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Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus

A Statement of the Department of Systematic Theology

The September 1984 issue of *The Cresset* carried an article by Valparaiso University Professor Theodore M. Ludwig, entitled, "Does God Have Many Names?"

The March 1986 issue of *The Cresset* printed a signed letter from Professor Ludwig, expressing regret for "unclarities" in the previous article which had led to "misunderstanding." The letter further states:

> It is of the very essence of Christianity to believe that God gives eternal salvation only through Jesus Christ as the center of the divine plan of salvation and that Christians are to share this good news with all other people. My article presupposed this central Christian teaching.

It would be gratifying to accept that this fine confession was indeed presupposed by the 1984 article, and that any other interpretation is simply a misunderstanding. Such a facile explanation, however, flies in the face of the following facts:

1. The 1984 article repeatedly attacks the exclusive claims of Christianity as represented in the old formula, extra ecclesiam nulla salus (outside the church there is no salvation). Prof. Ludwig's attacks on this formulation apply equally well to the Lutheran Church's confession in the *Large Catechism,* Creed, §§56 and 66: "But outside the Christian church (that is, where the Gospel is not) there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness.... Therefore they remain in eternal wrath and damnation..."

2. The 1984 article by implication criticizes Karl Barth for teaching in his *Church Dogmatics* that Christianity "alone has the commission and the authority to be a missionary religion, i.e., to confront the world of religions as the only true religion, etc." Barth may be criticized for many things, but he should not be attacked for resisting modern "theories which relativized Christian claims," as the 1984 article does.

3. The 1984 article states: "Among Christians there is a growing feeling that the long-standing tradition of exclusivism, which

sees truth and salvation only in Christianity, is no longer viable for the needs of the church and the world in this pluralistic age. . ." This development is supported throughout the article, and "among deeper theological reasons" for it there is cited the alleged fact that "we today have a strong sense of the relativity of knowledge, including religious truth."

4. The 1984 article argues that "we would be poorer as Christians if there were no longer any Muslims, any Hindus, any Buddhists, Sikhs, or Confucianists. To say that, however, is to suggest that these various religions of the world have a place in God's purpose for humankind. . ."

5. The 1984 article deals at some length with the Karl Rahner-Vatican II scheme, according to which salvation was indeed obtained by Christ alone, but is distributed through the various religions, so that devout Buddhists, etc., are "anonymous Christians." This scheme the article criticizes, not as one might expect of a Lutheran, for detaching salvation from the revealed Gospel, but for not going far enough: "In holding Christianity as the final and absolute religion, other religions can in no way be approached as equals, however much respect and affirmation is given. . . . The arrogance of the exclusivistic view is surely softened by this model but reappears in a more subtle form."

6. The 1984 article criticizes relativism and pluralism not because they deny the absoluteness of Christianity, but because they fail " to take the truth-claims of the various religions seriously. By giving up the claim to finality and absoluteness of Christianity, at the same time something vital to all religions is relativized: the claim of each religion to ultimacy."

7. According to the March 1986 letter, the "central problem" in the 1984 article had been the "arrogant and hostile attitude" often shown to individuals belonging to non-Christian religions. In point of fact the 1984 article deals not with relations among individuals, but with the relations among religions as such. In that context "arrogance" is not some personal attitude, but the assertion of Christianity's "exclusivistic" claims. Thus the concluding section of the 1984 article argues that

- "The discussion has clearly moved beyond the 'outside the Church there is no salvation' model, so that people of other religions can now be approached with some respect and openness."

- "Truth is to be sought in living personal confrontation with God where he reveals himself in the Scriptures and in human culture and religion."

- "A model that looks to dialogue with other religions as a theological resource must accept in a basic way the pluralism of religions; if other religions are met as basically inferior, something other than dialogue takes place in the meeting."

- The goal of dialogue "is not to convert but to share and to challenge and to contribute in a common quest for understanding the Mystery. And the contribution will be mutual.... Yet if God is at work also in these religions, Christians can also learn something of the Mystery from them."

- "Christianity must be viewed as a unique, historical reality—not the exclusive possessor of truth and salvation, ...challenging and being challenged by the other pilgrims on the way towards a fuller understanding of the Mystery."

- "If God intends these religions to be present in our world, to be faithful we must recognize them in our theology and seek to be present to them in dialogue."

The entire thrust of the article is that Christianity is "not the exclusive possessor of truth and salvation." The 1984 article represents therefore a fundamental assault on the basic New Testament confession that Jesus is Lord. Such radical apostasy calls for unconditional retraction, not for excuses or explanations of alleged misunderstandings.

Eugene F. Klug, D.Theol.
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The Church Growth Movement: A Word of Caution

Glenn Huebel

The Church Growth Institute of America recently made its predictions of the fastest growing denominations of the next decade. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was in the top ten of that elite group. One of the reasons for this confidence in the LCMS was stated as our synod's enthusiastic integration of the principles of the church growth movement. Clearly, a rapidly growing interest in the church growth movement is evident in the LCMS. Many of our districts are participating in well orchestrated church growth programs, and a great and growing number of our pastors and leaders are trained in the fundamentals of the movement. A movement so enthusiastically embraced and which exercises such a profound influence upon the thinking and strategy of the LCMS deserves to be well scrutinized.

Having recently participated in a two-year Texas District church growth project led by the Church Growth Institute of America, I have found much to be commended in the movement. The principles taught are generally very practical and helpful in guiding and structuring the congregation and its ministry. The outreach mindset which characterizes every aspect of the movement is certainly a healthy and needed influence in the LCMS. The tools developed by the leaders of this movement are easy to use and very relevant and practical aids to the congregation. I cannot agree with those who find nothing good in the movement.

With so many things to commend about the program, it is certainly tempting to embrace every aspect of the popular movement without question or careful evaluation. Yet a word of caution is in order, especially at this time in which church growth enthusiasm has reached almost a fevered pitch in the LCMS. It is not my intention to expose and castigate every doctrinally flawed statement in the mass of church growth literature. In fact, the movement studiously avoids any distinctive theology which might limit its universal appeal. For that reason very few theologians of any denomination will find the expressed theology of the movement particularly offensive. Realization of this was the seed of my own cautious attitude. A movement which finds universal appeal across denominations must be based on some other foundation than theology. Indeed, the ecumenical movement has demonstrated that

theology is a stumbling block to the outward union of denominations and, therefore, must be diluted before institutional unity can be achieved. The great weakness of the ecumenical movement (on the outward plane) is that it fails to offer an exciting substitute for theology. By contrast, the church growth movement finds eager and growing acceptance in a great number of denominations because it does offer a positive rallying point. The great strength and universal appeal of the church growth movement is centered in its sociological insights as they are specifically applied to religious institutions.

This combination of shallow, "bare-bones" theology together with a well packaged, pragmatic sociology causes me concern. Will the church's priorities change? Will the church begin to seek its growth from the promising seed of applied sociology rather than the biblical seed of the Word? Are church growth principles and standards becoming, in the minds of our people, the marks of the vital church? Will pure, careful, and precise theology become obsolete, an historical relic in the modern church, supplanted by much more effective and "practical" church growth principles? These are my concerns.

Of course, a church growth enthusiast will label these concerns as totally unfounded. They will object that church growth principles are designed to complement our theology, not to replace it. I believe that the intent is sincere, but what will happen in practice? It is generally implied that those who balk or have concerns about the movement are not prioritizing "growth" as they should. Objections and cautions are often labeled as "non-growth excuses." In many cases this assessment is probably accurate. In fact, even as I write I must accept and consider this challenge to my motivation. The best way to state my concern, therefore, is to challenge the church growth movement on the basis of the great commission itself. It is from a desire to see the lost gathered into the kingdom of grace that I share these concerns and cautions. It is my fear that the church growth movement may, indeed, unwittingly hinder true church growth by leading us subtly away from the only source that generates that growth—the Word and the sacraments. I wish to measure the church growth movement against the great commission on three fronts: (1.) The goal of the church growth movement is sociological rather than theological.

(2.) The standards of measurement of the church growth movement are sociological rather than theological. (3.) The means employed by the church growth movement are sociological rather than theological.

I. The Goal

First, we may measure the goal of the church growth movement against the standard of the great commission. The goals of the church growth movement and of the great commission of Christ are stated in exactly the same words: "to make disciples of all nations." C. Peter Wagner, a leading spokesman for the church growth movement, states: "Those who have chosen to identify with McGavran's movement, and I include myself among them, have chosen as their biblical rallying point, Jesus' Great Commission to 'go and make disciples of all the nations.'"[1]

As faithful, confessional Lutherans we must, however, ask whether the Scriptures and the church growth leaders mean the same thing with these words. In theory and profession, perhaps they do. In practice, however, I think not. To be sure, church growth leaders state (sincerely, I believe) that it is essential for discipleship that one be a true believer in Christ and His vicarious atonement. But faith itself is not measurable. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His" (1 Tim 2:19). "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20). This places the kingdom of grace on a plane beyond the reach of scientific investigation. Nevertheless, faith does bear fruit. In fact, as faithful Lutherans we say that faith always and inevitably bears fruit. Church growth practitioners attempt to measure the fruits of faith. The chief fruit upon which the church growth movement focuses is stated in Wagner's words: "The fruit the church growth movement has selected as the validating criterion for discipleship is responsible church membership."[2]

Many have accused the church growth movement of "playing a numbers game," meaning that they do not care what statistics really mean. In reality, church growth researchers carefully question what numbers signify. Wagner again states:

> As I see it, those who object to numbers are usually trying to avoid superficiality in Christian commitment. I agree with this. I am not interested in names on church rolls. There are already too many nominal, inactive and non-resident church members in American. I am not interested in churches which are religious social clubs. I am not interested in decisions for Christ totaled up as people raise their hands or come forward after a crusade. I am not interested in Christians who profess Christ but do not demonstrate it in their lives. These numbers are unimportant.[3]

What is Wagner's interest, then? Converts? Yes, but only *indirectly* as they are measured by "responsible church membership." The numbers are valid for Wagner only as they indicate "responsible church members." Responsible church membership is variously defined, according to each denominational emphasis. In practice, a "responsible church member" is one who is incorporated into the institutional life and activity of the congregation and who manifests in one degree or another those "fruits" which are valued by the particular theology of the congregation (speaking in tongues, praying, regular church attendance, giving, etc.). Responsible church membership is, therefore, in practice, defined in outward, institutional, behavioral terms, with little attention given to motive or source of power.

The practical focus of the church growth "great commission" is the outward incorporation of a person into a congregational institution and the production of a Christian lifestyle (witnessing, praying, attendance, service, etc.). The church growth movement, by its own admission, sets its target on the outward "fruits of faith" rather than on faith itself. What is wrong with this shift in focus? If every true Christian bears fruit (a statement with which we would agree), then why not turn our focus to the inevitable fruit which verifies faith? Unfortunately, the outward "fruit" can be artificially produced. People can be behaviorally "changed" or "reformed" by outward manipulation of one form or another. People can be drawn into and become active members of an institution—even a religious institution—through other motives than faith in Christ and by other means than His voice. For instance, people can become regular, active members of a congregation because their "belonging needs" are satisfied. (This motive is, incidently, identified and stressed by church growth principles.) People can be motivated to "give" through fear or guilt or hope

of reward. People can be manipulated sociologically or psychologically to conform to practically any outward standard. The cults of our day amply prove this point. By making "responsible church congregation membership" the goal of the great commission, church growth teachers are reducing the mission of the church to the sociologically defined and measurable "*form* of godliness." It should be noted at this point that I am *not* entering upon the "quality versus quantity" argument against church growth. I am convinced that church growth principles foster even "quality" church members as that term describes outward behavior. As history and as the cults prove, however, even "quality" or "responsible church members" can be sociologically or psychologically produced.

Against this procedure we must uphold the true great commission of Christ, which is to "make disciples of all nations." A "disciple" is not merely one who outwardly behaves as a Christian, or even one who with his lips confesses Christ, but rather one who, in his heart, repents of his sins and believes in the forgiveness merited by the substitutionary work of Christ. The great commission, as defined in Scripture, focuses essentially upon the heart of man, not merely on his behavior, his outward fellowship with Christians, or any other outward fruit, as important as these may be. The great commission is concerned not with a sociological or psychological conversion, but with the theological conversion of the sinner, an inward turning from sin to grace worked by the power of the Holy Spirit, a resurrection from spiritual death to spiritual life. In summary, the great commission is the commission of Christ to build the church, not merely to incorporate people into outward fellowship or membership of a congregation. Christian "fruit" is a necessary result of conversion, but it should never become the focus of the great commission for the reasons stated above. Francis Peiper clearly distinguishes the difference between these two things in his *Christian Dogmatics:*

> The Christian Church is composed of all those and only those in whom the Holy Spirit has worked faith that for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction their sins are forgiven. Nothing else makes one a member of the church, neither holding membership in a church body, nor outward use of the means of grace, nor profession of the Christian faith, nor filling an office of the church, nor zeal for a moral life in imitation of Christ, nor any immediate regeneration or

> submergence in God of which the "enthusiasts" of all shades talk . . .[4]
>
> Since man by nature is inclined to imagine that mere outward affiliation with the church secures his salvation, the great practical importance of ever defining the church as the communion of believers or saints, and not as an institution, an outward polity, is manifest.[5]

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession clearly describes the nature of the church and thereby directs us to the real goal of the great commission in these words:

> For it is necessary to understand what it is that principally makes us members, and that, living members, of the Church. If we will define the Church only as an outward polity of the good and wicked, men will not understand that the kingdom of Christ is righteousness of heart and the gift of the Holy Ghost [that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, as nevertheless it is; that therein Christ inwardly rules, strengthens, and comforts hearts, and imparts the Holy Ghost and various spiritual gifts], but they will judge that it is only the outward observance of certain forms of worship and rites. Likewise, what difference will there be between people of the Law and the Church if the Church is an outward polity? But Paul distinguishes the Church from the people of the Law, thus, that the Church is a spiritual people, i.e., that it has been distinguished from the heathen not by civil rites [not in polity and civil affairs], but that it is the true people of God, regenerated by the Holy Ghost.[6]

In summary, the goal of the church growth movement is to make "responsible church members," which is a goal pragmatically defined in institutional, measurable, behavioral terms. Though the leaders agree that a "rebirth" is necessary, the *practical* target of the movement is the outward building of a religious institution. The real goal of the great commission however, is, and must always remain the conversion of sinners from unbelief to faith in Christ. The fact that we cannot see or measure this enterprise should not tempt us to shift our focus. It should humble us to realize that only God is able to build His church.

II. The Standards

The second problem which we should observe in the church growth movement concerns its standards of evaluation. The standards of evaluation used by the church growth movement are perfectly consistent with its goal—organizational, sociological growth. The standards by which the church growth movement measures and evaluates the health of a congregation are almost exclusively sociological in nature. The church growth process always begins with a careful evaluation of the congregation's present condition. This evaluation is necessary to identify problem areas and plan workable solutions. (Church growth principles are custom-fitted to each congregation's needs.) The two-year church growth project in the Texas District began in each participating congregation with the task of gathering a vast amount of statistics. This was the data base upon which the congregation's health and vitality was evaluated by church growth experts. The statistics which we were requested to gather and chart included worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, number of visitors (separated into first-, second-, and third-time visitors), age distribution of members, number of small groups in the congregation, membership growth or decline (categorized into baptism, transfer, and conversion), demographic information on the surrounding community, and much more. No questions were asked concerning the content of doctrine or preaching, nor was it necessary to find out how many members were diligently involved in a study of the Word (with the exception of worship service and Sunday school statistics). The data considered statistically relevant was that which would give an accurate picture of the life of the congregation as a social organism. It was data which was primarily, almost exclusively, sociological in nature. The problem areas identified were sociological problems, and the solutions suggested were sociological solutions (more about this matter in Part III). I am certainly not criticizing the collection of this data, nor the accuracy or relevance of the evaluation. I too found it to be helpful in the performance of my ministry. I am simply identifying it as a sociological evaluation of the congregation's life.

This approach, nevertheless, is problematic because the kingdom of grace (the true object of the great commission) is not necessarily fourishing in every healthy, vibrant, growing religious social unit or congregation. Organizational health is certainly an important consideration which we cannot neglect, but we can-

not identify organizational health with the health and vitality of the kingdom of God. In other words, church growth measurements may lead to wrong conclusions, dangerously wrong conclusions. Not every "growing" church is successfully fulfilling Christ's great commission. Not even every church incorporating previously unchurched people is successfully fulfilling the great commission. Some religious groups are extremely healthy, vital, growing organizations which fulfill many needs of their members and the community, but are, nevertheless, not "making disciples" in the real sense of that concept.

Jesus commented that the Pharisees were very active evangelists in a broad sense of that word, and they were "successful" in building the visible church: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15). The same may be said today of the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses, which by the outward measurements of church growth criteria are vital, healthy, growing religious bodies, but are not "making disciples" because they lack the Gospel. The church growth movement does not include non-Christian cults in its studies, nor do its leaders uphold the cults as positive examples of growth. Nevertheless, many of the churches included in the church growth literature as examples of healthy, vibrant churches grossly distort the Gospel and incorrectly divide Law and Gospel. Among these are the legalistic Pentecostals, Assemblies of God, and Nazarenes, who tend to substitute Law for Gospel. Unfortunately, they may be far healthier than most of our Lutheran congregations from an organizational standpoint, and they may be drawing more people into their realm of influence. But how does the kingdom of God fare among them?

Mere sociological evaluation of a congregation's or church body's health may be deceptive. In Lutheran and confessional theology the health and vitality of the church is correlated only with the means of grace. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states: "The church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is rightly administered."[7] Similarly we confess in the Apology:

> The church is not only the fellowship of outward objects and rites, as other governments, but is originally a fellowship of faith and of the Holy Ghost in hearts. [The Christian church consists not alone in fellowship of outward signs, but it consists especially in inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart...], which fellowship nevertheless has outward marks so that it can be recognized, namely, the pure doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ. [Namely, where God's Word is pure, and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the same, there certainly is the Church, and there are Christians.] And this church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews..."[8]

The purely taught Gospel and the sacraments as instituted by Christ are the only marks of the church. The vitality of the church is correlated with the purity of the means of grace operating within it. Any other mark can be counterfeited and is therefore misleading.

Obviously, an error in standard generates an error in conclusion or evaluation. Congregations which church growth principles applaud may, indeed, be adding nothing and, in some cases, even undermining the kingdom. Church growth standards have no way to distinguish the real temple of God from the wood, hay, and stubble which will be burned on the last day (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). It should be noted at this point that the church growth movement has found no correlation between the content of doctrine and the ability of a church to grow and flourish. In fact, the church growth movement has declared that pluralism in doctrine is a blessing of God which allows everyone to find a church suitable to his own tastes.

But why should we, as confessional Lutherans, be concerned about this faulty standard of measurement? Since we have pure doctrine, what difference does it make? It can potentially make a great deal of difference. People and organizations tend to emphasize and produce what their accepted standards of measurement approve. If we embrace and accept these standards without realizing their inherent flaws, our priorities as a church will be changed accordingly. Historically we have emphasized the pure means of grace because they were the standard by which we evaluated the church. If we now accept another standard of

measurement, particularly one which finds no value in the pure means of grace, our most precious treasure may be lost and traded for glittering trinkets. Satan is successfully tempting us with the glory of a worldly kingdom if we give up or pay less attention to the cross. Especially is this caution necessary in the LCMS at the present time, considering our doctrinal crisis. The leaven of false doctrine has penetrated the loaf and is working its corruption within. In order to avoid confrontation and maintain outward peace, the organizational image is being emphasized. Some among us are contending that doctrine is not really important, after all. And now we have embraced enthusiastically the church growth movement. What a temptation! Here a new standard is offered which commends doctrinal pluralism in the name of the great commission! What more pious reason could there be to lay aside our differences? Satan is a wily foe, indeed.

