him avert his crushing threefold denial? No, of course we cannot go back and undo what already has been done. Then what can we do? Our Lord answers our query clearly in v 8 as He comments on the action of the woman in our text, "She hath done what she could . . ."

WE ARE CALLED THIS HOLY WEEK TO DO WHAT WE CAN

- I. We can come to be with our Lord this Holy Week (v 3).
 - A. We can be with our Lord in worship this Holy Week.
 1. We are with Him in the powerful texts of Holy Week.
 2. We are with Him in the Sacraments associated with Holy Week.
 - a. The Sacrament of the Altar on Maundy Thursday.
 - b. The Sacrament of Baptism during the Good Friday/Easter cycle.
 - B. We can be with our Lord in prayer this Holy Week.
 1. Through prayer we confess our sorrow over our sins which contribute to the need for His passion.
 2. Through prayer we offer our gratitude to Him for His passion on our behalf.

Transition: What can we do this Holy Week? We can come to be with our Lord and:

- II. We can pour out on Him our most precious gifts (v 3).
 - A. One precious gift we can pour out this Holy Week is to be His witness.
 1. We can witness to the death He died for all.
 2. We can witness to the life He lives for all.
 - B. Another precious gift we can pour out this Holy Week is to be His servant.
 1. We can be His compassionate and forgiving servant in our family.
 2. We can be His giving and helpful servant in our neighborhood.

Conclusion: What can we do as we stand at the portal of Holy Week? We can easily offer a litany of things we cannot do. However, the point this morning is that we can come to be with our Lord this Holy Week, we can pour out for Him our most precious gifts. Yes, indeed, WE ARE CALLED THIS HOLY WEEK TO DO WHAT WE CAN.

Mark Oien
Bedford, Mass.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Mark 14:17-26

April 4, 1985

Introduction: The title of an old TV game show, "Truth or Consequences", suggests that if one does not tell the truth there will be negative consequences, and if one does tell the truth the negative consequences will be averted. In our text, we have an interesting variation on this theme. Jesus tells the truth tonight and emphasizes this fact in both verses 18 and 25. However, even though the truth is told tonight, there still are consequences, negative for Jesus, positive for us.

TONIGHT JESUS TELLS US THE TRUTH

- I. The truth is Jesus was betrayed.
 - A. Jesus was betrayed by one close to Him (v 18).
 - 1. Judas was one of the twelve chosen by Jesus (v 17).
 - 2. Judas was sharing an intimate meal with Jesus (vv 17 & 20).
 - B. Jesus was betrayed in accordance with the divine plan.
 - 1. The divine plan is written in Holy Scripture (v 21).
 - 2. The divine plan is spoken of by Jesus Himself (v 21).
- Transition:* The truth is Jesus was betrayed. Yet on the very night He was betrayed
- II. The truth is He offered divine fellowship.
 - A. Jesus offers divine fellowship through the means of His Supper.
 - 1. Through the means of His Supper Jesus offers His very body and blood (vv 22 & 24).
 - 2. Through the means of His Supper Jesus offers a new covenant (v 24).
 - B. Jesus offers divine fellowship in the eternal Kingdom of God (v 25).
 - 1. Jesus has promised to receive us into His eternal Kingdom (Jn 14:1-4).
 - 2. In the eternal Kingdom of God we will live continually in the presence of the Lamb (Re 21:22).

Mark Oien
Bedford, Mass.

GOOD FRIDAY

John 19:17-22
April 5, 1985

The crucifixion of our Lord is such familiar ground that critical comments on this text are hardly necessary. On Good Friday the saints who attend worship simply want to remember what their Lord did for them. Our task is to help them do so in a meaningful, edifying way.

This is the conclusion of our Lent-long meditation on the Passion History. The following thoughts by Leon Morris in his commentary on John seem very fitting for the preacher's consideration as he approaches the Good Friday sermon: "John describes the horror that was crucifixion in a single word . . . The evangelists record the fact and let it go at that. The death of Jesus for men was their concern. They make no attempt to play on the heartstrings of their readers."

Introduction: When we were children we probably played "King of the Hill"; or whatever name it went by. The object was to be the one on top of the pile of earth or snow. The one on the top pushed down those who tried to take his place. In many ways the game symbolizes the goals of people in life: To be on the top above others. What a contrast to this Good Friday as we remember our Lord as a king:

KING OF THE CROSS

- I. The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus was without question the darkest day in the world's history.
 - A. The injustice that led to Jesus' condemnation only heightens the bitterness of what He endured. (Elaborate briefly on the jealousy of the Jewish leaders, the trumped-up charges, the spineless concession of Pilate after repeatedly stating Jesus' innocence, etc.)