Some are thinking, perhaps, that our synod will never wholly accept the shallow standards of the church growth movement in place of the true marks of the church as identified in our confessions. Will we always consider pure teaching the vital, essential mark, the precious treasure of our church body, the very *seed* of the church of God? Or will the maintenance of pure doctrine one day be considered an unnecessary nuisance? Doctrinal controversy, even necessary and healthy controversy, wreaks havoc on the outward institution. It projects a negative image to the public and thereby diminishes, sometimes substantially, the appeal of the organization to outsiders. Nevertheless, history has demonstrated that Satan will never allow pure doctrine to remain in the church without strife and warfare. Will the preservation of the pure teaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments one day be considered too costly, too destructive, too much of a hindrance or a danger to the institutional health of the church? Will the maintenance of pure preaching and pastoral practice ever cease being an asset and become a liability in our hearts and minds? In a recent Bible study a district leader emphatically expressed the idea that our "concern for pure doctrine" was a sinful hindrance to our fulfilling of the great commission. Is it possible to fulfill the great commission without pure doctrine? According to church growth standards, the necessary costs of maintaining truth may, indeed, hinder and diminish our "health" and "vitality" as an institution. According to the confessions, pure doctrine, the church, and therefore the great commission are inseparably and wonderfully united.

III. The Means

A final caution regarding the church growth movement is that the means it employs to accomplish the great commission are shallow. Again they are consistent with the goal desired and are sociological rather than theological. We have noted above that, by church growth standards, doctrine is not a vital ingredient of a growing, flourishing church. In consequence, churches of all denominations from one end of the theological spectrum to the other can grow and flourish by applying the principles of the church growth movement. Doctrine is a variable. Church growth principles are the constants of growing churches. And what are these vital principles that keep a church "going and growing"? A review of church growth literature reveals that they are pragmatic, organizational principles, many of which are patterned after the business model. The church growth way to keep a church going and growing is largely applied sociology, including an understanding of group dynamics. The growing church has well organized infrastructure of cell groups and a careful procedure of incorporating new members into these cells. The growing church is keenly aware of saturation points in a group, even pinpointing the saturation point of worship attendance at eighty percent of seating capacity. Growing churches recognize and use the homogeneous unit principle, realizing that people enjoy being with those who have similar cultural backgrounds. Growing churches pay special attention to the convenience of the worshipper, providing adequate parking space and special parking for visitors. Growing churches recognize the importance of making a good first impression, focusing special attention on the first-time visitors. Church growth theory recommends certain leadership styles as an important ingredient to church growth. Growing churches carefully analyze the demographics of their communities and target their efforts and message to particular groups and classes of people. All of this activity is helpful and very practical, but it is also primarily sociology.

The Bible is frequently used and quoted in church growth materials. I have observed two primary ways in which the Bible is used in the program. First, it is used to defend the priority of the great commission. However, vital elements in the great commission, such as the theology of conversion, the vicarious atonement, the church, and the means of grace, are not treated at length. Secondly, the Bible is used as a sociology textbook of sorts. It

is used to demonstrate the presence of certain sociological principles at work in the early church and its growth process. In other words, the Bible seems to be used in a very superficial way to defend and support the principles of the church growth movement.

Whereas these sociological phenomena are, indeed, evident in the growth of the early church, it is interesting to note that important biblical data concerning church growth is not generally included in the church growth materials. For example, the Bible does not leave it to us to determine the causes of growth, but clearly identifies these causes. The Bible itself ascribes the growth of the church, not to the application of certain "principles," but to the living and abiding Word of God. Church growth teachers can find the *oikos* or "household" evangelism principle at work in the New Testament to defend their "web evangelism" principle. This is a valid observation. Why do they not also emphasize what is abundantly more evident in the New Testament, that the growth of the church is specifically attributed, not to the *oikos* principle, but to the Word and sacraments? It was the word preached by Peter which "pricked the hearts" of hearers on the first Pentecost. "They that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). The church growth teachers find abundant statistics in the Book of Acts to justify their insistence upon keeping accurate records and counting people. This is a valid observation. Why do they not also stress the means of grace, which receives more emphasis in the Book of Acts than keeping statistics? The prayer of the church recorded in Acts 4:29-30 is a prayer for boldness to speak the word. In Acts 6:7 Luke tells us the source of the church's vitality: "And the Word of God increased: and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly." In Acts 8:4 we are told that the Christians were scattered and went everywhere "preaching the word." It was the Word of Christ preached by Peter which converted the house of Cornelius. The Word is the source of all the growth we see in the Book of Acts.

Paul, the great missionary of the Book of Acts, reveals in His epistles where the power and success of his great-commission ministry is found. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:17). Again, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). To the Colossians Paul writes, "All over the world this Gospel is producing fruit and growing. . ."

(Colossians 1:6). When Paul instructs Timothy as a pastor and teacher of the church, he does not give him a course in applied sociology (*oikos,* receptive fields, etc.) but directs him to the pure doctrine of God's Word: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

In the gospels, the same source of church growth is clearly emphasized. The parable of the sower is often used by church growth leaders to demonstrate the principle of receptiveness. How is it that they do not emphasize what is so emphatic in that parable, that the kingdom of God is derived from the proclaiming and hearing of the Word? Again, Jesus says that "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field" (Matthew 13:24). This seed is the Word of God. There is also the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20, the "biblical rallying point" of the church growth movement. How is it that church growth leaders use this passage to emphasize the priority of the command to make disciples (verse 19), without also emphasizing the priority of the means (verse 20) by which disciple-making is accomplished? Jesus not only commands the making of disciples but also immediately adds, "baptizing and teaching."

Clearly, the unique role of the Gospel and the sacraments as means of grace is stated as emphatically in Scripture as the great commission itself. The expansion of the kingdom (true church growth) is a function of the Word. Sociological principles can be effective means to build a successful visible church, but have no power whatsoever to build the kingdom. Only the pure Gospel and sacraments can accomplish this task. The Lutheran confessors understood well the connection between the expansion of the kingdom and the means of grace as they included Article V in the Augsburg Confession:

> That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel. . ."[9]

The Brief Statement also emphasizes the means of grace as the only means of growth in the kingdom of God:

> Churches at home should never forget that there is no other way of winning souls for the Church and keeping them with it than the faithful and diligent use of the divinely ordained means of grace. Whatever activities do not either directly apply the Word of God or subserve such application we condemn as "new methods," unchurchly activities which do not build, but harm, the Church.[10]

Again, why should this matter be a concern to the LCMS since we have the pure Gospel and the sacraments? I believe that we must beware of a subtle inversion of our priorities. Inversion is one of Satan's most successful methods of deception. He tempts us to place meat which perishes over meat which endures, sight over faith, law over gospel, the kingdom of the world over the kindgom of God. To emphasize church growth principles (law) over the means of grace (Gospel) would be a serious and fatal mistake. But such an inversion is not easily detected.

Never would we blatantly and openly substitute church growth principles for the means of grace, yet subtly, in our minds and hearts, this substitution, in fact, may happen. It may be happening. What are we trusting as a synod—the means of grace or applied practical sociology? If enthusiasm is a barometer, it appears that the church growth principles have an edge over pure doctrine. The synod has enthusiastically embraced church growth principles. Great numbers of our pastors have been trained at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. Many districts, including my own, are emphasizing and integrating church growth principles. Lyle Schaller has rated the church growth movement as the most influential development of the 1970's. It is becoming a tidal wave in our synod at the present time. Enthusiasm for church growth principles is quite evident. Does the synod express the same eagerness to preserve our doctrinal unity and purity? Do we have theological conferences across our synod for the express purpose of resolving evident doctrinal problems? It seems that enthusiasm for doctrinal purity and unity is waning. Another possible indicator of the synod's changing priorities is the seminary curriculum. Currently our seminaries still emphasize classical Lutheran theology. But rumblings are now being heard, and many are expressing the "need" to change that emphasis toward a more "practical" curriculum. Could this desire be translated into the production of religious sociologists and religious psychologists rather than practical theologians? There

is also the commonly heard statement that we can "plug our doctrine into church growth principles." But this statement itself betrays an inversion of priorities. Should we not, rather, plug church growth principles into our doctrine, since the Word, rather than principles, builds the true church?

I fear that the emphasis in the synod may well change by popular demand from the means of grace to pragmatic principles, from theology to religious sociology, from the kingdom of God to a religious kingdom of the world. It seems that this is not my fear only. Recent comments by President Ralph Bohlmann indicate that he has seen a potential threat to the kingdom of God among us:

> The church can be tempted to substitute stones for bread, Bohlmann said. If "stones," such as reliance merely on organizational and institutional techniques, are substituted for the bread of God's Word, the Synod will be left without power from God to accomplish what it sets out to do.
>
> And like Jesus being tempted in the wilderness to worship Satan in exchange for wordly power, the church can be tempted to look at the world, its splendor and authority, and be tempted to think it would be helpful for the church to be like the world, Bohlmann said. He added that the Synod must remember Jesus' words to Satan, "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."[11]

The means offered by the church growth movement to build the church are shallow and have no power in themselves to build the kingdom of God.

Closing Remarks

The church is a great deal more than a visible social organization. If we ever lose sight of that fact, the kingdom of God may be taken from us as it was taken from the Jews. The doctrine we confess as a church must remain the treasure of our hearts and the central emphasis of our synod. C. F. W. Walther stated it well in one of his letters:

> Our treasure is not our size but rather our unity in doctrine and that both in pastoral as well as in ecclesiastical practice. Should our synod lose this treasure, then it will be ruined. . .[12]

W. A. Baepler expressed the same thought in his essay, "Doctrine, True and False":

> Pure doctrine is the greatest blessing man can receive. The Lutheran Church is the church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments. Not the number of her adherents, not her organizations, not her charitable and other institutions, not her beautiful customs and liturgical forms, but the precious truths entrusted to her constitute her true beauty ahd richest treasure.[13]

The danger of the church growth movement is that its principles, on an outward plane, work with or without the Word. The means of grace are not an essential part of the system. Unless we remain conscious at all times of the severe limitations of these principles, that they in themselves build only an outward institution, we may be deceived into trading our precious treasure for worthless trinkets.

In this essay, I have been largely critical of the church growth movement—many will think, unfairly so. I feel compelled to add, lest I be misunderstood, that church growth principles can be a positive aid to our synod. First of all, the movement has pointedly reminded us that there are lost souls to be reached, that God loves them in Christ, and that efforts to reach them have often been less than enthusiastic. I know that for me this confrontation is necessary. I need to repent of lovelessness with respect to lost souls. Secondly, the movement has "lifted the fog," so to speak, and exposed "religious busy-ness" and "institutional maintenance" as an empty veneer and evasion of our chief mission in the world. Christ certainly did focus great effort upon the "sinners." He did meet them where they were and spent time with them in the interest of their souls. So also must we leave the comforts of our Christian fellowship in search of the lost. Finally, the church growth movement has given us some practical and useful tools and insights. We must organize our efforts if we are to be effective in the mission which our Lord has given us. It is here that church growth principles can help us. These principles teach us to be wise managers and communicators. There is nothing wrong with pressing sociology or any other discipling into the *service* of the Gospel. In fact, the Lord urges us to employ the wisdom of this world to spiritual ends (Luke 16:8,9).

The virtues of church growth have been widely acclaimed in the promotion of the movement. This essay has been weighted toward "caution" simply because I have not heard such caution widely expressed. Lutherans can certainly learn from church growth principles, but Lutherans should not become so mesmerized with the outward glory of the church that they lose sight of the far more precious—indeed, priceless—gift entrusted by grace to us, the pure means of grace. Through these alone Christ builds His church, "even when steeples are falling."

Endnotes

1. C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984), p. 13.
2. Wagner, p. 21.
3. Wagner, p. 23.
4. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, p. 397.
5. Pieper, III, p. 400.
6. *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 231.
7. *Concordia Triglotta,* p. 47.
8. *Concordia Triglotta,* p. 227.
9. *Concordia Triglotta,* p. 45.
10. *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 11.
11. "Bohlmann Addresses Leaders Gathered for Planning," *Reporter*, 12, No. 4 (February 24, 1986), p. 1.
12. *Walther Speaks to the Church*, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), p. 23.
13. W.A. Baepler, "Doctrine, True and False," *The Abiding Word*, ed. Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), II, p. 496.

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Theological Observer

A TALE OF TWO BOOKS

A recent publication of Concordia Publishing House is Hermann Sasse's *We Confess Jesus Christ* (St. Louis, 1984). A very different volume is by John H. S. Kent, *The End of the Line?* a product of Fortress Press (Philadelphia, 1982). Few may realize it now, but in fact these two books are nearly perfect paradigms of what the publishers' respective churches really stand for. The sharply contrasting books, both as it happens by historical theologians, represent, of course, not the average or typical theologies of their churches, but the latters' basic directions and ultimate destinations, given their present courses. "Missouri's" average theology is hardly as good as Sasse's, nor can that of the New Lutheran Church possibly be as bad as Kent's. Rather, the two books represent the two polarities or centers of gravity round which North American Lutheranism is resettling at present. If the Missouri Synod is serious about reclaiming its confessional heritage, it will continue to pursue the path so conscientiously charted by Sasse. And if the merging synods insist on letting historical criticism dominate their seminaries, Kent's "end of the line" will be the logically foreseeable outcome.

The five Sasse pieces are translations by Professor Dr. Norman Nagel of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis—of material selected from the collection of essays by Sasse which had appeared in two German volumes under the title *In Statu Confessionis* (1966 and 1976). The English paperback is the first of three in the *We Confess* series, of which the second, dealing with the sacraments, has already appeared. A third volume, on church and ministry, should be out by the time this article appears in print.

The center-piece of this first Sasse volume, and possibly of all three, is the essay on Luther's theology of the cross. Here Sasse, beginning with a panoramic survey of the cross in church history, plumbs the depths of what it means to be Lutheran. "The cross demands faith *contrary to what our eyes see*" (p. 50). This is not a summons to intellectual irresponsibility. Faith must not escape from objective reality into subjectivity. On the contrary, faith defies and unmasks our own illusions. Heaven cannot be stormed by feats of philosophy or religion. It is freely given to a faith which, taking God at His word, believes His power where it sees weakness, knows His love when it experiences anguish, and finds glory in the cross under the mask of shame. God hides Himself not in high abstractions, but in lowly, visible things like baptismal water, absolving words uttered by sinful lips, and consecrated bread and wine—and this all the better to reveal Himself there. This is not a theory or a game: "A yes to the cross of Christ is also a yes to my cross" (p. 52). This article is preceded by a study on "Jesus Christ is Lord" and is followed by an essay commemorating the fifteenth centenary of the Council of Chalcedon and by two essays on the church as a confessing entity and as itself also an article of faith to be confessed. A brief biography of Hermann Sasse concludes the volume.

As it happens, Kent's book also consists of five main parts. The first two chapters trace the retreat of Christian dogma before rationalism and historicism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively. Chapter Three discusses the fate of the doctrine of the church from John Wesley's time to the present. The next chapter treats of the "social theology" of that same period, and the last chapter deals with the twentieth century. Where Sasse was able to confess, because he was conscious of standing on the firm rock of God's Word, Kent, a professor of theology in the University of Bristol, can only debunk, retreat,

question, criticize, and deny. For him there is no truth, no dogma, no Word of God at all in the old, traditional sense: ". . .the study of modern historial theology which I have attempted here suggests that if Christianity is nearing the end of its main, public line, this is because it has exhausted ways of keeping its images alive" (p. ix). Although Kent punctuates his title, *End of the Line,* with a question mark, an exclamation point would have been more fitting. To show that things are not as hopeless as they seem on his account to be, Kent offers this piece of bravado (p. x):

> For the critical theologian, for the Christian humanist, the assertion of belief, of belief in God, in human creativity, in the Gospels as one sign of that human capacity to make peace instead of a desert, is now more than ever a matter of faith: faith in the underlying rationality of the universe,. . .faith in the quality of life commended in what seems to have been the teaching of Jesus. . .; faith in reason, however unfashionable reason may have become in the sick romanticism of today.

To paraphrase Antony Flex, how does a Christianity so defined differ from no Christianity at all? It is not surprising to find Kent criticizing J.A.T. ("Honest To God") Robinson's crude "reinterpretations" for still having kept too much of the old mythology. Of Robinson's redefinition of Christ's divinity in evolutionary terms, without any personal pre-existence ("God raised Jesus up through the normal process of heredity and environment and made him his decisive word to men"), Kent says: "neither biology nor the doctrine of the divinity of Christ had suffered much so far" (p. 111)!

Kent is quite right, no doubt, in seeing the collapse of the church's accustomed social support, in an increasingly secularized Europe, as the fundamental reason for the urgent preoccupation with the question of what it is that legitimates the church's existence and authority. Rome's answer was to anchor the whole system in papal infallibility at Vatican I. The Anglican Oxford Movement turned to the historic episcopate for support. In this context Kent's judgment makes very good sense: "the modern ecumenical movement partly originated in the anxiety of church leaders to replace the vanished social order in which the Churches had played an accepted part with a united ecclesiastical institution capable of holding its own as an independent structure with the increasingly independent and secular state" (p. 63).

Is it really true, however, that those who, in the various churches, stood for a "fixed dogmatic orthodoxy of the past" saw their main problem as one of "how to restore the Church's past ascendancy in western society" (p. 1)? Kent's rather too easy identification of the cause of "orthodoxy" with that of the ecumenical movement is an optical illusion due to Kent's extremely liberal perspective. After all, when observed from great astronomical distances, two stars which are actually very far apart, may seem to be quite close. There is also a Reformed Anglo-Saxon bias which makes it seem self-evident that the church is essentially a "visible" institution.

Here Sasse and Kent take antipodal positions. Walking by faith, not by sight, Sasse points to the pure Gospel and sacraments, that is, to the pure marks of the church, as the sole guarantors of the church's presence. Kent, together with the ecumenical movement he criticises for being insufficiently liberal, treats the church as a part of this world, with reformist social and political duties. The church is thus an article of sight. Perhaps Kent's scepticism needs also to be

seen, however, as an understandable reaction to an impossible "ecclesiology of glory." Focusing narrowly on Anglican and Roman pronouncements, Kent takes "orthodox theologians" to be advocating a belief in "the indefectibility of the [visible] Church, which Christ will never desert and which the Holy Spirit will lead into all truth" (p. 80). Sasse's sober and sobering theology of the cross can help to purge our proclamation of "human illusions," such as all delusions of grandeur about external historical institutions and, thus, to inoculate our theology against the grim fate of being swept away in the "general disillusionment" (Sasse, pp. 36, 37) of our time.

Since my esteemed colleague, Dr. Eugene Klug, has raised the issue of Dr. Sasse's orthodoxy in respect of biblical inerrancy (*Concordia Journal*, July 1985), a comment or two may be apropos. I fully share Dr. Klug's dismay at some of the statements in Sasse's posthumous *Sacra Scriptura* (Erlangen, 1981). It is a great pity that an unfinished manuscript by Sasse was printed after his death, together with some previously published material. The book ignores the development over the years of Sasse's position on inerrancy and thus leaves an unfair overall impression. For instance, when President F. Schiotz of the American Lutheran Church had cited Sasse against inerrancy, Sasse complained that "selected passages" from his articles "taken out of their context . . . might suggest that [he rejected] the inerrancy of the Scriptures. The contrary is true." And Sasse tried repeatedly to stop the reprinting and sale by the St. Louis Seminary Bookstore of an English translation of his "Letter to Lutheran Pastors on Holy Scripture" of 1950. In deep humility Sasse wrote to *Lutheran News* (7 August 1967), enclosing a copy of a letter to the bookstore manager, in which Sasse said that "the essay, written during our Australian discussions of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, contained formulations which [he] could not maintain," and that he had "corrected what had to be corrected." In his essay of 1950 Sasse had, in effect, limited biblical infallibility to "articles of faith." In the July 1960 number of *The Reformed Theological Review*, however, Sasse clearly confessed: "one thing Christian theology can never admit, namely, the presence of 'errors' in the sense of false statements in Holy Scripture."

Soon after he became president of the Missouri Synod, Dr. J.A.O. Preus wrote to Sasse for advice on the inerrancy question. Sasse replied under date of 24 February 1970, urging the Missouri Synod to do serious theological work on this topic, since hardly any help was to be found elsewhere. Barth, wrote Sasse, had tried, but ended in *Schwaermertum*, and Elert's doctrine of Holy Scripture, despite some "excellent paragraphs," was "terribly weak." Sasse compared inerrance to the ancient church's *homoousios* and urged: "The term *inerrantia* cannot and should not be given up—the meaning is quite clear, the absence of real error in the Bible."

Nevertheless, it is true that a certain ambiguity haunted Sasse's writings on this subject. If a grateful pupil be permitted to conjecture about a venerable and learned master's oversight, I would say that Sasse never succeeded in applying his deeply incarnational, Chalcedonian theology of the cross to Holy Scripture with the same consistency with which he had applied it to the sacraments and to the church. The theology of the cross demands that the mysteries of God acting under earthly "masks"—including, therefore, Holy Scripture—be taken not at their apparent face value, in terms of human phenomena, but at their real face value, as given by God in His Word. Theology, also bibliology,

must be done "from above," that is, in reliance on God's authority alone, without substantive admixtures "from below," that is, from the wisdom and philosophy of this world.

The sole point of these digressions is to commend the present *We Confess* series. It would be tragic if we refused to learn from Sasse on church, sacrament, ministry, and confession, simply because there were inadequacies in his writings on Scripture. Where, after all, is the theologian who has no "blind spots"? Dr. Norman Nagel has rendered the church an enormous service with his masterful English renditions of Sasse's essays, which rank already as classic contributions to the genuinely Confessional Lutheran theology of the twentieth century.

With John Kent's *The End of the Line?* one shudders on the brink of the bottomless abyss. The critical religious ideology—one can no longer call it theology—presented there with all due academic elegance, betokens a background of super-human powers, hissing, as it were, through Pontius Pilate: "What is truth?" Sasse, whose illusions perished at the front in World War I, exorcises the hissing, in *We Confess Jesus Christ.*

K. Marquart

THE REDEDICATION OF THE SPRINGFIELD BELL

A special service took place around the belfry of Kramer Chapel on 28 April 1986 in connection with the rededication of the so-called Springfield Bell. The bell was cast in Troy, New York, in 1882 for use at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois. It was installed later that year in a copula atop the dormitory building known as "die Kaffeemuehle" (Coffee Mill), a building so designated because of its square shape. The bell hung there until the Coffee Mill was razed in 1932. The class of 1932—in particular, the "Coetus" fraternity—was instrumental in preventing the bell from being sold for scrap in that year. It was stored in Springfield and, when the burden of the Depression eased, it was installed on the portico of Craemer Hall. From 1939 on it was rung by students to mark the completion of their seminary studies. It was brought to Fort Wayne when Concordia Theological Seminary was moved in 1976. The bell was stored in the old barn on the seminary campus until members of the Alumni Association began asking about it in 1984. The bell was rediscovered and moved to the concrete bunker. Finally, the class of 1986 resolved to have the bell hung in Kramer Chapel belfry.

On the occasion of the rededication of the Springfield Bell the hymn of invocation was "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord." The Rev. Prof. Daniel G. Reuning, Dean of the Chapel, led the congregation in a responsive rendition of Psalm 150, followed by the reading of Colossians 3:12-17. The academic dean, the Rev. Prof. David P. Scaer, Th.D., made the following remarks:

"Religions can be divided, according to the categories of the discipline of *Religionsgeschichte*, into two types. The more developed type is the established religion whose foundations are rooted in one location. The Jewish people have Jerusalem as the center of their worship. Muslims have Mecca. Roman Catholics look to the Eternal City where the basilica is built over the final resting-place of the prince of the apostles. The more primitive type of religion is the nomadic,

found in the wilderness. It is never at home in any one place, but like Elijah and John the Baptist its adherents move according to the directives of the divine will. The nomadic religion never has to go into all the world because its peripatetic nature requires that it always travel with no place to rest. The ancient Jews through the time of Joshua up to the time of David had a nomadic religion. They were in exile, moving from Canaan to Egypt and from Egypt into the Sinai peninsula and back to Canaan. Their model was Abraham, who by faith sojourned in a foreign land, living in tents. They looked not for an earthly city, but for the city which is to come, whose builder and maker is God.

"If our sister institution in St. Louis belongs to the more established type of religion, our institution is nomadic and exilic in nature. In our 140-year history we have folded up our tents and packed our baggage three times. If numbers mean anything, we have 260 years of exile before we reach the golden number of 400. Perhaps by coming to Ft. Wayne, we have returned to our Canaan. People say that one can never go home. This is especially true of the loyal students and faithful alumni of Concordia Theological Seminary, since she has moved from place to place. Our alumni have an alma mater, a stepmother, but the stepmother has a history of filling out change-of-address cards every so many years. Here today and some place else tomorrow. After the Jews had wandered in exile without any permanent home from the time of Abraham to the time of Moses, God did not at first give them a land of their own. He gave them the ark of the covenant so that they could have permanent symbols of their past. The manna, the tablets of stone, Aaron's rod were reminders of God's grace. They were nomadic and their lives were in constant flux, but God's redemptive love in their election as the messianic people was constant, unmovable, and firm.

"The bell which we dedicate today ties together our old home on the campus in Springfield, Illinois, with our new home here in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It goes before us and follows after us. The bell whose knell called our brothers in the ministry, many of whom have received the final crown, to prayer, to the preaching of the Word, and to the participation in the Blessed Sacrament will now call us to perform our sacred obligations. The places where this bell has rung have changed, but those who today hear and obey the call of the bell confess the same faith and believe the same Lord. We all bless one holy name, we partake one holy food, and like those before us we press on to our one hope, endowed with every grace of God. We who hear today the call of this bell will with all saints hear the final triumph sounded over our graves, and then we will hear the trumpets of a myriad of angels when the Lamb of God whose message we proclaim and whose flesh and blood we drink will Himself be the host at the everlasting banquet of heaven."

The president of the seminary, the Rev. Prof. Robert D. Preus, Ph.D., Th.D., performed the rite of dedication of the bell. Following the Lord's Prayer and the benediction, the service concluded with the singing of another hymn: "Built on the Rock the Church Doth Stand." Various officers of the graduating class and the student association were the first seminarians to ring the rededicated bell. In the ensuing weeks the new candidates reinstituted the old custom of ringing the bell to mark the completion of their student days in Concordia Theological Seminary.

Homiletical Studies

SERIES A EPISTLES

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 13:11-14

November 30, 1986

This epistle presents a timely Advent text. As Paul describes the worship life of the church, based on the mercies of God (Ro 12), he places the Christian life of service within both the church and the civil realm (Ro 12:9-21 and 13:1-7) in the context of the coming salvation of the Lord (text). Using the imagery of the night far spent and the day at hand, Paul urges proper Advent living, which casts off the works of darkness such as revelry and drunkenness and puts on the armor of light which refers to the daily power of our baptism in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction: A new church year begins today with a forward look to the coming again of Jesus Christ, the same Jesus born in a manger 2,000 years ago. The world of Christmas glitter goes on its merry way, masking the darkness of sin as the hour grows late. Today's epistle from Romans 13 cuts through both the darkness and the dream-like holiday atmosphere with the clarion call (v 11):

Time to Awake

The text shows us how to awake for the day of salvation.

I. We awake by casting off the works of darkness (vv 12b, 13b).

A. Paul describes the works of darkness.

1. Revelry—noisy partying which is demeaning to self and a nuisance to others.
2. Drunkenness—severely condemned by the heathen Greeks, who knew how to drink properly.
3. Immorality—the desire for the forbidden bed, a common heathen sin.
4. Shamelessness—so gripped by lust as to engage in open immorality without shame.
5. Contention—wanting to win power and prestige at any cost.
6. Envy—never content but always looking for what others have.

B. We confess our shady works of darkness as unsuitable for the light. The six works of darkness listed above characterize our world today and affect Christians as well as unbelievers. Pornography, drug and alcohol abuse, the American fixation on cut-throat competition, and the endless pursuit of materialism, e.g., the life of the Yuppies (Young Urban Professionals), reveal the sin which stand between us and God.

II. We awake by walking in the day (v 13).

A. Paul describes walking in the day in context.

1. Love your neighbor as yourself (Ro 13:8-10).
2. Submit to the governing authorities (Ro 13:1-7).
3. Avoid offense to the weak brother in eating and special days (Ro 14:1-12).

B. We confess our frequent failure to walk in the day. Our sins of omission loom large as we relate to fellow Christians, community, government, and weaker believers.

III. We are awakened by putting on the armor of light (the Lord Jesus Christ) (vv 12b, 14).
A. Paul points to our baptism into Christ as the power for awaking. "Put on" means being clothed with and relates to the baptismal section in Romans 6. See also Galatians 3:26-27.
B. We receive daily forgiveness as we put on Christ who came to us in our baptism.
1. Christ came as a light into the dark world of sin. He cast off the works of darkness, walked in the light, and conquered the powers of darkness on Calvary, awakening from the dead on the new Easter day.
2. Christ comes to us in our baptism with His light and provides the armor of light through Word and Sacraments so that we can walk in the day.
3. Christ will come in the new day of eternity to receive us to Himself and to let us experience in its fullness salvation from darkness into the light.

Conclusion: Advent before us—a season to let God penetrate the deeds of darkness with the light of His Son Jesus Christ and a time to awake for a walk in the day as we put on the Lord Jesus Christ each day.

Stephen J. Carter

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 15:4-13

December 7, 1986

Not only does this text relate to the Advent season with its emphasis on hope which comes to us from God through the Scriptures, but it also discusses the purpose and importance of the Old Testament Word for the apostolic message. Set in the practical section of Romans which urges Christians to bear the burdens of the weak, this section clearly announces that the Old Testament Scriptures speak relevantly and authoritatively to the New Testament church by proclaiming Christ as hope for the common life of doxology. Old Testament references (2 Sm 22:50; Ps 18:49; Dt 32:43; Ps 117:1; Is 52:15) richly color the text.

Introduction: Discouragements abound in our world today—the hopelessness of international terrorism, the threat of nuclear war, uncertainty about world economics, the decline of moral values. Closer to home, we struggle with keeping our family together, holding a steady job, and making ends meet. Today's text provides specific help to deal with our problems. Paul writes to the Roman Christians that we are

Abounding in Advent Hope

I. Through the hopeful Scriptures.
   A. The Old Testament provides instruction about Jesus, the Messiah for Jews and Gentiles alike (vv 4a, 8-12).
      1. By pointing to several Old Testament verses, Paul demonstrates how Jesus brings hope and reason for rejoicing.
      2. We often feel hopeless because we either neglect to read the Scriptures or take them for granted. Consequently we miss Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.
   B. The Scriptures build patience and comfort (v 4b).
      1. Paul promises that reading the Scriptures will bring steadfastness and strength.
      2. We find Advent hope as we let the Scriptures make us steadfast and strong. Regular worship and Bible study during Advent will help us.

II. Through the God of hope.
   A. The God of hope produces like-minded praise (vv 5-6).
      1. Both Jews and Gentiles responded to the Advent hope with lives of praise together.
      2. We often fail to praise during Advent because we look to our problems and helter-skelter Christmas preparations instead of the God of hope.
   B. The God of hope fills us with joy and peace in believing (v 13).
      1. The God revealed in Scripture gives us His Son Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, who fills us with joy and peace.
      2. Having confessed our failure to praise, we receive God's joy and peace in Jesus during Advent and celebrate together with praise in voice and life.

Conclusion: Problems and difficulties continue. But our Advent hope, Jesus Christ, remains. Through the Scriptures we receive patience and comfort which rekindle our hope. The One who makes the Scriptures authoritative is the God of hope who fills us with joy and peace in believing—no wonder we praise God. We are abounding in Advent hope.

Stephen J. Carter

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

James 5:7-10

December 14, 1986

The approaching anniversary of Jesus' first coming to earth as a human being reminds us that He is coming again. His second coming will be as Judge and King, in glory and in power. The suggested goal of the sermon based on this text is that God's people should not be diverted from the work which the Lord has assigned to us while we wait for His coming, but rather focus with

renewed precision on the task of proclaiming the Good News of God's love in Christ. We can more zealously proclaim God's love when we

Wait Patiently for the Lord's Second Coming

I. The activities of the rich and unscrupulous are a test of our patience. The "therefore" of verse 7 points to the content of verses 1-6.
   A. We are so eager to stop the rich from robbing the laborer of his due.
   B. We are eager to stop all abuses by which the rich are benefited at the expense of the poor.
   C. Our natural inclination is to make quick judgments and to seek vengeance upon those who through dishonesty and abuse exploit the poor.

   Application: Impatience seeks to lash out in whatever way possible to correct injustices and to avenge immediately. The heavenly Judge, however, takes care of vengeance in His way and time.

II. Exercising "patience" means that we pursue our God-given calling with undivided attention until the Lord comes again.
   A. The farmer plants his seed with care and nurtures it to maturity. Application: The Lord has commanded us to make disciples (teach and baptize, Mt 28). Do this diligently!
   B. The farmer waits for harvest. Attempting to correct wrongs developing in the growth process destroys the harvest. Wait for the harvest! Application: Harvest time is when the Lord comes again. To grumble and to judge prematurely interferes with the harvest. Wait patiently!

III. God's servants speak His Word but wait for His time of judging.
   A. His Word reproves sin and corrects the sinner.
   B. Through God's Word the repentant sinner is forgiven and restored.
   C. God's servants may expect suffering and abuse, even as Jesus did. Examples are the prophets (Job; vv 10-11).

Conclusion: Waiting with patience is made easier as we remember that Christ is coming soon.

Rudolph A. Haak
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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 1:1-7

December 21, 1986

The text is well chosen for the Sunday before Christmas since it reminds Christians of the Gospel of God told beforehand by the prophets through the Scriptures. Some of these Gospel promises could be mentioned in the introduction of the sermon. (See also I A of the outline.) The text also solidly undergirds the Christmas message. It confirms the fact that the Christmas Good News

(Jesus' birth) has its source in the heart of God Himself. It confirms the fact that the Good News is for all. The suggested goal of the sermon is that through it the Lord will enable the hearers to proclaim the Christmas message with greater vigor, confidence, and enthusiasm.

Introduction: Good news is always welcome. But if it is not authentic and real, it becomes bad news. If the news is good for only a select few, then it may be bad news for me. Today's message directs us to

Good News Worth Repeating

I. It rests firmly upon the person and work of Jesus Christ (vv 2-4).
   A. Promised long ago by God's prophets (v 2).
   B. Descended from David's line as foretold (v 3).
   C. Confirmed to be God's Son by His resurrection from the dead.
      1. His resurrection proves that He is God's answer to the problem of sin.
      2. His resurrection demonstrates His victorious power over sin, death, and the devil.

II. The Good News is a message of grace (v 5).
   A. Good News for the undeserving, the sinner.
   B. It assures us of God's forgiveness and on-going love.
   C. It is meant for all (vv 5-6).
   D. We, the slaves of Jesus Christ, are to be carrying and proclaiming it to all the world (vv 1, 6).

III. The goal of the Good News repeated is the obedience of faith (v 5).
   A. It is aimed at bringing a "yes" response to God's offer of His love in Christ Jesus.
   B. It is aimed at lifting us out of the morass of sins' consequences (guilt, fear, enslavement) to a new life in Christ.
   C. It is aimed at bringing a trust in our gracious God which brings peace (v 7).
   D. It is aimed at bringing an obedient faith which abandons worry and leaves life in the hands of God.

Conclusion: Our God, who so faithfully remembered and kept His promises concerning Jesus, is altogether trustworthy as the object of our faith. Proclaim the Good News with vigor, confidence, and enthusiasm.

Rudolph A. Haak
Cambridge, Minnesota

CHRISTMAS DAY

Titus 3:4-7

December 25, 1986

The text is loaded with Gospel terms that are intimately and inseparably associated with the "appearing" of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in whom God shows Himself in the fullness of His grace:

"Kindness": graciousness, God's constant readiness to bestow His blessings and to forgive.

"Love" (*philanthropia*): love of mankind, benevolence.

"Mercy": the clemency of God in providing and offering salvation to humankind by Christ.

"Justify": to declare just and righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ.

"Regeneration": spiritual birth, new birth (cf. Jn 3:5).

"Renewal": spiritual newness repeated daily, over and over again.

"Hope": joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation.

God's Kindness and Love Manifested

I. Manifested in our justification.
   A. Saved by His mercy.
      1. We need God's mercy because of our condition (v 3).
      2. In clemency God provides and offers salvation.
   B. Declared righteous by grace.
      1. Not by our works done in righteousness.
      2. But by God's grace.

II. Manifested in His making us heirs in hope.
   A. God provides rebirth; life begins all over again—a qualitative, not a quantitative, thing (cf. Jn 3:5).
   B. God pours out His grace in baptism.
      1. Grace is sufficient for all.
      2. The Holy Spirit grafts us into Jesus Christ in baptism (cf. Ro 6:5).
      3. We are made coheirs with Christ of all God has for them that love Him.
   C. God makes us heirs in the hope of life eternal.
      1. Hope is the joyful, confident expectation of eternal salvation (cf. 1 Pe 1:3ff.).
      2. We are renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word daily.

Norbert H. Mueller

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Galatians 4:4-7

December 28, 1986

"In the fullness of time": The time appointed by the Father and preeminently tied to the coming of Christ. This time fixed in the purpose of God was probably a common thought of early Christianity (cf Jn 2:4, Eph 1:10). "Sent": a reference to God's sending His Son from His preexistent state into the world (cf. Php 2:6). In the phrases "sent forth His son" and "made of a woman" there is brought together the deity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Involved are Christ's humiliation and His ultimate purpose to deliver those under the Law (cf. Php 2:7,8).

Jesus Was Sent in the Fullness of Time

I. To redeem those under the Law.
   A. To redeem He had to be a unique person.
      1. Made of a woman.
      2. Made under the Law (cf. 2 Cor 5:21).
   B. To redeem He had to carry out a special work.
      1. Fulfilling all the righteous demands of the Law.
      2. Suffering all the penalties due for disobedience of the righteous demands of the Law.
      3. Doing all this vicariously, that is, in our place, for us.