- B. The execution of the world's only perfect man was truly "cruel and unusual punishment," even for one who was guilty. (Elaborate on how crucifixion was not allowed for Roman citizens, the mistreatment by soldiers, the beating that itself could kill, the shame of carrying one's own cross, obviously an agonizing and drawn-out way to die.)
- C. In penitence and faith this day we are especially aware that the curse which fell on Jesus was rightly aimed at us (Jn 1:29, 2 Cor 5:19 & 21, Ga 3:13).

Although a symbol of horror and death the cross has rightly become the most powerful symbol for divine love to us who believe.

- II. The claim regarding Jesus' kingship has elevated the cross to a glorious throne. "This is the King of the Jews". (Note that John calls this "Titlos", title, rather than accusation.)
 - A. For Pilate it was a taunt to the Jews who brought the "problem" of Jesus before him and whom he hated.
 - B. For the Jews it was an embarrassment as well as a reminder of the very things for which they desperately wanted to be rid of Jesus (Jn 11:47-53).
 - C. For Jesus the title was only part of the truth.
 - 1. He is King of creation (Jn 1:1-3, Col 1:15-17).
 - 2. The cross was His glory as He fulfilled the Father's will (Jn 17:1-4, He 12:2).
 - D. For us "King" is a title we dearly love by which to know Jesus.
 - 1. At His cross-throne we find cleansing and new life (Ga 6:14a, 1 Jn 1:7b, Ga 2:20, He 4:16, etc.).
 - 2. Around His heavenly throne we will forever praise His love (Re 7:14-17).

Until then may we, by the power of His Spirit, hold Jesus as both King of our hearts and of our lives.

Edwin Dubberke
St. Louis, Missouri

EASTER SUNDAY

Mark 16:1-8

April 7, 1985

Easter is "old hat" to many who attend services on this day. For others it is the yearly spring trek to church. For a few it is another exciting personal encounter with a living, dynamic Savior. Preach resurrection victory in such a way as to feed the faithful and challenge the others with the life-changing power of an alive and present Christ.

Introduction: What a thrilling experience to again join the whole Christian church in celebrating the Festival of the Resurrection! Everything, the music, the singing, the words, the atmosphere, are all upbeat: "Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!" Yet apart from this day our lives so much reflect the spirit of those women who went to the tomb early the first Easter morning. They thought Jesus was dead.

It is said that on one occasion when Luther was depressed over the problems he faced his wife Katharine came in wearing a black mourning cloth. When Luther

asked who had died she replied, "The way you have been acting I thought God had died." To all of us the joyful announcement of Easter is:

GOD ISN'T DEAD—DEATH IS!

- I. The problem of "God is dead" attitude in our lives is more real and prevalent than we might care to admit.
 - A. Contradictory as the term is it well describes how people think of and deal with God.
 1. Refer to "God is dead" movement of a few years ago. It no longer makes headlines but its conclusions are popular.
 - a. The mess the world is in shows God isn't around
 - b. Man seems to be progressing well without Him anyway.
 2. This is not new since Adam and Eve acted as if God were not a factor in their lives.
 3. Someone summarized it well, "We're too busy to care about God." (Elaborate: Busy using or seeking material gains. Consumed by worry—illustrate with contemporary concerns and fears of people, economic, political, personal. Doesn't God care?)
 - B. Does this seem exaggerated or trivial for this festive day?
 1. How else can we explain the difference:
 - a. After the women in our text learned that Jesus was risen their lives were never again the same.
 - b. We have celebrated many Easters. Yet our lives, in terms of direction and problems, are much like those who do not know Christ at all. (Elaborate: Lacking meaning or hope for life, not clinging to God's promises in trials of life, swinging through life with our own standards.)
 2. The truth is: Of ourselves we are already dead spiritually; ahead lies inevitable physical death and judgment, ready or not.
- II. How different is life, now and in the future, when we grasp and share the victory of our glorious Lord.
 - A. By His resurrection we are assured of deliverance from and victory over the death sin brings.
 1. To accomplish this Jesus WAS truly dead. (Elaborate on the recent message of Lent and Holy Week—He died for us.)
 2. Christ's resurrection is God's endorsement of His sacrifice (Ro 4:25). Thus the resurrection is the basis for our deliverance from sin (Eph 1:7); for new life with the Father (Eph 2:1 & 4-6); for power to live life on a new level (Ro 6:4).
 - B. Besides deliverance from spiritual death Christ's resurrection establishes our own resurrection and a share in eternal glory. (Elaborate: Jesus' own promises, Jn 11:25, Jn 14:19; in Him we have new hope now, 1 Pe 1:3-4; fulfillment awaits us, 1 Cor 15:54-57.)

Rejoice tomorrow as well as today: Christ is risen! In Him we live!

Edwin Dubberke
St. Louis, Missouri

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 20:19-31

April 14, 1985

The three year pericopic system has no Gospel Lesson variation for this Sunday. The Easter evening appearance of Jesus is prescribed for all three years and this obviously challenges the preacher to say something fresh each year.

The temptation is ever present to make the doubt of Thomas the focus of an entire sermon. It becomes quite easy to berate him (cf. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, p. 1379) and to simply shift the same malady to the hearers with a great many negatives.

While Thomas's doubt cannot be dismissed, it is instructive that the writer John declares that these signs of Jesus have been written that we might believe that He is God and so have life and joy in Him (Jn 20:31, 1 Jn 1:3-4, 5:13). The focus is on Jesus as the victorious Christ and God. The life and joy we have in Him dispels our fears and doubts and equips us to proclaim His salvation to others.

Introduction: If we had been in the room before and while Jesus appeared, we would have experienced the same emotions and responses. Fear, joy, doubt, faith. But then, don't we still? The good news of Jesus' saving power penetrates our lives. We respond in varied ways. Our faith is not always at the heights. But God wants us to grow in faith and life and in commitment to His mission. So He gives us the Word of His salvation. These things are written so that you may have

LIFE IN HIS NAME

- I. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - A. He is the living Christ (v 19). He presents Himself as the One whom death and time and space cannot hold.
 - B. He bestows peace (v 20). His death and resurrection overcome all that causes fear and doubt.
 - C. He commissions (v 21). The mission of the Father through Jesus continues as disciples go in His name to proclaim Him as the Christ, the Son of God.
 - D. He equips (vv 22-23). The bestowal of the Holy Spirit gives power to His Word of Law and Gospel through His disciples.
- II. So believing you may have life in His name.
 - A. The person and work of Christ bring us together as God's people. His death and resurrection are the answer to our sinful predicament.
 - B. Like Thomas, however, we can experience doubt. We are called to believe that which we do not see (vv 24-25).
 - C. Jesus comes to us. In Word and Sacrament. "This is written that you may believe." "Behold My hands and My side." "This is My body and My blood."
 - D. The Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith in us. "My Lord and My God." "My sins are forgiven." "I believe and have life in His name" (1 Jn 5:4-5).
 - E. Our Easter life leads to Pentecost power. We who live in Him proclaim Him so that others may believe and have life in His name.

Conclusion: How blessed to believe, even though we have not seen!

Luther G. Strasen
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THIRD SUNDAY IN EASTER**Luke 24:36-49****April 21, 1985**

This text reports the events of the previous Sunday's Gospel Lesson from another perspective. The episode of Thomas is now recounted and further detail of Jesus eating to prove that He is alive is given. Also, the Lord affirms that the past days' events were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and are the basis for new spiritual life which is to be preached to the world with Spirit power.

Introduction: Have you ever been overwhelmed with good news or some joyful event in your life? We almost don't know how to handle such an occurrence. But, once it settles in, it would be hoped that the euphoria would have lasting effects. When the disciples that first Easter evening saw Jesus alive, they experienced surprise and fright which turned to joy that was hard to believe. The New English Bible version translates the first part of v 41, "It seemed too good to be true." But it was true and Jesus instructed that

WHAT IS GOOD AND TRUE SHOULD BE TOLD

- I. It seemed too good to be true.
 - A. The reports were coming in. Sin and death had not conquered. The Lord had risen indeed! (Lk 24:33-35).
 - B. Jesus Himself appeared to them in the room. Joy and incredulity clashed (v 41).
 - C. Our reaction, too, is both awe and joy. It seems too good to be true that, despite our sin, God offers forgiveness and life through His Son.
- II. It is good because it is true.
 - A. It is not a human plan of salvation. Human efforts reject Christ (Ac 4:11) because of self-righteousness and deceit, and they have no truth (1 Jn 1:8).
 - B. It has always been God's plan, revealed already to the Old Testament faithful (v 44).
 - C. It is fulfilled in Christ (v 46). He is the Truth of God's salvation.
 - D. It is good because it calls for us to repent and offers the truth of God's forgiveness (v 47). Thus we become right before God (1 Jn 1:9).
- III. It is truth that is good for others.
 - A. God desires that His salvation be preached to all nations (v 47). Repentance and forgiveness will restore people to the goodness of God's light over against the darkness of sin (1 Jn 1:5-7).
 - B. The people of God are witnesses to the power of Christ's death and resurrection (v 48). All of us can preach of Jesus in our daily testimony to others.
 - C. The Holy Spirit gives us power to tell what is true and good (v 49).