II. That all might receive adoption as sons.
   A. We have been adopted into the family of God.
      1. We are no longer slaves to the Law.
      2. We are children of God, for in faith we cry, "Abba! Father!"
      3. We are heirs, coheirs with Christ Jesus.
   B. God sends us the Spirit of His Son.
      1. Grafted into the church by the Spirit working through our baptism.
      2. Sustained in our relationship through the Spirit working through the Word of promise.
      3. Nurtured by the Spirit working through the Lord's Supper.
   C. The spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Norbert H. Mueller

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

January 4, 1987

Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians with a glorious Trinitarian doxology (vv 3-14). Lenski says, "Christ is the golden string on which all the pearls of this doxology are strung. He is the central diamond around which all the lesser

diamonds are set as rays"(p.350). The second portion of the lesson consists of verses of 15-18, in which Paul in prayer asks God to grant the Ephesians the wisdom to understand the hope that is theirs in Jesus Christ. The celebration of our Lord's incarnation is an excellent time for us once again to remind ourselves and our hearers of our Christian hope.

Introduction: Hope in the Christian's understanding should be more than wishful thinking; it is firm confidence. Using the word "hope" as an acrostic may help us better understand and hold

The Hope to Which You Have Been Called

I. "H" = Holy. The hope we hold centers in the holy Son of God.
   A. Our spiritual blessings are in Jesus Christ who came as the holy Child of Bethlehem to bring us the riches of the Father's kingdom.
   B. Through the holiness of Christ God sees us as His holy people.
   C. As God's holy people we have access to the Father and therefore can be confident of the hope to which we have been called.

II. "O" = Our. The hope to which we have been called is ours through faith in Jesus Christ.
   A. We lay personal claim to the hope in Christ by virtue of the faith given to us by God's gracious Spirit.
   B. Our hope ever increases as we in faith come to know our Jesus better.
   C. God chose us even before time that we might be His and live in a personal relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ.

III. "P" = Promise. Our hope is not based on wishful thinking but on the promise of God in Christ Jesus.
   A. God is faithful to His promises. Jesus Christ is the proof of His faithfulness.
   B. Our hope is anchored in the ageless promises of God. Based on His promise we can project our hope into the future.
   C. The promise of God is the guarantee of our election, redemption, and eternal hope.

IV. "E" = Eternal. Our hope in Jesus Christ is eternal.
   A. Our hope is eternal because it is rooted in our everlasting God.
   B. We have been chosen to be the adopted heirs of our eternal God; therefore, His riches, including eternal life, are our inheritance.
   C. The eternal character of our hope allows us to be unconsumed by the momentary struggles of the day.

Conclusion: I pray that all of us might better comprehend the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ.

William G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Acts 10:34-38

January 11, 1987

"God shows no partiality." The original compound is found only here in the New Testament. The idea is that God does not make judgments regarding individuals on the basis of their appearance or circumstances. In fact, just the opposite is true. God accepts those who fear Him and do what is right.

Introduction: We as a society of people like to smell good and look attractive. In 1984 we in this country spent 15.8 billion dollars on cosmetics to help assure our beauty. With all of our concerns about outward appearance, are we overlooking the inner beauty that comes from a close, living relationship with our Savior? Maybe we need to ask ourselves,

Is Beauty Only Skin Deep?

I. Human inclinations seem to encourage superficial judgments. However, God never judges on outward appearances.
   A. Our concerns about how others see us are based on how we look at them.
      1. We too frequently are quick to judge others on the basis of appearance.
      2. Knowing how quickly we judge may cause us to fear being seen without our "make-up," fearing that we will be unfairly judged by others.
   B. None of us wants to be judged on the basis of superficial evidence. Thankfully, God is never that inconsiderate; He looks deeper than the surface.
      1. Peter in the text affirms that God does not judge on the basis of bigoted opinion or outward beauty.
      2. The text literally says, "God does not accept or reject persons on the basis of facial features."
      3. God in His grace looks into the heart to see if there is faith in Christ.

Transition: Peter learned the truth of God's unbiased love through a vision given him (Ac 10:9-22). Through his testimony you and I are also granted the same revelation: to God beauty is much more than skin deep.

II. God accepts individuals on the basis of His love for them in Jesus Christ.
   A. God accepts individuals of every nation who "fear" Him.
      1. To fear God is to have faith in Him.
      2. To fear God is to rightly understand the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ.
      3. To fear God is to live in the "peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all."

B. God accepts individuals living under all circumstances who seek in Christ "to do what is right."
   1. To do right is to repent and seek forgiveness in Jesus Christ.
   2. To do right is daily, through the power of one's baptism, to crucify the old and bring forth the new person to live to God's glory.
   3. To do right is to strive to honor God by doing what one knows to be in keeping with the Lord's will.

Conclusion: With or without "make-up," God loves each person. He has proven His unbiased love in giving His Son to "reconcile the world unto Himself." We are recipients of that love. He looks beyond the surface right to the core of our being where He wants to see a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

William G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

January 18, 1987

One of the hardest jobs connected with being a coach is leading the team to have a positive attitude about itself. To do this the coach might make a speech like this right before a big game: "Team, you have practiced hard, you are hitting well, you are in top physical shape, you are bigger than the other team, faster than the opponent, you have been working well together. There is no reason why you should not win this game!" Whether or not all this is true is beside the point. The coach has to build up his team.

We might say St. Paul is doing the same thing in the introduction of his letter to the Corinthian congregation. His words about his prayer for the Corinthians sound like a great build-up, and they are. However, he is not saying anything about what the people did. Paul gives all the credit for the build-up to God. What the people there were facing was reality, challenges they could not escape, not the least of which was staying faithful until the final epiphany of Jesus Christ. The congregation was not perfect. Immediately after the beautiful build-up, Paul taxes them with their divisions, their fornication, their arguments about baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other things. Paul does not sell the grace of God short. Instead, he tells the people how God has given them, and us as well,

The Great Build-up

I. The great build-up is the reality of the grace in Christ Jesus given to all of us (v 4).
   A. We meet this grace throughout the church year. The festival half of the year is one grand epiphany of God's grace after another (elaborate).
   B. We experience this grace.
      1. By faith we become those who are sanctified (v 2).
      2. We are given the qualifications to be called holy (v 2).
      3. We are tied to all those who call on the name of Jesus with us (v 2).

4. This is not just lofty talk; the grace of God in Christ changes us.

II. The great build-up is for our Christian life (vv 5,6,7).
   A. There is an immense richness in what we as Christians know and say.
      1. All of our congregation's educational programs are designed to help people know Christ and the will of God.
      2. What we know determines what we can say. This congregation has a lot to say. All of us are mingling with other people each week--and how we can talk! Some of our conversation turns to some good words about God's grace and God's will.
   B. We do not come behind in any gift.
      1. Paul praised the Corinthians because, compared to what other believers were doing, they were right there with them, not behind. We can also assume that God's grace led them to perform in such a way that God was pleased. God had given them a lot and He expected them to keep up with other believers in their care of the poor, sick, grieving, and the like.
      2. Our congregation has been built by God so that we do not come behind either. (Preacher, pour on some compliments!).

III. God will continue the great build-up, enabling you to stand in the final epiphany (v 8).
   A. Many people fear the final "buzzer," but there is no need to fear.
   B. God's grace will confirm you to the end so that you will be blameless.
      1. The Christian's scoreboard has the Savior's face on it--His score.
      2. God has built you up. You have faith, forgiveness, and therefore God's righteousness.
      3. God is faithful. He means what He says when He calls you into fellowship with His Son. He will not let up on His grace; He will not forsake you now or ever.

Conclusion: This is quite a build-up. It is the truth about Christ and you. It is what Epiphany is all about.

Lowell F. Thomas
Lakeland, Florida

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

January 25, 1987

Any pastor who has served a divided congregation shudders at the thought. Divisions sap the church's vitality, ruin relationships, prevent goal-setting, and create pain in every part of the Body. Any pastor who has witnessed a divided congregation heal the breaks will stand in awe at the grace of God. Not only does it work again; it can work with a newly found energy and purpose.

Introduction: Some acerbic wit has observed that, where two or three

Lutherans are gathered together, there will be a split. This observation may be more fact than fiction. Consider how many new congregations have been formed because of a disagreement in the church. Attend some of our voters' meetings and listen to the disagreements that can occur. Some, of course, are good natured or just good debate. Others can soon turn into a "step outside and say that" confrontation. God forbid that we should ever suffer a division in our congregation! God grants us grace to heed Paul's words to the Corinthians in our lesson. He gives us

An Anatomy of a Division Healed

I. The division is detected.
   A. A division is usually detected by hearing its noise.
      1. People quarrel rather than discuss matters. In a quarrel people seek to win, right or wrong. A discussion trades ideas to aid understanding.
      2. The noise can be heard firsthand or secondhand. A division, by its nature, cannot be contained. Jesus said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand" (Mt 12:25). A division always creates a split.
   B. Paul heard from Chloe's household about a quarrel concerning personal attachments to various leaders (vv 11,12).
      1. There seems to have been a contest about which leader was the best. The options included Paul, the great apostle; Apollos, a converted Jew, eloquent, instructed by Aquila and Priscilla (Ac 18:24-26); Peter, whom we all know; and Christ, the Lord of the Church.
      2. Christians can become too attached to leaders today. We see this problem when a preacher is praised more than Christ by some, while others talk as much about his faults.
   C. Have we been quarreling?
      1. Christians do not have the right to fight. Even a feisty confession can be divisive.
      2. When a division takes place, the matter is great in the minds of those involved.

II. The cause is revealed.
   A. People forget who the Savior is (vv 13-15).
      1. "Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into his name?" The answer was and is obvious.
      2. A necessary question for a divided congregation is this: "Where is Christ?"
   B. People also forget the real purpose of the church.
      1. Paul's seemingly careless record-keeping indicts any over-emphasis on human institutions (v 16). Did church records ever save anyone?
      2. The purpose of the congregation is to preach Christ (v 17).
      3. A necessary question for a divided congregation is this: "What does this issue have to do with preaching Christ?"

III. The healing is effected.
A. Restoration is a gift connected with the name of Jesus Christ (v 10).
1. The name of Jesus allows the guilty to repent.
2. The name of Jesus is all that Jesus is and had to give to sinners: forgiveness of sins, peace with God and man.
3. Restoration is an activity of the congregation carried out through the office of the keys. Those who have been healed help heal others.
B. Perfect agreement is experienced among minds glued to Christ.
1. Of course, there will be differences. God created us in that way and the varieties of gifts enhance the possibilities for service--not quarreling.
2. The Spirit of God leads people to keep Christ in the center of their lives and church. While this point should be obvious, it is not always so. We constantly pray that the Spirit grant us such lives and such a church.
C. Healing leaves scars; but they only point to what once was hurting but now is healed in Jesus' name.
1. Let us dwell on Christ, not on the scars.
2. Let us catch any divisions early and settle them in the name of Jesus.
3. Let us be gentle with each other. We are all by nature troublemakers. By God's grace we are peace-makers.

Lowell F. Thomas
Lakeland, Florida

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

February 1, 1987

From a human perspective, God operates in a very strange fashion. He does not prize or value those qualities men and women cherish. Boasting of one's wisdom, power, and status counts for nothing in the sight of God. In the Old Testament, when He called His people to Himself, He chose a most unlikely and undeserving band of slaves. He molded these "nobodies" into His own nation (Dt 7:6-8). God's strategy has not changed in the New Testament. What the human eye values (v 26) is of no consequence to God (vv 27-29). Only in Jesus (v 30) do we learn of how God perceives the issues of wisdom and power and status. Once we share His world view, we quickly learn that the only cause for boasting is in the Lord Himself (v 31).

Introduction: Where there are differences of opinion, people often make every effort to work out a compromise. In some cases this is most appropriate. However, Paul indicates that there can be no compromise when human and divine world views meet each other. Here there is only collision.

Colliding World Views

I. Views collide on what constitutes wisdom.
   A. There is a view from the human perspective.
      1. Wisdom is determined by the degrees and the skills one has acquired.
         a. The Greeks valued this wisdom in Paul's day (Ac 17:16-21).
         b. Many value this wisdom today.
      2. This wisdom is inadequate.
         a. Many very wise people still have very big personal problems.
         b. Human wisdom fails to deal with issues like sin and death (1 Cor 3:19,20).
   B. There is a view from God's perspective.
      1. Real power is demonstrated by the servant Christ (v 27; Mt 20:28).
         a. Through His servant life He has reconciled us to our God (2 Cor 5:18-21).
         b. Through His servant life He has restored us to each other (Php 4:2).
      2. Real power is demonstrated by the servant church.
         a. Jesus shows how this power is to be used (Jn 13:15,16).
         b. Display of this power identifies us as true disciples (Jn 13:34,35).

II. Views collide on what matters in life.
   A. There is a view from the human perspective.
      1. Status and position are what matter.
         a. That was the hallmark of Greek society (v 26).
         b. Our society today is not much different.
      2. This view suggests that some lives are more significant and valuable than others (Jn 4:9).
   B. There is a view from God's perspective.
      1. All life is precious.
         a. Jesus sought out the unlovable (Mt 9:10-13).
         b. Jesus died for all (1 Jn 2:1,2).
      2. All life is to be precious to us (Jas 2:1-7).

Conclusion: In the collision of world views there can be no compromise. Only one is the true perspective. May God grant that we see from His perspective at all times.

Lawrence W. Mitchell
Bloomington, Indiana

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

February 8, 1987

Never before have there been so many "proclaimers of the Gospel" as today. In addition to pastors who occupy pulpits in churches across the land, there is a host of radio and television proclaimers who build their own churches, cultivate their own fellowships, operate their own networks, and establish their own universities. Where do these proclaimers fit into God's plan? What is their place in the church of Jesus Christ? It is easy to be confused about the role of these proclaimers. In some cases people base their faith not in Christ but in a certain proclaimer. Others see their relationship to the church as totally dependent on the personality of a proclaimer. Some are willing to heed the Word of God only as long as the proclaimer has a dynamic style. Proclaimers are not the essence of the church. They do not make the Church what it is (v 5). Jesus alone is Head of His church (v 2). The kingdom of God is not dependent on the personality or the speaking ability of any proclaimer (vv 3,4).

Introduction: What are we to make of all the proclaimers of the Gospel who confront us on radio and television? What about the proclaimers of the Gospel in our own churches? What St. Paul—the chief proclaimer of the Gospel—said of himself so long ago has significance for us today.

Proclaimers of the Gospel

I. They are gifts from God.
   A. There are no self-appointed, self-designated gifts to the church.
      1. This is how some appear (Ac 8:9-12).
      2. This is not God's plan.
   B. God sends the proclaimers.
      1. He sent Paul to Corinth (Ac 16:6-10; 18:9-11).
      2. He sends pastors today (Eph 4:11).
   C. God equips the proclaimers.
      1. They are not left to their own dramatic devices.
         a. Some dramatic proclaimers have a big following.
         b. The content of their message may be far from the truth (2 Cor 4:20; 2 Tm 4:3,4).
      2. They are empowered by the Holy Spirit.
         a. Paul's speech was not impressive (vv 3,4).
         b. God worked through Paul as He does through others today (v.4; 2 Cor 12:9).

II. They testify to Jesus.
   A. Paul proclaimed the crucified Christ (v 2; 2 Cor 4:5).
      1. He did not have to dream up his message (Ga 1:11).
      2. He was entrusted with the Gospel.
         a. He was an apostle to the Gentiles (Ac 9:15).
         b. He proclaimed a message for the sin-corrupted world (Ro 5:6-11).

B. Today the same Christ is proclaimed.
   1. Passing centuries have not lessened our need for the Gospel.
      a. Proclaimers do not have to come up with their own "contemporary" message.
      b. Sin still destroys life.
   2. Jesus is all we have to proclaim (Ac 4:12).
      a. His sacrifice is eternally effective (He 9:25,26).
      b. His promises are eternally comforting (Jn 10:27,28).

III. They are not perfect.
   A. Sometimes we expect perfect proclaimers.
      1. We look for those who excel in all gifts and make no mistakes.
      2. We are easily disappointed.
         a. Some were disappointed in Paul (2 Cor 10:10).
         b. Some are disappointed today.
   B. Proclaimers are frail sinners (2 Cor 4:7; 11:30; 1 Tm 1:15).
      1. The church is not built on proclaimers but on Christ (2 Cor 4:5).
      2. The glory belongs to God alone (2 Cor 3:5; 1 Cor 1:30,31).

Conclusion: In his wisdom God uses frail proclaimers of the Gospel to spread His Word and shepherd His people. However, these men do not make the church what it is. We thank God for proclaimers of the Gospel, but we also remember that our faith rests in no man—only in Christ.

Lawrence W. Mitchell
Bloomington, Indiana

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 2:6-13

February 15, 1987

This text underscores that all we believe and teach which gives us life with God now and eternally is not human invention. Rather, it is the great saving act of God which He himself has revealed to us by His Spirit. The world has never ceased promoting its own wisdom (1:22) and Paul is not about to join the philosophical flock (2:1-5). Thus, still today, we must affirm the genuine source of our salvation.

Introduction: Knowledge about the things of this world multiplies every year. We know far more about the processes of life now than we did only fifty years ago. Such knowledge is not necessarily linked to wisdom, even though today there are countless proponents of philosophies and "guidelines for living," both ancient and modern. But has such wisdom made life better? Does it truly take care of our sinful situation and meet our most basic need of salvation? Paul submitted his own knowledge and wisdom to that of God (2:1-2) because he believed that the latter makes us wise unto salvation as it directs us through this life. From God we have

A Superior Wisdom

I. God's wisdom is superior to human wisdom.
   A. It encompasses all human experience.
      1. It is from eternity (v 7).
      2. It had been hidden in time past but revealed for the good of humanity (v 7).
      3. It has as its goal to bring us to glory, to give us all we need for time and eternity (v 7).
   B. It is greater than human wisdom.
      1. Human wisdom deals with the things of this life (v 6).
      2. Human wisdom does not understand the things of God. If people at Jesus' time had understood, they would not have crucified Him (v 8).
      3. Human wisdom has no final, glorious purpose and fulfillment. It ends up without eternal blessings (v 6).
   C. We must not substitute human wisdom for the wisdom of God, for we will end up with nothing.

II. God's wisdom is that which He reveals to us.
   A. Even we who are God's people cannot comprehend God's wisdom of ourselves (v 9).
   B. But God reveals it to us by His Spirit, who alone knows God's mind (vv 10-11).
   C. He reveals the Good News of all that He has prepared for in Christ (v 9, 2:1-2).

III. God's wisdom brings us ultimate blessings.
   A. It does not mislead us like the wisdom of this world can (v 12).
   B. It is a wisdom that opens us to the free gifts of God (v 12).
   C. Thus, we can be sure that we have the truth that truly enriches our lives.

Conclusion: Knowledge is important. We need to know what and whom God has revealed. To know Christ and Him crucified is to have the wisdom from God which is superior to all, for it is the wisdom that saves.

Luther G. Strasen
Fort Wayne, Indiana

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

February 22, 1987

The general thrust of the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians is the divisiveness that was taking place in the congregation at Corinth. Yet at this point Paul's emphasis is not so much the divisions as it is the foundation upon which the church is built in contradistinction to divisions. The apostles whom Paul mentions are not themselves false teachers, but to place misguided loyalties in them

endangered the construction of the church. Of note is that the Greek word for "destroy" used twice in verse 17 describes firstly the action of those who wreak havoc on the church and then the destruction of God upon them for their false leadership. The KJV "defile," used in the first case, does not carry through the construction—versus—destruction theme of the pericope.

Introduction: "You yourselves are God's temple," Paul tells us. He is picturing God's people as a holy building which has as its basic foundation Jesus Christ. That building is what today we call the Holy Christian Church and each of us who believes in Jesus Christ is a part of it. But already at Paul's time there were problems in the church which were causing erosion of the temple rather than its construction. In the Corinthian congregation there were those who gave their first loyalties to the apostles they knew and were in danger of following the teachings of men rather than trusting in Jesus Christ. The apostle deals with this detrimental situation in the first three chapters of First Corinthians. He now sums up his appeal by reminding all of us who are God's people that for the church to grow and fulfill its mission it must be

Built on Christ

I. The church is always being built.
   A. God has used people like Paul, Apollos, and Peter. They were wise builders (3:5-6, v 10).
   B. Through the centuries, spiritual leaders have built upon what the apostles constructed (v 10).
   C. Yet it is always God's grace that enables anyone to build (v 10).
   D. And the basic foundation must always be Jesus Christ. There can be no other (v 10).

II. The church must be built carefully.
   A. The church is God's holy temple in whom God dwells (v 16), all who have been called out of darkness into God's wonderful light through Jesus, the foundation (1 Pe 2:4-10).
   B. What is built upon the foundation must spiritually connect and conform to the foundation so that what grows is the holy temple, giving evidence in both faith and action (Mt 5:38-48).
   C. There are those through the centuries (and still today) who have built on their own wisdom, which is foolishness in God's sight and fulfills nothing (vv 18-20).
   D. The building is torn down then, rather than built up (v 17).
   E. But God, in turn, will destroy those who destroy (v 17).
   F. Thus, we, as a denomination or congregation or as individuals (both pastor and people), must be certain that we are building with genuine spiritual materials.

III. The church will grow as it is constructed on Jesus Christ.
   A. We thank God for the true builders of the past and rejoice in them, but we do not boast or glory in them (v 21).
   B. We have abundant gifts from God, including spiritual leaders. However, what makes us grow is not that we belong to them, but that we are of Christ (vv 21-22). That is the greatest gift.

C. And Christ is of God. Through Christ we are recipients of God's salvation; we are His holy temple.

Conclusion: We are built and we are builders. With Jesus Christ as the foundation, the building which is His church grows to the glory of God.

Luther G. Strasen
Fort Wayne, Indiana

LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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

March 1, 1987

As the first letter of Peter speaks of problems created by those who persecuted the church from without, this second letter addresses problems encountered within the Christian fellowship. False teachers were raising doubts in the hearts of individual believers, and the apostle sees the need for the Morningstar to arise within these simple hearts once again (v 19). By their sophistry the false teachers were able to strip away from some believers a firm defense of the Christian hope (1 Pe 3:15). The claim was made that the saving acts of God in Christ, remembered from the past, were nothing more than fairy tales which reasonable adults abandon when they advance beyond childhood. On the other hand, the Christian hope for the future was said to be nothing more than one empty promise upon another. All that remained, the false teachers said, was the present: Live as if there is no tomorrow! In answer to this rhetoric Peter testifies that when life is lived in a vacuum, without regard for the past or the future, the inevitable result is aimless licentiousness. It is plain to see that the Transfiguration made a tremendous impression upon Peter. He speaks of the event as one who on several occasions had experienced serious doubts himself: "I saw what happened on that mountain!" Call it "poetic mercy," if you will, that the man who once sank beneath the waves of Galilee could now bolster the faith of others. We also note in Peter's message a sense of urgency which is befitting every minister of the Gospel. He was deeply concerned about what would happen to the small flock of the faithful after he himself had put off the tent of his body (vv 12-15).

The Word Made Sure

I. The Christian and the past.
   A. His faith is anchored in the Old Testament prophets.
      1. Moses and Elijah testified concerning Christ (see Lk 9:31).
      2. The Old Testament promises witness to a plan of God long in the making (Lk 24:45-47).
   B. The New Testament facts confirm the Old Testament promises.
      1. The Father glorifies the one He announces as his Son, the Messiah.
      2. The apostles testify: "We saw and heard all of God's promises fulfilled."

II. The Christian and the present.
   A. His life in the present is founded upon the past.
      1. He listens only to the living Word of the prophets and the apostles (1 Pe 3:2).
      2. He always goes back to his beginnings, distinguishing human novelties from the ever-new mercies of God (Lm 3:22,23).
      3. He lives every day according to the will and purposes of a loving God.
   B. His life is directed toward the future.
      1. By faith in the promises of God the future is already present and real.
      2. He directs others toward God's promised future as a bearer of light to a dark world (v 19).

III. The Christian and the future.
   A. The world will be darkest before the dawn, but then the Morningstar will arise.
   B. The promises of the second coming of Christ are as sure as the fulfilled promises of his first coming.

James Bollhagen

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 5:12 (13-16), 17-19

March 8, 1987

This pericope serves as an explanation of how we are saved specifically by the life of Christ (end of v 10). Since our salvation is entirely the work of another, it is thoroughly completed *extra nos,* apart from our participation. But at the same time Paul carefully notes that man's condemnation results from personal involvement and culpability, "because all men sinned" (v 12). Although Paul limits his words to the fall and redemption of mankind, we remember that the whole creation is involved (8:20). The Adam-Christ typology and our solidarity with them both is seen in a somewhat different light in 1 Corinthians 15:45ff. The phrase "in life" (v 17) is seen by some commentators, including Lenski, as referring to eternal life in heaven. This is undoubtedly right, but this present life lived by faith in the Son of God is not thereby excluded. The new creation in Christ has already been initiated here in this fallen world in the lives of believers, and its repercussions for daily life are limitless (vv 1-5). The law-Gospel dialectic is clearly in evidence, and it is also abundantly clear that "mercy triumphs over justice" (Jas 2:13). God hastens to His proper work, that of removing from our lives the spell of death. We observe that both condemnation and justification flow out of (*ek*) the transgressions of man (v 16). This enigma of grace is reminiscent of how God sent the Flood because of man's sin and of how He promised never to send another flood for the very same reason (cf. Gn 6:5 and 8:21). Finally, in this text Paul does not conceive of death as merely a final punctum like a period at the end of a sentence. It is an omnipresent force in our world and an ever-present determinant in the lives and ac-

tions of sinners. Living under the shadow of death, man is bent upon self-preservation, and virtually every sin can be traced back to that motivation.

Life out of Death

I. The spell of death.
   A. The primal sin of Adam brought the condemnation of death into the world.
   B. Man lives under the power and control of death.
   C. Death's control is evidenced by man's sinful acts of self-preservation.

II. Christ: the removal of the spell of death.
   A. The Second Adam has ushered in a new creation.
      1. The grace of God has miraculously appeared in the midst of sin.
      2. Christ came as the obedient Son of God.
   B. The Second Adam has provided a gift.
      1. The abundance of God's grace is received by faith (v 17).
      2. The gift flowing from His grace is a favorable verdict based upon an alien righteousness.
      3. The favorable verdict will always stand up in the face of condemnation.

III. Life in the new creation.
   A. God's favorable verdict is in force here and now.
   B. Where the sting of death has been taken away self-preservation can give way to self-sacrifice.
   C. The new life means reigning with Christ eternally.

James Bollhagen

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

March 15, 1987

The central thought is justification by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers rejoice in this fact so much that they seek no self-made crutch to help them stand before God. The problem is that we regard even faith as a good work. The means to the goal is showing that *sola fide* emphasizes *sola gratia* and *solus Christus*. (See Robert D. Preus, "Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification," *CTQ* 45 [July, 1981]: 163-84. N.B.: In part I below, misinterpretation of the Gospel is discussed; hence, the thrust is Law. In part II.B. the Law is mentioned to demonstrate the contrast with the Gospel.)

Introduction: "Salvation by faith" is not good news if I worry about how weak my faith is. Really "justification by faith" is shorthand for "justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith." The shorthand can be true or false, depending on how one understands it. So we ask,

Does Faith Save?

I. Yes—in that it eliminates all crutches on which to stand before God.
   A. Faith is the opposite of works, as shown by Abraham (vv 3-4).
      1. Paul set forth a clear alternative: one or the other.
      2. But the rabbis viewed Abraham's trusting as a good work. We are similar when we emphasize unduly the psychology of faith or the great things faith leads us to do.
   B. Faith is the only way to receive a promise (vv 13-14,16).
      1. "This is Paul's chief argument, which he often repeats" (Ap.IV:84, q.v.; also Ap.IV:70).
      2. Therefore, the promise calls for faith. It is not conditioned on or validated by either works or faith (see Ap.IV:297).
      3. Salvation is completely God's work, in spite of our deep desire to contribute something to it. If we *did* contribute, even faith, God would not be the Savior (see v 2).

II. No—in that faith itself does not become our virtue before God.
   A. Christ is our righteousness, not faith itself (v 5 together with vv 6-8; cf. images like "drinking" in Jn 4).
      1. His "not guilty" verdict on us is based on His work, not ours.
      2. Jesus, His work, and the results of His work constitute the object of our faith and form the center of our piety.
         a. We are saved not because of faith, but because of our Lord.
         b. We can thus be certain of our salvation (v 16).
   B. The quality of our faith is never good enough (v 15).
      1. When saving faith is compared to climbing into a tightrope walker's wheelbarrow, the implication is that faith must be very bold to be real.
      2. When the "health" of the church is analyzed in terms of how zealously it carries out the Great Commission, faith's production of fruit becomes the criterion of Christianity.
      3. When we look upon the fervency or effects of faith as a reason why God is not playing favorites when He loves us, we do neither Him nor ourselves any favors.
   C. God justifies the one who has no virtue but Christ (v 5). This is the Gospel alternative to an enslaving obsession with faith.

Conclusion: To say, "faith saves," is like saying, "eating makes you strong." Eating itself does not; the nutritional value of the food does. Faith saves in that it receives the Savior.

Ken Schurb
Columbus, Ohio

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Ephesians 5:8-14

March 22, 1987

In this text "light" refers to aspects of both law and Gospel, emphasizing the salvation-good works connection. The central thought is that Christians should live out their status as God's beloved people and oppose evil. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers have a day-to-day lifestyle in which Christ's claim on them dominates. The problem is that alienation from God and its resultant works confront us constantly. The means to the goal is proclaiming that Christ's claim redeems and transforms.

Introduction: Imagine trying to describe light to a blind person. "It enables one to see" may be the best you can do. You have explained the nature of light in terms of its activity, though it is possible to distinguish the two. The text is similar as it discusses Christ's light.

The Effects of the Light in a Darkened World

I. It shows the way (vv 8-10).
   A. To God.
      1. Lest we forget, we were once darkness (v 8a), a condition not of mere sadness, but being targets of God's wrath (v 6).
      2. Now we are light in Christ (v 8b). God fought darkness not by switching on a light within each person, but by setting up a great Illumination among us (see Jn 9:39). Jesus has overcome sin and its darkening effects on us (Jn 1:4-5).
   B. Therefore we can find a path in the world (v 8c).
      1. It is not a matter of rote. Just as light shines, trees give fruit, and children take after their parents, we who are light in Christ act like Him (vv 8c-9).
      2. Therefore, our desire is to please Him in all things (v 10).

Transition: Our present circumstances in addition to our past surround us with darkness, however. On the Third Sunday in Lent the church traditionally warned of the danger of turning back to the world. But what should we do instead?

II. It exposes the darkness (vv 11-13) .
   A. By establishing a clear contrast.
      1. We refuse to have part in dark works (v 11a; compare v 7).
      2. We view them with horror (v 12). We know they stand against the entire work of Christ and would thwart His work through us.
   B. By actively opposing darkness (v 11b; see resources on *elegcho*).
      1. By word and deed we show people their sin (v 13a; Jn 3:20f).
      2. We lead them to see things for what they really are (v 13b).

Transition: No matter how dark a room is, light has a way of filling it. If the law "targets" every sin to put a person to shame, the Gospel "targets" every sinner to raise him up with the offer of God's grace.

III. It awakens the sleeper (v 14).
   A. Christ puts us (and those with whom we speak about Him) in the midst of His light--not to condemn, but to save.
   B. No one sleeps so "lightly" that he does not need this light, and no one is so dead that it cannot raise him.
      1. Darkness becomes light only when light comes in from outside.
      2. The words of verse 14 are a "Gospel imperative."

Conclusion: "The Father's light shines upon the flesh of the Lord, so that a glow may come to us from His flesh, and thus man may come to incorruption" (Irenaeus). When Christ's light shines on us, we are light and we shine; we *do* as we *are*.

Ken Schurb
Columbus, Ohio

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 8:1-10

March 29, 1987

Here God's words show us the Spirit of life in Christ, which (1) infiltrates our fragile physical existence, giving us hope in victory based on the incarnation of Jesus Christ; (2) indwells in our personal lives so that righteousness can be fulfilled; (3) influences our attitudes so that we can overcome the negative, destructive forces of evil; and (4) inspires hope in everlasting life to give us peace in the face of death.

The Spirit of Life in Christ

I. The Spirit of life in Christ infiltrates our lives and is based on God's sending His own Son (v 3).
   A. God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (v 3).
      1. Therefore, He identifies with our weaknesses.
      2. Jesus' obedience to the will of the Father leads us to faith.
   B. God condemns sin in the flesh (v 3).
      1. Through Christ's holy life God provides a model which gives us a sense of the sacredness of life.
      2. Christ's teachings condemn the fleshly sins.

II. The Spirit of life in Christ indwells in us personally to set us free from sin (v 2).
   A. When the Holy Spirit is in us, Christ is also in us and we are set free from the power of sin (v 10).
      1. Without Christ dwelling in us we would be under the control of sin.
      2. When Christ dwells in us, the Spirit gives us life because of His righteousness (v 10).

B. The Spirit of Christ sets us free from sin so that the righteous demand of the law might be fulfilled in us (v 4).
   1. We are lifted above fleshly beastliness.
   2. Our potential is fulfilled by Christ's Spirit dwelling in us.

III. The Spirit of life in Christ influences our mind-set as seen in our attitudes and values (v 5).
   A. Those whose priorities are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh (v 5).
      1. The mind of the flesh is enmity towards God.
      2. Those whose being is in the flesh are not able to please God.
   B. Those whose being is according to the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit.
      1. They discipline themselves to maintain a life of prayer.
      2. They know that Christ who dwells in them is greater than the satanic curse.

IV. The Spirit of life in Christ inspires eternal hope in us to set us free from the havoc of death (v 2).
   A. The mind of the flesh is death (v 6).
      1. The mind of the flesh and a person's consciousness, which depend on the flesh, are sustained only for the life-span of the flesh.
      2. The mind of the flesh tries to escape the reality of death.
   B. The mind of the Spirit is life and peace (v 6).
      1. When we take on the qualities of mind of the Spirit, we strengthen our faith in God's saving grace.
      2. A peace comes to us when we know that we are freed from the limits of death.

Conclusion: A seventy-year-old man summarized the Spirit of life in Christ when I called in his home representing the "Alive in Christ" fund-drive of the church.

"My wife died recently. I've retired as an engineer, and my health seems to be slipping since I retired," he said.

"Would you like to help with our church's historic effort to support education, missions, etc?" I asked.

"Yes. I've left my savings to my children, which will be adequate to care for them. My old firm has asked me to return part-time. I'll do that, which will make the payments on a $25,000 pledge. It will give me something meaningful to work for in my retirement. To whom do I write the check for the first payment?"

Harold H. Zietlow

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Romans 8:11-19

April 5, 1987

St. Paul describes the fulfillment of certain expectations with four terms: (1) revelation, (2) resurrection, (3) adoption, and (4) glorification. The Greek word he uses for these expectations is *apokaradokia* which literally means to watch with one's head stretched out, to keep an eager lookout.

Eager Expectations

I. We have eager expectations of the revelation of the sons of God (v 19).
   A. All of creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
      1. Until that revelation, creation struggles under the dark curse of pain and death.
      2. At the time of the revelation of the sons of God, Christ will usher in His visible kingdom.
   B. We, the children of God, welcome this promise of the revelation of all those who will appear in everlasting life.
      1. Now we see "through a glass darkly."
      2. God's revelation of the sons of God will manifest the miracle of life over death.

II. We have eager expectations of the resurrection of our bodies through the promise: "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also. . ." (v 11).
   A. "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, . . .you will be resurrected to everlasting life" (v 11).
      1. God's life-giving Holy Spirit enters our life to dwell in us through the Word and Sacraments.
      2. Our faith appropriates the promises and gifts offered by Christ's Holy life-giving Spirit.
   B. Consider the options; those who do not trust in the indwelling, life-giving Spirit separate themselves from God forever.
      1. In this life they are without hope.
      2. In death and in judgment they die the "second death" of God's wrath.

III. We have eager expectations of the adoption as ". . .the children of God" (v 15).
   A. We no longer have to fear falling back into slavery.
      1. We are freed from sin; ". . .God has given us not the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Tm 1:7).
      2. We are freed from death; we have the glorious liberty of the children of God (Ro 8:21).

B. As adopted children of God we can enjoy communicating with Him as our Father.
   1. We can say, "Abba, Father," because the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit.
   2. As adopted children of God we escape the stunting lovelessness of orphans.

IV. We have eager expectations of glorification (v 17).
   A. We who are in Christ suffer together with Him in the frailty of life and against the forces of evil.
      1. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Ac 14:22).
      2. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17).
   B. We who suffer with Christ shall also be glorified with Him.
      1. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim 2:12).
      2. "Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16).

Conclusion: As I was writing this outline, I received a phone call telling me that my ninety-year-old aunt, sponsor at my baptism, died. Like so many devout children of God whom you and I know, she encouraged me in my catechetical instruction and my work as an ordained pastor in the church. She had been suffering pain from cancer and the natural loneliness of old age. The Spirit of Christ was in her, so she could look forward to death with eager expectations of the rich promises of God's Word. Her joy to be with the Lord was expressed with the same happy smile she expressed on the photo of our visit to her when she joined us in prayer to our Father in heaven.

Harold H. Zietlow

PALM SUNDAY

Philippians 2:5-11

April 12, 1987

Whether Palm Sunday or the Sunday of the Passion is observed on this day, our text is fitting. Paul's *sedes doctrinae* on the humiliation and exaltation of Christ speaks most pointedly to the events of Holy Week, events which had their preview on Palm Sunday with the paradox of Jesus' humiliating, yet exalted entry into Jerusalem. And Paul certainly had in mind the cross of Good Friday and the empty tomb of Easter in his *etapeinosen* of verse 8 and *hyperhysosen* of verse 9.

The context of this passage is sanctification. Paul is calling the Philippians to a life of humility and selflessness (vv 2-4,12-13). In order to make his point in the strongest possible terms, he injects into his exhortation the example of Christ Jesus. He is saying, "If you want to know how to live in this respect, look at Jesus and imitate Him." The text itself, however, whether an early Chris-

tian hymn or creed used by Paul or Paul's own composition, remains as one of the clearest Christological teachings we have. Its emphasis is evangelical, to show Jesus as Savior, "that every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord." Both text and context should be emphasized, for only in looking to Jesus in faith are we able to follow Jesus' example in life.