Conclusion: God's salvation is never too good to be true. It is utterly good and utterly true and we can tell the world so that all people can experience its truth and goodness.

Luther G. Strasen
Fort Wayne, Indiana

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 10:11-18

April 28, 1985

The concept of a divine shepherd is not exclusively a New Testament thought. Psalm 23 opens with "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and the prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, use the imagery of shepherd and flock in reference to God's loving care for His people. To the people of the Biblical times, both O.T. and N.T., sheep herding was a familiar scene and an example that they could easily understand. Today the imagery of our Lord as "the Good Shepherd" is a popular symbol for Christians. Jesus is pictured as the one who lovingly leads the flock, gently nudges the stray, and wisely watches over the needs of those He calls His own.

Introduction: Each of us occasionally has a mental picture of how we would want others to see us. Most often such thoughts are complimentary and grandiose. It seems unusual that our Lord would portray Himself in such a lowly role. A shepherd, how insignificant. Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the world, the author of creation, a shepherd? But, not just any shepherd, rather the one true Good Shepherd. This simple title and seemingly lowly role conveys a multifaceted picture of who this Jesus is and what our relationship is to Him as our Savior. Jesus uses the imagery of the shepherd to describe for us the beauty of the relationship of a loving Lord to His people. In this text, Jesus claims for Himself the role and describes for us

THE QUALITIES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

- I. Committed to His flock.
 - A. He is committed for life, His and the sheep's.
 - B. His commitment surpasses other earthly relationships.
 - C. His commitment is not broken by cares, concerns, or earthly pressure.
- II. Knows His flock intimately.
 - A. He knows each member of His flock personally.
 - B. He understands needs, weaknesses, problems, and every other aspect of His individual sheep's needs.
 - C. He provides for his flock in the manner he knows to be best for each sheep.
- III. Opens His flock to all that hear His voice.
 - A. The intimate nature of the Shepherd and His flock does not prevent other sheep from being welcomed into the fold.
 - B. The Good Shepherd has the capacity to care for all.
- IV. Loves His flock.
 - A. The most evident characteristic of the Shepherd is His love for His sheep.
 - B. This love is clearly demonstrated in that the Shepherd, of His own will, lays down His life to save the sheep.
 - C. In so proving His love, He is also capable of lifting His own life and that of the sheep out of the snare of death.

Conclusion: "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hands." (Jn 10:14; 27-28)

William G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**John 15:1-8****May 5, 1985**

Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine to describe the living relationship the individual believer is to have in and with Him.

Introduction: Biology is the scientific study of life. The term comes from the Greek "bio" meaning life, and "logy" meaning the science or study of. Jesus in this parable uses an observable biological occurrence to teach a truth regarding our faith relationship with Him. Therefore, maybe we can think of today's message as a presentation on "faithology," the study of faith's function.

FAITHOLOGY

- I. Faith, our vital connection with the true source of life.
 - A. Jesus is the one true source of life.
 - 1. He has established the relationship.
 - 2. He provides for our needs, both spiritual and physical.
 - 3. He gives us access to the Father.
 - B. Union in Jesus gives us the ability to produce "fruit."
 - 1. Fruit bearing is a natural result of being alive in Christ.
 - 2. Continued fruit bearing requires an ongoing relationship with the Savior.
- Transition:* The believer, through his union in Christ, demonstrates his living relationship by the actions and fruits that proceed out of his faith. However, the one who becomes too careless or apathetic in that relationship can find his or her fruit lacking.
- II. Faith, to be strong, is to be used.
 - A. The non-fruit bearing branches demonstrate the void of faith in their lives.
 - 1. Such faithless branches cannot withstand the winds of life.
 - 2. Non-fruit bearing limbs have broken their connection with the Life-source.
 - 3. The end result of non-fruit bearing branches is obvious as the limb dries up, becomes brittle, and useless.
 - B. The Gardener-Father in His care for the vineyard, His Church, frequently "prunes" the branches, assisting them to be more fruitful.
 - C. A healthy limb is one which recognizes the true source of its nourishment and responds accordingly.
 - 1. The vital connection of limb to vine, believer to Christ, is maintained and nourished through regular use of Word and Sacrament.
 - 2. "By their fruits you shall know them."