Introduction: Whether we admit it or not, we are all imitators. Consciously or unconsciously, we conform our lives to a standard of behavior patterned after individuals we admire. We look to others, follow their example, and even idolize their words and behavior. For that reason, it should be an easy transition for us to follow St. Paul's exhortation in our text. He encourages us:

Look to Jesus

I. As our example.
   A. He is our example in humility.
      1. He is God from eternity.
      2. Selfless love caused Him to become one of us.
         a. To become "a man" (incarnation) v 8a.
         b. To become "a slave" (humiliation) v 7b.
   B. He is our example in obedience.
      1. He obeyed the Father's will (cf. Lk 22:42; Jn 4:34).
      2. He obeyed to the point of death on a cross, the lowest degree of humiliation. The cross was a scandal to the world (Ga 5:11) and separation from God (Mt 27:46), but it was God's way of redeeming sinners (Ro 5:8).

Transition: That God should stoop so low as to become a human slave and die in our place is beyond our comprehension. But God's love is not to be rationalized; it is to be believed. His example of humility and obedience is not just to be admired; it is to be imitated. Jesus Himself gives us the desire and the ability to imitate Him.

II. As the object of our worship.
   A. We worship Him because God has highly exalted Him (v 9a).
      1. Jesus was victorious in His resurrection. He is a Hero with whom we proudly identify.
      2. No longer is Jesus limited in the use of His divine attributes. He has entered His glory (Lk 24:26) and now rules powerfully (Eph 1:20-22).
   B. We worship Him because God has given Him a name above every name (vv 9-11).
      1. "Jesus Christ," God's Chosen One, our Savior. The name tells us everything we need to know about what God has done for us and is still doing for us.
      2. "Lord," God's name for Himself, a name He possessed from eternity, but through His humiliation and exaltation, a name which is now confessed to the glory of God.

Conclusion: What more could we want out of life than to imitate and to worship the Lord who has saved us. "Let us then fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith" (He 12:2).

Paul E. Cloeter
Kimball, Minnesota

EASTER SUNDAY

Colossians 3:1-4

April 19, 1987

The second half of Colossians, a section which begins with our text, is the practical application of the doctrinal material presented in the first two chapters. What the precise nature of the heresy plaguing the Colossians was is debated. It certainly included Judaizing elements (2:16-17,21-22) which insisted on the practice of certain observances in order to improve and complete one's faith. The fact that Paul also has to stress a proper Christology (1:15f) would indicate some confusion in this area. Perhaps for these reasons, Colossians 2:9-10 expresses as well as any passage the scope of this letter. In our text, Paul contrasts these visible "things that are on earth" (i.e., legalistic requirements) with the hidden "things above." We have been raised with Christ, a fact which also is invisible. The exhortation of Paul, "seek those things above where Christ is," refers to the things that make for true Christianity and bring joy and meaning to life.

Introduction: Easter is about living. It proclaims a living Savior, one whose victory over death also benefits us. "Because I live, you shall live also." This life is not reserved just for heaven. For those of us who, like the Colossians, have been raised with Christ, resurrection living has already begun. The fact that we do not often realize this fact would lead us to ask:

How Do We Live the Resurrection Life?

I. Live with a remembrance of how Christ has changed us.
   A. You have died to what you once thought was real life (v 3).
      1. This death took place in Christ as we were connected to Him by faith (2:12).
      2. This death put into the past all work-righteous efforts on our part (2:8,20).
   B. We have died to all desires to continue a selfish life of sin (Ro 6:2ff).

II. Live with a mind occupied by things that really count (v 1b,2).
   A. "The things that are on earth" do not satisfy.
      1. The Colossian error and all other legalistic attempts to manipulate God's grace.
      2. Materialism and other "visible" efforts to find the good life on earth.

B. "The things above" are "hidden" but are the heart's desire of one connected to Christ.
   1. This is where Christ and His gracious rule exist.
   2. Included are all God's great acts of salvation (1:14; 2:3) and daily growth in sanctification (2:19).

III. Live with a hope of the future, glorious life (v 4).
   A. The victorious resurrection life is a hidden life now. Christians do not seem to be any better off than others. In fact, because our hope and joy are unseen, it appears to others that "we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor 15:19).
   B. But Christ will one day appear to vindicate His resurrection people.
      1. Our hidden life of faith will be revealed with Christ for all to see (cf. 1 Jn 3:2).
      2. We will join Him in glory.

Conclusion: Easter is a glorious day, not just because it promises us life after death. It allows us to participate in resurrection living now. Live, then, with a memory of Christ's great victory in the past, with a mind set on His presence and blessing now, and with a certain hope of sharing in His glory to come.

Paul E. Cloeter
Kimball, Minnesota

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 Peter 1:3-9

April 26, 1987

The salutation shows that Peter wrote his first epistle to Jewish and Gentile Christians scattered throughout northern Asia Minor. Peter's purpose was to encourage and strengthen his readers in their sufferings by reminding them of the living hope which sustains them on their earthly pilgrimage. The opening doxology of the text points to the crowning manifestation of God's great mercy, His raising of Christ from the dead (v 3). Christ's resurrection makes possible our new birth (regeneration) which occurred in our baptism (Col 2:12; Ro 6:4). Because Christ lives, the hope we received in our baptism is a living hope which looks forward to a heavenly inheritance (v 4). Christians can be sure of coming into this inheritance because God Himself guards them in faith (v 5). "In this you rejoice" (v 6) refers to rejoicing in the new birth, in the hope of heaven, and in God's protection. The verb means "to exult, to leap for joy." Christians can rejoice even though trials now cause grief. Trials are part of God's plan, for they are God's means of testing Christians. As perishable gold is tried in the fire, so faith is tested that it may be purged of its dross and the good metal discovered when Christ is revealed. Faith that endures trials is recognized as genuine (v 7). Although the Christians addressed by Peter expected Christ's coming, they had still to believe without seeing Him (v 8). Through faith in Christ they had a foretaste of heavenly joy and could rejoice in whatever happened because the consummation of their faith was assured (v 9).

Introduction: Probably all of us have thought of how pleasant it would be to come into an inheritance of property or money. We may have envied people who have won a million dollars in a lottery. But inheritances and lottery prizes fade away. And they are good only for this life. Did you ever see vehicles loaded with the possessions and money of the deceased following the hearse to the cemetery? There is, however, an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. It is the heavenly inheritance of which Peter speaks in the text. It is

The Greatest Inheritance of All

I. God has made us heirs of it.
   A. By His great mercy.
      1. Because of our sins we deserved to be shut out from God and heaven forever.
      2. But because God wanted us to be with Him, He showed mercy to us and sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for us.
   B. Through Christ's resurrection.
      1. Christ's resurrection guarantees the completeness of Christ's work and assures us of eternal life.
      2. Christ's resurrection makes possible our new birth as Christians who have the hope of the greatest inheritance of all.

II. God will bring us to it.
   A. By using trouble to test our faith.
      1. The dross is driven out.
      2. The genuineness of our faith will be seen at Christ's appearing.
   B. By using His power to sustain us to the end.
      1. Through Word and Sacrament God will guard our faith.
      2. We can rejoice even though for a little while we may have to suffer various trials.
      3. The outcome of it all is our enjoyment of the greatest inheritance of all.

Conclusion: The longer we live, the faster the years flit by. Life is a short pilgrimage. We are just passing through this world to the greatest inheritance of all. Of this inheritance we can be sure because God has made us heirs of it, and God will bring us to it.

Gerhard Aho

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 Peter 1:17-21

May 3, 1987

Verse 17 is a warning against carnal security. In the preceding verses (vv 15-16) Peter reminds his readers that, as God who called them is holy, they are to be holy in their conduct. While we call upon God as our Father, we do not forget that He is a holy God and therefore not an indulgent father. He judges every

person impartially, without favoritism, according to that person's deeds. It follows that we are to live out our lives in reverent fear of God. We are to be afraid of insulting and forsaking God by showing indifference to His Word and will. This fear is prompted, above all, by the knowledge of our redemption (v 18). If we persist in sin's futile ways, we show frivolity towards God's holy will and no regard for the ransom our redemption required. Before the foundation of the world God destined His own Son to be the Lamb for sinners slain (vv 19-20) so that our confidence (our faith and hope) might be in God and not in anyone or anything else (v 21).

Introduction: It is a travesty of the Christian Gospel to say that, because we are saved through faith without works, it does not matter what kind of works we do. We must not deliberately continue in sin. Rather, we must be imitators of God. In the verses preceding the text, Peter urges us to be holy in our conduct as God is holy. But what motivates us to holy conduct? We look at outward deeds, but God looks at what prompts those deeds. The text makes clear that the highest motivation for good deeds and words and thoughts is the ransom paid for our redemption. Peter urges us to

Live As Ransomed People

I. Because living in sin is futile.
   A. It brings only emptiness.
      1. Sensual pleasures and material wealth provide some kind of enjoyment for a while, but in the end they do not satisfy.
      2. Sin, once yielded to, tends to create an appetite for greater sin which leaves the sinner more jaded and spent in a seemingly purposeless existence.
   B. It incurs God's judgment.
      1. He judges each person's deeds impartially.
      2. We must not think, because we call God our Father, that it does not matter to Him how we live. We insult Him when we purposely continue in what we know to be wrong.
   C. But living in sin is futile, above all, because we have been ransomed from sin. How futile to remain in a bondage from which we have already been freed! That is like a kidnapped person insisting on remaining the captive of his kidnappers even though the ransom has been paid.

II. Because the ransom price was precious.
   A. No perishable thing sufficed to redeem us.
      1. Such as silver or gold.
      2. Such as a good reputation or great achievements.
   B. The ransom was none other than the precious blood of Christ.
      1. He was the spotless Lamb who was able to take our place by bearing our sin.
      2. Before the foundation of the world God destined His own Son to be the payment by which we were ransomed from the dominion of Satan and the power of sin.

III. Because the blessings received are great.
   A. We have received faith.
      1. The object of our faith is the living, changeless Christ.
      2. Our faith may waver but Christ never will. Because we are joined to Him by faith, we can endure every earthly trial.
   B. We have received hope.
      1. We have hope because Christ has been raised to glory.
      2. We can always have hope because no matter what we go through now, we belong to Christ, and we will one day be with Him in glory.

Conclusion: We surely have reason to live as the ransomed people we are. We have been delivered from sin's futile ways, we have been redeemed by Christ's precious blood, and we have been given faith and hope in God.

Gerhard Aho

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 Peter 2:19-25

May 10, 1987

In verse 19 the phrase translated "mindful of God" (RSV) means literally "for conscience of God," that is, consciousness of God's will. Even if suffering is unjustly inflicted upon us, it is God's will that we bear it patiently (Mt 5:39). The Greek word *kleos*, which the RSV translates "credit," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. To be patient when suffering a deserved punishment may be difficult; yet it is no more than our duty. But taking wrongful suffering patiently is more than merely recognized duty. Such conduct brings honor to Christianity and has God's approbation (v 20). In verse 21 Peter urges us to imitate Christ in suffering undeserved affliction patiently. Christ suffered even though He had committed no sin (v 22). He did not return evil for evil (v 23), He did not revile or threaten, but He trusted (committed) His revilers to God who judges justly (possibly a reference to Christ's prayer, "Father, forgive them"). Having spoken of the Lord as our example of patience in suffering, Peter emphasizes the deeper significance of Christ's sufferings. Already in verse 21 he had spoken of Christ suffering for *(huper)* us. Peter thus points to Christ suffering in our stead by vicariously bearing our sins (v 24). The reference here is to Isaiah 53:12, where the idea is suffering the punishment of sin. Christ died so that we would have nothing to do with sin but rather submit to the will of God. When we fall into sin, it is comforting to know that the stripes (the marks of scourging left in Christ's flesh) bring healing to us who believe in Him. For the sickness of our sin we are given the health of Christ's righteousness (v 24). Because in Christ we are healed we can endure patiently the physical and emotional strain our suffering brings us. Our patience is increased also by the assurance (v 25) that we who were lost in sin have been brought back to Christ, the chief Shepherd and Guardian of our souls which He bought for Himself with His innocent suffering and death.

Introduction: What have I done to deserve this? Have you exasperatedly asked that question in your suffering? We tend to show impatience if we cannot specify wrong actions for which we deserve our suffering. We are somewhat more ready to suffer patiently for wrongs we know we have committed (traffic violations, for instance). But there is nothing especially commendable about patience in such circumstances. What is highly commendable—indeed, has God's approval—is patient endurance of suffering that comes when we are trying to do right. How can we find the patience to take such suffering? Peter tells us.

Enduring Suffering Patiently

I. By remembering Christ's example (v 21).
   A. We are called to follow Christ's example of non-retaliation (v 23a).
      1. No reviling back.
      2. No threatening those who wrong us without cause.
   B. We are called to follow Christ's example of committing our persecutors to God's judgment (v 23b).
      1. Knowing that vengeance belongs to God alone (Ro 12:9).
      2. Yet asking God to forgive them (Lk 23:34).

While Christ's behavior in undeserved suffering is an inspiration to us, His example alone is not enough. What we need most of all to endure our suffering patiently is the healing Christ provides.

II. By looking to Christ for healing (v 24c).
   A. We have healing through Christ bearing our sins (v 24a).
      1. We no longer have to bear the eternal consequences of our sins.
      2. God has forgiven our sins, also our sin of impatience in suffering, and therefore our sufferings are not God's punishment.
      3. Suffering is our lot in a fallen world (Ac 14:22) and as Christ's followers (Jn 15:20), but in Christ's wounds we find spiritual health.
   B. We have healing through Christ caring for us (v 25).
      1. Christ is our Shepherd who in our baptism restored us to His fold.
      2. Christ is our Guardian who by Word and Sacrament keeps us from giving in to anger and self-pity when we suffer unjustly.

Conclusion: It is the healing we have in Christ as our sin-bearer and soul-carer that enables us to endure suffering patiently.

Gerhard Aho

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 Peter 2:4-10

May 17, 1987

The stone to which Christians are continually coming (v 4) is not an inert mass but is full of life. This stone (cornerstone in verse 6) is Christ who rose from the dead and is alive forevermore. Christians are living stones because of

their union with Christ who builds them up into a spiritual house (v 5), the antitype of the temple building. The temple is associated with the priesthood, and thus the living stones are also priests. The Christian church as a holy priesthood is the fulfillment of Exodus 19:6. Christian priests no longer offer animal sacrifices because Christ, the once-and-for-all sacrifice, offered Himself on the altar of the cross. The priests of the spiritual temple offer spiritual sacrifices of praise, good deeds, and themselves. These sacrifices they offer through Jesus Christ, through whom alone the sacrifices are acceptable to God. The quotation in verse 6 of Isaiah 28:16 stresses the security of those who trust in Christ. Such will "not be put to shame," literally, "not be in haste," not rushing about aimlessly because of fear and uncertainty. In verse 7 the literal translation, "to you therefore who believe is the honor," makes clear that the honor of not being confounded belongs to Christians. This meaning of the original is conveyed more clearly by the NASB than by the RSV or the NIV. From this honor it can, however, be implied that the stone (Christ) has precious worth to those who believe. To those who rejected Christ Peter applies the words of Psalm 118:22 to show that, despite their rejection of the living stone, it became, through that very rejection, the head of the corner, the chief cornerstone. In verse 8 Peter quotes Isaiah 8:14 to emphasize that, for the disobedient, Christ is also a stone of stumbling on which they fall and are broken. The Greek word for "disobey" in verse 8 implies willful opposition. The idea of some being destined or appointed (v 8) does not mean that God has appointed certain people to destruction. Rather, the disobedient, by persevering in their rejection of Christ, bring upon themselves the judgment appointed by God for all those who reject the Son. In verse 9 Peter contrasts the disobedient (unbelieving) and Christian people. The church consists of one chosen race because all its members have been granted a new birth by the Spirit. Their royal priesthood denotes the kingly honor they share with Christ. Christians are an holy nation because they possess Christ's holiness by faith and are thus God's children in a special sense, God's own people. The Greek words convey the idea of keeping something for one's self. As God's special people Christians have the privilege of telling others the virtues or excellencies of Him who called them out of the darkness of sin into the marvelous light of His grace. According to verse 10, where Peter quotes the prophecy of Hosea 2:23, it is God who calls people to be His special people. This call of God comes through the Word, by which people are empowered to receive God's mercy.

Introduction: Each Sunday Christians gather to worship in buildings made of wood, glass, steel, cement, and stone. The church, of course, is not buildings, not even stone buildings that have stood for centuries. Yet Peter in the text likens Christians to stones—living stones. He is telling us (*LW* 291):

"We Are God's House of Living Stones"

I. We live in Christ.
   A. Christ is *the* living stone.
      1. He is such because He died for us, rose from the grave, and will never die again.
      2. Consequently, God made Him the chief cornerstone which gives coherence and strength to all the other stones (v 6a).

B. We are living stones because we derive our life from Christ.
   1. Our spiritual life began in our baptism when we were added to the living stones which make up the Christian church (v 10).
   2. If later in life we become indifferent to the Word of Christ, we can lose our faith. Then Christ will no longer be for us the stone on which we are built, but a stone of stumbling that portends our eternal destruction (v 8).
   3. We can remain living stones only as we continue to believe in Christ as our precious cornerstone (v 4a; 6b).

The life we have from Christ flows out from us to others, as living stones in Christ.

II. We live for Christ.
   A. We do so when we offer spiritual sacrifices (v 5c).
      1. We have the privilege of telling others the wonderful deeds of God (v 9).
         a. We can praise God for having called us out of a darkness characterized by deadness, inertness, and opposition to God into that marvelous light in which we have a lively confidence of His mercy.
         b. In our conversations with other people we can let them know what great things God is still doing for us.
      2. We have the privilege of praying earnestly and persistently for ourselves and others.
      3. We have the privilege of doing kind and gracious deeds.
   B. Our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God.
      1. Christ atoned for the imperfection that stains even the good we say and do.
      2. Since we are accounted holy through faith in Christ, God regards as holy all that we do in faith according to His commandments.

Conclusion: The church does not consist of buildings made of stone or another material. It consists of people like you and me who through Word and Sacrament become and remain living stones. "We are God's house of living stones."

Gerhard Aho

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 Peter 3:15-22

May 24, 1987

This text includes the primary passage for the descent of Christ into hell. If you listen to the average Christian recite this part of the Apostles' Creed, you might well get the impression that Christ's descent into hell was the absolutely worst thing that could have ever happened to Him. Just the opposite is true! Christ was made alive and descended into hell for a great victory parade right through the enemy's camp! He thus assures every disciple of victory over

Satan. Christians should say those words of the Creed with excitement and joy. God has not called us to be merely different, but to be dynamic for Him in the world. The problem is that when our faith is challenged, we offer little for others to grasp. When challenged to tell why we believe, we find "That is what the pastor told us in confirmation class" just is not good enough. Our text presents a far better way.

Introduction: When we become Christians, there is a distinct danger that we may heave a sigh of relief that we escaped hell and are now headed for heaven. I say this is a danger if we thereby feel that that is the end of our Christianity. God not only saved us from something terrible and for something good in the future (heaven), but He wants our new lives in Christ to count for something right now.

Christian, Make a Positive Impact

I. Honor the Lord.
   A. With a proper answer to inquirers (v 15).
      1. What do you believe?
      2. Why do you believe it?
   B. With proper actions (life-style) among accusers (v 16).
      1. Your conscience is clear.
      2. Your accuser's evil is exposed.

II. Jesus leads the way.
   A. Through suffering.
      1. Jesus suffered (v 18).
         a. Unjustly.
         b. Vicariously.
         c. Once—completely on the cross.
      2. Christians, too, will suffer.
         a. We are freed, therefore, from suffering to atone for our sins (v 18).
         b. We are open to suffering for our faith and life in Christ (v 17).
   B. Victory is assured.
      1. Christ conquered.
         a. He was "quickened" (vivified, made alive) by the Spirit.
         b. He paraded victoriously through the enemy's headquarters in hell on Easter morning (v 19) for Satan and all who, like those who rejected God's patient grace in Noah's day, abide in hell (v 20).
         c. He ascended into heaven where He rules in glorious majesty (v 22).
      2. We, too, are conquerors.
         a. We are joined to the Victorious One by baptism (v 21).
         b. His promises to us are backed by His resurrection power.

Conclusion: As Christians we are not merely called out of the evils of sin and death. Instead God Himself gives us the honor, opportunity, and power to make

an impact on our world as our lives and lips speak the Gospel. Jesus Christ, powerfully risen from the dead, leads us to be conquerors through His name. What a challenge!

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SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11

May 31, 1987

This Sunday between the Ascension of our Lord and Pentecost gives us cause to shift our attention from His saving work on our behalf to our activity on His behalf in carrying out His great commission. Our work is not easy and will, in fact, often entail suffering. The problem may be that we are tempted to relegate suffering for Christ to those martyrs in Communist or other oppressed countries who dare to live as Christians and witness to their Savior. American Christians are too easily comfortable with their Christianity in such a way that they are unwilling to risk much in sharing it with others, much less in rejoicing in suffering. The text points us to our God of grace, who in Christ Jesus calls us not only to faith, but also to a strong witness in daily life to our Redeemer. The two sections of the text may not at first seem united. Yet they compliment one another in calling us away from self-pity in suffering to a positive response to suffering for the name of Jesus.

Introduction: This past week we joyfully celebrated the Ascension of our Savior to the Father's right hand where He is enthroned in glory, majesty, and splendor forevermore. In addition, He promises that He will come again to receive us unto Himself that by His grace we might share His glory in heaven forever. Meanwhile we have a job to do for Him—to live to His glory, to share His love everywhere! That can be very difficult. Therefore the Apostle Peter in our text helps us in

Dealing with Suffering between the Ascensions

I. Expect suffering.
   A. Suffering is part of the Christian life.
      1. We experience it in common with other Christians (5:9b).
      2. Sometimes it is severe (4:12; Nero).
   B. Be sure you suffer for the right reason.
      1. Suffering for sin is disgraceful (4:15; Lk 23:41).
      2. Suffering as a Christian (4:16) may be very subtle but real as you live as a Christian and witness boldly to Jesus.

II. Rejoice in suffering.
   A. Rejoice that your suffering glorifies God (v 16).
      1. It identifies you with the suffering Savior (4:13; 2 Cor 4:10).
      2. It spotlights His name (v 14). (Recall baptism.)

B. Rejoice that your suffering is followed by eternal joy and glory (4:13b; Ro 8:17-18).

III. Act wisely in suffering.
A. In vigilance.
1. Against the devil (5:8).
2. Knowing the "stakes" are high (5:8).
3. Constantly—lest indifference, ease, or pride blunt your witness.
B. Live under God's care.
1. Humbly (5:6). You cannot make it through on your own.
2. Trustingly.
a. God can take care of you (5:6, 10b).
b. God wants to take care of you (5:7; Ps 55:22).
3. Confidently. You are His by grace (5:10).
a. Through Christ, who effectively suffered for our sins.
b. Called (effectively) to be His.
c. To end in eternal glory.

Conclusion: As we see Christ ascend into heaven, we long to ascend with Him. Yet while we look wistfully toward heaven, our feet are still planted firmly on earth. Let us live and witness, not fearfully, but confidently—even rejoicingly—as a part of the faithful band of the Lord.

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THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-21

June 7, 1987

In the book of Acts Luke chronicles how the Word of the Lord grew. The birthday of that growth process was the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost was an annual festival of the Jews which followed the Feast of Firstfruits by a week of weeks (seven weeks or 49 days). It was also known as the Feast of Weeks and could be likened to a Thanksgiving festival. "Pentecost" is a Greek derivation meaning fifty because it was the fiftieth day after the Firstfruits Feast. It was a time of rejoicing among God's people. It was time to come to the temple to offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving. Thus, there were Jews from the Diaspora, Hellenistic Jews, as well as proselytes who had gathered from the civilized world at the temple.

From Joel to Jesus the promise was repeated, "You will receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Ac 1:8). What happened on that first Christian Pentecost was the fulfillment of divine promise that the Spirit's power would become manifest in the apostles. The Lord's men were together in one place, no doubt in or near one of the porticoes of the temple. (This open area would offer sufficient room for the great multitude who heard the wonderful news of Christ). There was *pneuma,* a wind powerful and strong, although the skies

were clear and calm. As God in past ages made His presence known in fire (Moses and the burning bush and Elijah and the chariot of the Lord), so there was fire here. It divided and danced over the disciples and they spoke in tongues they did not normally use or know. People gathered to witness the phenomenon. Here were simple country folk from Galilee suddenly speaking in foreign tongues understood by those assembled from the many ancient lands around Israel. The contention of charismatics that the apostles were using a "spirit language" by virtue of a "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is not borne out by the word *dialektos,* which implies an understandable language. There can be no doubt that it was the divine power of God's Holy Spirit which was manifested on that first Pentecost. In that outpouring there is the dynamic power which causes the Gospel to take root and bear abundant fruit. The preacher would do well to dissect the events of Pentecost and the manifestation of the Spirit, for in our day the work of the Holy Spirit is perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of God's dealings with His people.

Introduction: Once while watching youngsters compete in the "Special Olympics," I was moved by the tremendous spirit which these special children exerted in their competition. That strange, indefinable thing that compels retarded children to compete in athletics is "spirit." There is spirit in athletic contests. There is a spirit of patriotism that can grip a country. Also there can be a spirit of enthusiasm that permeates a church on the move for Christ.

Christians, too, talk of the Spirit. It is not some vague nebulous feeling, force, or power; rather it is the Holy Spirit. It is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity whom we all need to become and remain Christians and who was manifested in a most unusual way on the first Pentecost. That is the Spirit of which we speak today when we say:

"That's the Spirit"

I. That's the Spirit who comes to us in God's own way.
   A. He came to the apostles in God's own time.
   B. He came to them with God's own sign.
   C. He does not come to us in all the same ways as He did of old, but we have the assurance that He comes through the Word and Sacraments.

II. That's the Spirit who proclaims God's love in Christ.
   A. The apostles did not retreat to themselves, but they began to speak about Christ.
   B. They spoke in languages which many people of that world spoke and understood.
   C. The Spirit lays upon the church the responsibility of proclaiming the good news of Jesus to all, far and near.

III. That's the Spirit who helps us become living proof of God's love.
   A. Some mocked this Spirit's outpouring as intoxication. (People can mock the Spirit but to their own damnation.)

B. Those who believe fulfill God's promises of old through the prophets. There were those who believed Peter and the others and who by the Spirit became living proof of God's love.
C. When the Spirit moves us to believe, we also become living proof of God's love in Christ.

Conclusion: Young Jim was in little league. He was playing his favorite position in a play-off game. A ball came whistling at him at second base and almost in self-defense he held his glove in front of his face. The ball struck and a rally by the opponent was cut off. The coach yelled from the bench, "That's the spirit, Jim!" The Spirit who was manifested at Pentecost came in God's own way. He came to proclaim Jesus as Savior and Lord, and He came to make us living proof of His life-saving work.

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TRINITY SUNDAY

2 Corinthians 3:11-14

June 14, 1987

In chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians Paul would note the splendor of the New Testament ministry as opposed to that of the Old Testament exemplified by Moses. The Apostle contrasts the splendor of God in the Old Testament with that of the New revealed in Jesus Christ. The Apostle notes that the glory of the Old is far transcended by the New. Therefore, Paul says we can be "bold" or speak plainly. Moses, the mediator of the Old Testament, shared in the splendor of God on the smoky heights of Mt. Sinai—so much so that he covered his face with a veil when he appeared before the people of Israel. Yet Moses' splendor was a fading one, because he, as well as Israel, shared in the human condition of sin. There is a lasting splendor in Christ and the proclamation of His Gospel that never fades.

In our outline for this text for the Feast of the Holy Trinity, we have endeavored to note the contrast in splendor between the Old and New Testaments. There is a great difference between the light of a candle and the beaming brightness of the sun. God revealed His splendor of old to Moses and His people, but this splendor was but a candle compared to the splendor of God that we can see revealed in the face of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Introduction: Having travelled extensively throughout the western United States, I have been captured and captivated by the splendor of what "God hath wrought!" There is a rugged splendor in the churned rock formations of the Grand Canyon. Who could ever forget the moving splendor of Yosemite's El Capitan, or the mighty sentinels of God's oldest living things, the Redwoods? Of course, there are the Grand Tetons and crowded Yellowstone Park. Our land

abounds in glory and splendor. All of this is but a hint of the splendor of our God and the testament He has established on behalf of His people. It is of that point which Paul wrote and of which we speak when we say:

From Splendor to Splendor

I. There was splendor in the Old.
   A. Moses caught a flash of that splendor in God's presence.
   B. Israel caught a glimpse of that splendor in Moses' appearance.
   C. We catch a glimpse of the glorious splendor of our God in His presence and covenant at Sinai.

II. There is a greater splendor in the New.
   A. Moses could see this splendor only through distant prophecy.
   B. The New Testament believer sees it in the testament established through Christ.
   C. We see this lasting splendor of God, which requires no veil to spare us its brightness, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: The intensity of light is measured in candlepower. One candle may flicker and glow and be seen but a few feet while the beacon of a great lighthouse can be seen for miles. They both have a light and a certain splendor, but there is a vast contrast between the two. So is there a vast contrast in how we see the splendor of God. There was a splendor of God in the Old Testament, but it was a fading one. If we desire to see the true and lasting splendor of our all-glorious God, we must see Him in His New Testament which does not fade in glory and which ever remains a splendor in the face of the brightness of Jesus Christ.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 3:21-25a, 27-28

June 21, 1987

The "law" (*nomos*) in the first clause of verse 21 denotes religion embodied in statutes. Because statutory obedience cannot justify, God manifested a righteousness "apart from the law," apart from the exacting principle of man's complete obedience to laws. This righteousness is not opposed to the teaching of the law and the prophets in the Old Testament but rather finds its attestation there (v 21b). It is God's righteousness (v 22) in the sense that Jesus, God's Son, manifested it in His perfect life and innocent death. All people need this righteousness because all have failed (v 23) to measure up to God's glory, to the righteousness God has as God. As all have sinned, so all are justified (declared righteous) by God freely without any human effort on the basis of Christ's redemptive work (v 24). Christ's death had propitiatory power (v 25). God's justification of sinners benefits those sinners only who believe God's declara-

tion of their forgiveness. Because this faith too is entirely God's work, our salvation excludes all boasting by us (v 27) as though we had done something to earn it. In verse 28 Paul sharply distinguishes between faith and works as two different religious systems. The faith principle is a renunciation of any confidence that legal obedience might inspire.

Introduction: It is natural for us to justify ourselves. When someone questions our behaviour we declare it acceptable by pointing to its rightness and propriety. We are quick to defend our actions. That is not what St. Paul means by the term "justify" in our text. He is talking about God's act of justifying, not ours. To say that God justifies means that God declares human beings acceptable to Him. If that is so, we have no need to justify ourselves before God or anyone else. Therefore, the most freeing thing that could happen is for God to justify us, to declare us forgiven. This is precisely what God has done.

Our Justification by God Frees Us

I. From making the law our justifier.
   A. Our natural tendency is to use the law to justify ourselves before God.
      1. We do so when we try to keep God's commandments to win God's approval.
      2. We do so when we refuse to let the law reveal our failures in keeping it.
      3. We do so when we do not see ourselves as sinners who fall short of the holiness God requires (v 23).
   B. What God did through Jesus makes using the law as our justifier totally unnecessary.
      1. God sent Jesus to atone for our sins (v 25a).
      2. God has declared us forgiven, freely, despite our sin and without preliminary improvement of our behavior, on the basis of the redemption secured by Christ.
   C. It is good that the law is not our justifier.
      1. We have no need to worry about whether we have done enough to please God.
      2. We have no need to justify ourselves before God or before people by comparing our keeping of God's law to others' keeping of it.
      3. Of course, we try to keep God's law, but not for our justification. The law is not our justifier; God is. He justifies "apart from works of law" (v 28).

Paul says we are "justified by faith." Some have interpreted "by faith" to mean that faith is our justifier. But our justification by God also frees us

II. From making faith our justifier.
   A. If faith is our justifier, faith becomes a work of the law.
      1. Faith becomes something we contribute to our justification.
      2. We could never be sure whether we had enough faith.
   B. Faith is God's gift, not our achievement that causes us to be justified.
      1. We cannot boast even of our faith (v 27).
      2. Faith is the very opposite of works (v 28). Faith is instrumental—the hand by which we receive God's forgiveness.

C. It is good that faith is not our justifier.
   1. The strength or weaknesss of our faith need not determine our justification. Our faith is never as strong as it should be.
   2. We need not have faith in our faith but only in Jesus Christ. What matters is this: I believe God when He says that He has freely, for Christ's sake, justified me.

Conclusion: What a freeing thing it is to be justified by God!

Gerhard Aho

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 4:18-25

June 28, 1987

Paul shows that the method of justification is the same in both the Old and the New Testaments. Abraham's faith was both contrary to hope (as far as the natural workings of the physical body could provide hope) and rested on hope (that God could do what nature could not). It was God's purpose that Abraham should have many descendents (v 18). At a hundred years of age Abraham was fully aware of the deadness of his own body with respect to virility and also the deadness of Sarah's womb. Yet Abraham was fully persuaded that what God had promised God would do (v 19). Impossible as it seemed for Abraham to have an heir, his faith in God's promise did not waver but grew even stronger (v 20). He was utterly convinced God had power to quicken what was humanly dead (v 21). Abraham's faith was "reckoned to him as righteousness," that is, he was justified by faith (v 22). In essence Abraham's faith corresponded to ours (v 23). As the object of his faith was God who gives life to the dead, so the object of our faith is God who raised Jesus from the dead. Verse 24 identifies in principle Abraham's faith and ours. While Abraham's faith was in a divine promise which only divine power could fulfill, the Christian's faith is in God who by His great power has fulfilled the promise in Christ. The omnipotence of God provided at infinite cost for the expiation of sin. God's great work in Christ is described in verse 25: Jesus was delivered into death for our sins (to make atonement for them) and was raised on account of our justification (that the forgiveness Christ secured might be applied to all). While Christ's work was finished on the cross, its result was guaranteed by Christ's resurrection. Thus, He both died and was raised for our justification. Our faith is in the risen Lord through whose death God no longer imputes to people their sins.

Introduction: Most of us have made promises we could not keep or have been disappointed when others failed to keep promises to us. Disappointment turns into heartache and trauma when broken promises destroy a marriage. Also in money matters and job performance broken promises bring anguish. We have learned that we cannot always count on people to keep their promises. God, however, never breaks a promise He has made. The text assures us that

We Can Count on God to Keep His Promises

I. God raised life from Abraham.
   A. God promised Abraham many descendants (v 18).
      1. The idea seemed impossible because Abraham and Sarah were old and childless (v 19b).
      2. Abraham believed God could nevertheless do what He had promised (v 21) .
      3. Abraham was counted righteous through faith in God's promise (v 22).
   B. God raised life from Abraham by letting Sarah give birth to Isaac.
      1. Thus Abraham became the father of the Jewish nation.
      2. Thus Abraham became the forefather of Christ.
   C. What God did for Abraham shows that nothing is too hard for God.
      1. To us it may appear at times that God is promising the impossible when He promises to deliver us from trouble (Ps 34:17), to let good accrue from our suffering (Ro 5:3-4), to be with us always and everywhere (Gen 28:15a).
      2. Yet we like Abraham can believe God's word no matter how circumstances speak against it.

II. God raised Jesus to life.
   A. The promises and assurances of Christ's resurrection were hard to believe.
      1. For the people in Christ's day, even for Christ's own disciples (Jn 5:46-47; Lk 24:25).
      2. For the people of Athens in Paul's day (Ac 17:32a) and for many today.
   B. That God did actually raise Jesus from the dead (v 24b; 1 Cor 15:3-8) shows that God accomplished the hardest thing of all, our deliverance from sin.
      1. Christ was put to death to atone for our trespasses (v 25a).
      2. He was raised from the dead to assure us of our justification by God (v 25b).
      3. Like Abraham we are counted righteous through faith in God's promise—a promise God has now fulfilled.
         a. God keeps His promise to remove each day our burden of guilt.
         b. God keeps His promise to reckon us each day as His pure and holy people in Christ.

Conclusion: We human beings may break promises, but God never will. He who brought life out of old Abraham and raised Jesus from the dead can surely be counted on to keep His promises.

Gerhard Aho

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 5:6-11

July 5, 1987

The lessons for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost center upon the shape of the church's mission. In the Old Testament lesson, Moses announces that God initiated a relationship with Israel that was to be for all nations, and that the church's mission began as a divine fiat separating Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation on the world's behalf. The gospel for the day shows that behind the church's mission is Jesus Christ who completed the Father's mission of salvation by teaching, healing, and exorcising in a fallen world that could only be restored by His incarnation and self-sacrifice. His mission of redemption included calling twelve disciples to carry out the church's mission of teaching, healing, and exorcising in a fallen world that needed to hear that in Christ the kingdom of heaven was at hand. In the Epistle Paul zeros in on the scandal that made possible the church's mission. While the world was weak, languishing in sin and at enmity with God, God's love sent forth His Son to diagnose the world's terminal illness and to perform radical surgery on the world through death on a cross. All this our Lord did for the ungodly. Thus, through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ is the church's model for faithful Christian mission.

The preacher could introduce this theme by showing that as the church continues its mission in 1987, it does so by constantly focusing on Jesus Christ, who scandalized the world by suffering the humiliating death of a cross. The church's faithful mission is not accomplished by insisting on a certain cultural notion of success that sanitizes this scandal. Rather, it is accomplished by confronting the reality of the world's sin and the reality of the world's reconciliation. If the church's faithful Christian mission softens, in any way, the radical nature of Christ's cross, whatever growth it experiences is malignant, because it denies that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the model for faithful Christian mission. (For further discussion of this Sunday's pericopes along these lines see D. L. Tiede and A. Kavanagh, *Proclamation 2 Series A* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981], pp. 30-35.)

Jesus Christ—A Model for Faithful Christian Mission

I. Through His uncompromising diagnosis of the human condition (Ro 5:6,8,10).
   A. He confronts the problem at its source.
      1. The world is helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Ro 5:6; Mt 9:36; 10:6).
      2. The world is ungodly, steeped in sin (Ro 5:6).
      3. The world is hostile, enemies of God (Ro 5:10).

B. He knows the tragic results of the problem.
   1. The world seeks its own help by positive thinking.
   2. The world seeks its own wisdom by denying the consequences of sin.
   3. The world seeks its own reconciliation through emotional exhilaration.