Conclusion: The ultimate proof of discipleship is the fruit one bears. May all of our works flow from the grace of God active in us and through us.

William G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 15:9-17

May 12, 1985

The central thought of the text is that we are the friends of Jesus. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers will exercise their responsibilities as friends. The problem is that we often fail to act like the friends of Jesus we are. The means to the goal is that Jesus has given us wonderful privileges as His Friends.

Introduction: We are accustomed to thinking of Jesus as our friend and we express this thought with songs like "What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear." But friendship is a two-way street. Not only is Jesus our friend but we are the friends of Jesus. Jesus says (v. 14):

YOU ARE MY FRIENDS

Let's look at what it means to be friends of Jesus.

- I. We have the privileges of friends.
 - A. Christ has chosen us (v 16b).
 1. We were not able to choose Him (v 16a; Eph 2:3; 1 Cor 2:14).
 2. He chose us purely out of grace (1 Jn 4:10; Ro 7:8).
 - B. Christ opens Himself to us (v 15).
 1. He shares with us the truths regarding His redemptive work, our regeneration in baptism, and the blessings of His body and blood in Holy Communion.
 2. He has divulged to us the precious truths of His Word.
 - C. Christ promises to give us what we ask in His name (v 16d).
 1. Don't we need patience, love, perseverance?
 2. Aren't there fellow Christians whose needs we can bring to Christ?
 3. Don't our home and church have needs?
- II. We have the responsibilities of friends.
 - A. We are to do what he commands (v 14b).
 1. Binding ourselves to the sound doctrine of His Word.
 2. Practicing what accords with sound doctrine no matter how the world reviles us (Jn 15:18-19).
 - B. we are to love one another(v 17).
 1. As Christ loved us (v 13).
 2. Carrying each other's burdens, overlooking each other's weaknesses, forgiving.
 - C. We are to bear abiding fruit (v 16c).
 1. No matter what the circumstances or how we feel.
 2. There will be abiding fruit when we support the faithful preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Sacraments.

Conclusion: "You are my friends," Jesus said. Are you enjoying your great privileges? Are you carrying out your holy responsibilities? Blessed are you, friend of Jesus!

ASCENSION DAY**Luke 24:44-53****May 16, 1985**

Introduction: Jesus must have lifted His hands many times during His earthly ministry, but the New Testament writers specifically mention the lifting up of His hands only in connection with His ascension. Can we attach any significance to Luke's reference to Jesus "lifting up His hands"? (v 50) Let's consider

THE MESSAGE OF THE LIFTED HANDS

The lifted hands of our ascending Lord tell us of:

- I. A sacrifice that cleanses us.
 - A. Christ's uplifted hands were nail-marked hands which testified to His having suffered as the Scriptures foretold (v 46a).
 1. The Scriptures make clear that Christ suffered for our sins (1 Pe 2:24a).
 2. The Scriptures also make clear that Christ alone was able to suffer sin's punishment for us (1 Pe 1:19; 3:18).
 - B. The nail prints in Christ's lifted hands tell us that He, the risen Lord, has made an effective sacrifice.
 1. On the basis of Christ's sacrifice and glorious resurrection the forgiveness of sins can now be announced to all (v 47).
 2. As we daily confess our sins we can be sure that Christ's sacrifice cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn 1:7).

Transition: The full dimensions of the salvation which accompanies our cleansing from sin will be experienced in heaven. But before we get there, we have work to do. The lifted hands of Jesus tell us of:

- II. A power sufficient for our task.
 - A. Christ's uplifted hands pointed to the heavens where He would be seated at God's right hand.
 1. To be at God's right hand is to have divine power and to use it fully.
 2. Ten days later Jesus clothed the disciples "with power from on high" (v 49).
 - B. Christ's uplifted hands tell us of power that is available to us for our task of witnessing to Him (v 48).
 1. The Spirit empowers us to witness with words as the apostles did on Pentecost.
 2. The Spirit empowers us to witness by actions as the apostles did when they returned to Jerusalem (v 52).
 3. Christ's power is not low amp or low wattage power. It is so great no gauge can measure it. Because of Christ's ascension we have a staying force that keeps us humble in success and a place of refuge in life's tragedies.

Conclusion: Let's get the picture in our mind's eye—Jesus ascending into heaven in the presence of His disciples, His hands lifted up in blessing. Those lifted hands tell us of a sacrifice that cleanses us from all sin and of power that is sufficient for our witnessing task.

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 17:11b-19

May 19, 1985

Introduction: It means much to have someone praying for us. But sometimes our fellow Christians forget to pray for us, as we for them. There is one who never forgets to pray for us. The text is part of Christ's great prayer for His dear Christians.

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS OWN: GOD KEEP YOU

There is need for God to keep us:

- I. Because of danger from without.
 - A. We live in a world that hates us (v 14b).
 1. The world hates us because we have Christ's word (v 14a) which judges the world's wisdom to be foolishness and proclaims a wisdom which is foolishness to the world.
 2. The world hates us because we are "not of the world" (v 16) but strangers and pilgrims here.
 - B. We live in a world that seeks to destroy us.
 1. By persecution and scorn.
 2. By guile and temptation.
 - C. God keeps us from the danger without.
 1. Not by taking us out of the world (v 15a), for he uses us to bring the news of salvation to others (v 18).
 2. But by guarding us "in His name" (v 11b), in the pure doctrine of His Word and in a godly life, thus preserving us from the devil's snares (v 15b).
- II. Because of danger from within.
 - A. Disagreements in Scriptural doctrine.
 1. False teachers do arise (Ac 20:29-30).
 2. All false teaching ultimately threatens the Gospel and is therefore not to be sanctioned (Ga 1:8).
 - B. Divisions over matters not prescribed by Scripture.
 1. Such as building or not building a sanctuary.
 2. Such as the amount to be given to a charitable cause.

Both disagreements in doctrine and divisions over externals destroy our oneness as Christians (v 11b).

- C. God keeps us from the danger within.
 1. By sanctifying us in the truth of His Word (v 17). To be sanctified is to be separated from falsehood and evil for holy and noble use. God's Word becomes our food and drink, our shield and refuge, our lamp and guide.
 2. By encouraging us to make faithful use of the Word and Sacraments (v 19b; Ac 2:42).

Conclusion: Heavenly Father, in accordance with your Son's prayer, keep us to the end amid the dangers that threaten from without and within.

Gerhard Aho

PENTECOST**John 7:37-39a****May 26, 1985**

Introduction: Jesus spoke the words of our text at the Feast of Tabernacles, an eight-day-long celebration of the harvest. A ritual on the last day of the Feast reminded the Israelites of how God provided their ancestors, wandering in a waterless desert, with water from a rock. The rock gushing forth fresh water symbolized Jesus, the Rock of Ages, who was now among them and from whom living water was flowing. On this Pentecost we have gathered at this fountain. Jesus is still calling:

"IF ANYONE THIRSTS LET HIM COME TO ME AND DRINK"

- I. Jesus satisfies our spiritual thirst.
 - A. We all have a thirst.
 - 1. It can manifest itself in restlessness and frustration.
 - 2. It can become evident in a vague feeling that there is something more to life.
 - B. We try to satisfy our thirst in various ways.
 - 1. By pursuing wealth, fame, power, pleasure, only to have the acquiring of these things turn sour.
 - 2. We may strive to make ourselves right with God, only to experience more guilt.
 - C. Jesus alone satisfies our thirst by offering us Himself.
 - 1. His love, redemption, forgiveness, hope.
 - 2. We receive Jesus and all his blessings when we come and drink, that is, when we believe in Him.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament enables us to come to Jesus and drink.
- II. Jesus causes living water to flow from us.
 - A. This living water flows from every believer without exception.
 - 1. Think of the Samaritan woman, the women who visited Christ's empty tomb on Easter morning, the disciples on Pentecost.
 - 2. Not just drips and trickles but rivers and streams. Having been forgiven, we can forgive. Having been reconciled, we can be reconcilers.
 - B. This living water flows from the body of believers, the Church.
 - 1. From the Church's preaching, teaching, writing, singing, giving.
 - 2. Into a vast desert of human need.
 - C. This living water does great things.
 - 1. People are converted (Is 35:6-7).
 - 2. People are eternally refreshed with heaven's joys (Re 7:17).

Conclusion: "Let him who is thirsty come, and . . . take the water of life without price" (Re 22:17).

Gerhard Aho