II. Through His radical demonstration of God's love (Ro 5:8ff).
   A. He solves the problem through His messianic mission of salvation.
      1. By the scandal of Jesus the Word taking flesh to restore creation.
      2. By the scandal of Jesus the Lamb dying a sacrificial death.
   B. He knows the boastful results of His messianic mission of mercy.
      1. The declaration of righteousness to the sinner through His blood (Ro 5:9).
      2. The salvation of the sinner from the wrath of God (Ro 5:9-10).
      3. The reconciliation of the sinner to God through His death (Ro 5:10-11).

III. Through His empowering of the apostolic missionaries (Mt 10:1-7).
   A. To proclaim to the world the presence of His kingdom (Mt 10:7).
      1. Christianity is the world's exorcist (Mt 10:1,8).
      2. Christianity is the world's healer (Mt 9:35; 10:1,8).
      3. Christianity is the world's teacher (Mt 9:35; 10:7).
   B. To give to the world access to the presence of His kingdom.
      1. Baptism continues Christ's mission by plunging one into His death.
      2. The Eucharist sustains Christ's mission by nourishing one on His body given, His blood shed.

Arthur A. Just, Jr.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 5:12-15

July 12, 1987

The theme from last Sunday continues into this Sunday with particular attention upon the realities of the world's condition and God's radical solution to the problem of sin. The dilemma confronted by all three lessons is the reality of the church's mission. The church is called upon by God to endure the same dangers that Jesus Christ endured in bringing redemption to a fallen world. Once again, our focus is missions, but a concern for missions that understands the true nature of Christian mission. All three lessons give us examples of those who have understood their calling by God, endured the hardships that went with that calling, and emerged victorious because they were faithful to that mission and to the One who sent them on their mission. Such witness can give courage to those who understand that preaching the theology of the cross brings persecution, mockery, and rejection. The church that grows is that church that faces these realities squarely and does not shrink from the wrath of a yuppie generation. The hard lesson in reality taught to the church this week by Jeremiah,

Paul, and our Lord himself is that the mission of the church is fraught with danger, but a danger that gives rise to the glorious celebration of Christ's triumph. (For further discussion on this Sunday's pericopes along these lines see *Proclamation 2 Series A,* pp. 36-41.)

A Hard Lesson in Reality

I. Taught to us through the suffering prophet—Jeremiah (Jr 20:7-13).
   A. A reluctant prophet victimized by the message he proclaims.
      1. Who feels seduced by God (v 7).
      2. Who feels mocked by his own people (vv 7-8).
      3. Who experiences "terror on every side" (v 10).
   B. A compelled prophet chosen by God to proclaim this message (v 9).
      1. With a mission that embraces an entire world.
      2. With a destiny to proclaim hard words to a hardhearted people.
      3. With sufferings for the sake of the Gospel.
         a. A hard lesson in the reality of the human condition.
         b. A hard lesson in reality learned firsthand by Jeremiah.

II. Taught to us through the persecuted apostle—Paul (Ro 5:12-15).
   A. Who sees the hard reality of the prophet-apostle's existence.
      1. To proclaim the original sin that infects us all (vv 12-13).
      2. To identify the world's problem as sinful people (v 14).
      3. To call a people to repentance and faith.
      4. To challenge any denials of this hard lesson in reality.
         a. This lesson is an ugly one to learn.
         b. This lesson diagnoses the reality of the human condition.
         c. This hard lesson in reality was learned firsthand by Paul.
   B. Who sees the hard reality of God's solution to the problem (v 15).
      1. With confidence in the exclusivity of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.
      2. With constant remembrance of the presence of God's solution in the life of the church.
         a. "In the Word heard and preached" (*Proclamation*, p. 40).
         b. "In the Sacrament of the Word faithfully observed and celebrated" (*Proclamation*, p. 40).

III. Taught to us through the crucified Lord—Jesus (Mt 10:24-33).
   A. Who faced the heard reality of sin by dying on a cross.
      1. Through suffering, He destroys suffering.
      2. Through death, He destroys death.
      3. Through His resurrection, He restores creation to newness of life.
   B. Who teaches His disciples how to face the hard realities of suffering and dying for Him.
      1. "Don't expect better treatment than your teacher and Lord received" (*Proclamation*, p. 40).
      2. "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (v 28).
      3. "Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven" (v 32).

C. Who teaches us to be "clear-eyed realists who rejoice in His triumph by reigning with Him from His cross" (*Proclamation*, p. 41).

Arthur A. Just, Jr.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 6:1b-11

July 19, 1987

Human logic is clearly not a reliable tool in considering biblical truth. Nowhere is this more obvious than in St. Paul's comments in the text before us. Although it is true that God's grace abounds in the presence of sin, only a satanic kind of logic would reason that people of God can continue in sin, thereby giving grace an opportunity to increase even further. In truth this is impossible. As Paul affirms plainly, a fundamental change has occurred in a genuine Christian. There has been an active participation with Christ in both His death and resurrection. Repeatedly (vv 3,5,6,8) the Apostle describes the believer's union with the dying and living Lord. As the Christian is joined with Christ, it is inconceivable that he should seek to take advantage of grace. A believer is not simply "wounded" to sin. He is dead to it (v 11).

This does not mean that sin is no longer dangerous. It, in fact, remains quite deadly. But the child of grace has no intention of dabbling in it, thinking that grace will "cover" him if he strays too far. A Christian has turned away from sin, empowered by a Savior who defeated it completely. This is not perfectionist theology. Believers do sin, but they do not want to do so. When they do, their life in Christ assures them that grace heals and forgiveness is sure because of the Christ in them.

Introduction: People walking the beaches along certain parts of our coastline sometimes come upon jellyfish which have washed ashore. Even though these sea creatures may be dead, many have learned from experience that picking one up can be a painful event due to the toxins that remain. In a sense this is an image of sin. Believers have in Christ died to it. Yet it is not to be ignored because it is still deadly. Sin, in truth, is

Defeated But Still Dangerous

I. Dying with Christ means death to sin.
   A. We have been crucified with Him (v 6).
   B. We have been buried with Him by baptism (v 6).
   C. We have died with Him and to our old self (v 6).
      1. This death has freed us from slavery to sin.
      2. Because we are dead to sin, it is inconceivable and even impossible that we should continue eagerly in it.

Transition: Genuine children of Christ have participated with Him in His death. They share in His victory. Though sin remains dangerous, it has no final power over them as they remember that

II. Living with Christ means life in grace.
  A. We have been joined with Christ in His resurrection (v 5).
    1. His victory is our victory.
    2. His life assures life for us.
  B. We have a life in Him that means also a life for Him.
    1. Our life is new, freshened by His grace and motivated by His victory.
    2. His indwelling presence ("in Christ," v 11) empowers us to live with a deep aversion to sin and a sincere desire to follow only Him.

Conclusion: Sin, though defeated, can still menace God's people. But they have no interest in being drawn into its perversion. They have a new life which is interested in living for Christ, because He both enables them and empowers them.

David E. Seybold
Fredonia, Wisconsin

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 7:15-25a

July 26, 1987

One of the ironies of the Christian life is that it is the person who has experienced the free grace and forgiveness of God most fully who is the most acutely aware of his sin and weakness. The Apostle Paul is a fitting example of this fact, even as he describes it in the text before us. In truth, he perceived painfully that a very real "civil war" raged in the heart of every Christian between flesh and spirit. The good which is desired is not achieved, and the evil which is shunned seems to succeed. To a Christian this is utterly distressing. It heightens the sting of the law, even as it deepens an appreciation for the Gospel. The goal of the sermon is to lead the hearer to understand the nature of the Christian struggle and come to the same conclusion that Paul did, that only through Christ can we be delivered "from this body of death" (v 24).

Introduction: Extensively educated people often admit that the more they study and learn, the more they understand how little they really do know and how much there remains to be learned. Christians have a similar experience. The more they grow in faith, the more they realize how sinful they really are and how much they have yet to learn about discipleship. This heightens the struggle within them, even as they perceive ever more clearly the nature of both law and Gospel. In this way they come to know the glorious answer to the powerful question,

"Who Will Deliver Me?"

I. From my struggle with evil.
   A. The law heightens the knowledge of sin.
      1. We know what we should do but cannot seem to accomplish it.
      2. We know that our "flesh" is evil and leads us into actions that are admittedly wrong (v 18).
   B. The law increases the pain of sin.
      1. We suffer because our actions do not match our desires (v 22).
      2. We struggle over our wretched captivity which dwells in our flesh and wars against our "mind" (v 23).

Transition: As the Christian understands more deeply the demands of the law and his inability to achieve them in spite of his best intentions, the struggle within him intensifies. Like Paul he wonders, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" It is Christ in His empowering and healing Gospel.

II. For my dedication to God.
   A. The "Good News" announces that God's love and grace are far greater than man's sin.
   B. The "Good News" affirms that the struggle with sin has been won by Christ, who will deliver His people from their wretched personal war (v 24).
   C. The "Good News" leads the struggling believer to live thankfully and with devotion for a Savior who strengthens him (v 25).

Conclusion: With an increase in faith comes a heightened awareness of the demands of the law and an intensified struggle between flesh and spirit for the believer's heart. This "civil war" is both frustrating and debilitating, a true "body of death!" The eternally encouraging truth is that it is Christ who can and will deliver us from it. His love is greater than our sin!

David E. Seybold
Fredonia, Wisconsin

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 8:18-25

August 2, 1987

The lessons for the Eighth and Ninth Sundays after Pentecost are from the same sub-section in Romans 8. Verses 18 to 25 form a unit which treats of the creation and man, respectively, awaiting the fruition of hope; verses 26-27 treat of the Holy Spirit's help to the saints in keeping the hope alive. Verse 17 is a transition which anticipates the whole argument. In the time of the present indwelling of God's Spirit in us previous to the realization of our future inheritance, we live with an indebtedness to the Spirit. The Spirit continuously assures us of being God's children and of our future lot by crying, "Abba Father." This is the "internal witness" of the Holy Spirit to our human spirit (vv 12-16).

A new factor enters—suffering! In verses 17-18 our glorification is juxtaposed with suffering. Verse 17 does not state a condition, but rather a circumstance (as in v 9): "seeing that we suffer with Him now (or for His sake), that we may enjoy the glory of the final consumation." Hence, our present state of suffering is contrasted with our future hope of glory. The Holy Spirit gives to us the gift of hope in the midst of present suffering.

Romans 8:18-25 will hardly be properly understood unless the poetic quality displayed in it, especially in verses 19-23, be recognized. Its outward structure but more so its inner quality of imagination, feeling, sympathy, and breadth of vision is poetic. All of creation is portrayed as being in sympathy with the believer and with the Holy Spirit in "groaning" while awaiting the revealing of the sons of God (vv 22,23,26). Paul's source is not Jewish apocalyptic nor Stoic literature, though he could cite from these traditions and is possibly appealing to people's knowledge of the imagery of Stoic cosmologies and Eastern apocalypses. He is personifying the entire cosmos. After all, the Evangelists report that at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus a great earthquake occurred and the graves of many saints opened (Mt 27:52-54; 28:2; cf. Ps 65:12f; Is 24:4,7; Jr 4:28; 14:4).

A final word about the use of some terms in this section would be in order. The most difficult and variously used is *ktisis* (vv 19, 20, 21,22). The only probable interpretation is that it refers to the sum-total of sub-human nature both animate and inanimate. So the translation "the creation" or "the created universe" is preferred to "creature." The word "earnest expectation" or "confident hope," *apokaradokia* (v 19), used elsewhere only in Philippians 1:20 in the New Testament, is an intensely poetic term, giving the picture of "craning forward with the neck and head." The use of the phrase "in hope" in verse 20 is different from its use in verse 24. In the former it points to the creation after the promise of Genesis 3:15 had been given. The "in hope" of verse 24 is a "modal dative" in that it expresses not the means by which we are saved, but the mode: "we are saved by Christ in a condition in which we have hope." Luther's rendering is right: "Denn wir sind wohl selig, doch in der Hoffnung." The difficult expression "inexpressibly groanings" of verse 26 will be discussed below in the outline. Its history of interpretation from the second century on is interesting, but not apropos to the sermon.

Introduction: Hope and despair are all around us. Contrast them in these lines: An ancient epitaph in Asia Minor reads, "Here lies Dionysius of Tarsus, sixty years old, having never married; I wish my father hadn't either"; while Paul says, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" (Php 1:21). Someone in *South Pacific* sings of being "struck like a dope with a thing called hope"; while Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pe 1:3). Yes, the Christian has hope, and this hope exists in the context of suffering and pain. (Thus, verses 17 and 18 are themselves an introduction for the sermon.)

The Spirit Keeps Hope Alive Amidst Suffering

I. The content of hope (vv 18, 19, 21, 23b).
   A. We are God's children (v 19).
      1. Our sonship is still veiled. Our incognito status is recognizable only to faith. That is why all creation is standing on tiptoes "awaiting the revelation of the sons of God" (v 19).
      2. But we are real children of God. That is why the creation groans as it waits; even so Christians groan while they await their adoption. We have put on the righteousness and the life of Christ in our baptism (Ro 6:1-11), and we are already children of God, though not yet manifest (1 Jn 3:1-3; cf. Ga 3:26ff).
   B. We have an inheritance.
      1. Our inheritance, though real, is also concealed (vv 17, 23-25).
      2. With faith we, like Abraham of old, already see our inheritance allotted to us because we are "joint-heirs with Christ" (v 17).
      3. The Holy Spirit keeps hope alive in spite of the suffering around us (vv 18, 20), because it is the very nature of the Spirit's indwelling that He holds before us what we do not and cannot see now (vv 24-25).

II. The present painful context of hope.
   A. The sufferings of the present time in nature (v 18).
      1. All creation is groaning because it has been subjected to vanity and frustration. This subjection occurred when God said, "Cursed be the ground for thy sake" (Gn 3:17-19). Note the mutability and mortality of everything.
      2. All creation has been subjected "to vanity" (v 20) and a "slavery to moral corruption" (v 21). It includes the slavery to the "weak and beggarly elements" (Ga 4:9) and to the futility, disorder, and absurdity of things of which Ecclesiastes speaks. The whole subhuman creation has been subjected to the frustration of not being able to fulfill its purpose, to glorify God.
      3. As Christians enlightened by the Word, we understand that the basis of the suffering and enslavement of creation is sin. The Gospel promise of Genesis 3:15 was followed immediately by the curses of Genesis 3:16-19.
   B. The sufferings of the present time in the Christians (v 23).
      1. God has given us the pledge of the Holy Spirit. He is the "Guarantee" (2 Cor 5:5).
      2. As the creation groans while it waits, so the Christians groan while they await their adoption.
      3. The object of our expectation is the redemption of our bodies (v 23). This expression must refer to our own resurrection at the parousia. That, at least, is the final liberation (1 Cor 15:54; Php 3:21).

Conclusion: Is it worth the wait, the groaning, the suffering? God does not, and cannot, deceive us. He has promised that the "unseen things" for which

we hope are far better than even our fondest expectations. There where there is "fulness of joy" and "pleasures forever" (Ps 16:11) is a worthy hope which the Holy Spirit alone can keep alive in us.

G. Waldemar Degner

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 8:26-27

August 9, 1987

Introduction: We have heard about the "groaning" of nature and about the "groaning" of the believer; now we come to the "speechless groaning" of the Spirit of God in us. The obvious picture is that of a little infant who is totally dependent on its parents. We are completely dependent on God, even in our life of prayer and intercession. Our text tells us why we are helpless, and then from where our help comes.

The Holy Spirit Helps Our Weaknesses

I. We are weak, even when we are praying; we need help (v 26).
   A. We do not know "how to pray," nor even "what to pray"—though we are God's children (v 26a).
      1. Some try to practice glossolalia (1 Cor 12-14), but this effort is not the same as "inexpressible groanings." True glossolalia was a special gift given only to some in apostolic times, not to all Christians.
      2. The text (v 26) means that Christians do not know "what they are to pray." The emphasis is not on the art of prayer (how), nor on the object of intercession, but on the very content of our prayer. This lack of knowledge is a weakness indeed. In this context "the Spirit helps our weakness." The word "help" is found elsewhere only in Luke 10:40 where Martha wants Jesus to ask Mary to help her in the kitchen. So here the thought is broader than just intercessory prayer. The Spirit, rather, helps in all our needs.
      3. The Holy Spirit is our Helper. This is perhaps the best translation for "Paraclete," as used in John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7. The NASB and the NKJV adopt that translation. In the context of John, the Holy Spirit helps us in our witness, in our encouragement, in teaching and leading, and even in admonishing the world through us. Paul and John are very close in their teaching on the Holy Spirit.

II. Though we are weak, we are also God's saints (v 27).
   A. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts (see 1 Sm 16:7; 1 Kgs 8:39; Ps 7:9; 17:3; 26:2; 44:21; 139:1,2,23; Pr 15:11; Jr 17:10; Ac 1:24; 15:8).
   B. The Spirit cleanses and renews the heart, fills it with God's love (Ro 5:5) and leads us to the throne room of God where "we have access to His grace" (Ro 5:2; cf. Eph 3:12).

Conclusion: We are God's saints, made holy through the blood of Christ Jesus. The direction of the Spirit's ministry in the entire eighth chapter of Romans is "in behalf of the saints." Here is a great vicarious concept by which the Holy Spirit, through the Word, holds before our eyes the self-sacrifice of Jesus for us. Here is the help in weakness that we need.

G. Waldemar Degner

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 8:28-30

August 16, 1987

From pure maple syrup to pure gold, the qualifier pure connotes that which is the finest, the richest, that which is of the highest quality. The text is pure Gospel. It presents to us some of the best news to be found anywhere in the Holy Scripture. This text should intoxicate the believer's heart with the love of God in Christ. It speaks powerfully about both sanctification and justification. Verse 28 highlights the ongoing work of God in the life of a believer, which without exception has as its goal that which is good. Verses 29 and 30 set forth the eternal call and love of God as it is manifested in the believer's life from before the cradle to after the grave.

Introduction: The psalmist in Psalm 19:1 states, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork." St. Paul in our text in essence states that you, the people of God, also declare the glory of God and show forth His handiwork.

We Are the Handiwork of God

I. We are the handiwork of God because He made us to be His own (vv 29-30).
   A. God determined to make us His own.
      1. He foreknew us (v 29).
      2. He predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son (v 29).
   B. God unilaterally made us to be His own (v 30).
      1. He called us.
      2. He justified us.
      3. He glorifies us.

II. We are the handiwork of God because He consistently works in our life for good (v 28).
   A. God works for good in every experience of our life.
      1. God is not absent from any of our experiences (Ps 121; Mt 10:30).
      2. God's purpose is to weave our life into a tapestry of His design.
   B. God often works for good in our life behind the scenes of our current awareness.
      1. We cannot read the mind of God (Ro 11:33-34).
      2. God's ways are not our ways (Is 55:8,9).

Conclusion: God made us to be His own. He works consistently in our lives to accomplish His good purpose. Truly we are the handiwork of God.

Mark R. Oien
Bedford, Massachusetts

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 8:35-38

August 23, 1987

We live in a world where separations can be a hurtful reality. With one out of every two new marriages ending in divorce, with a record number of children being raised in broken homes, with a fluid society where family members move from coast to coast and beyond, with strong polarities in politics and religion, with growing stress between labor and management, with farmers being torn from their land, separation and its pain is no stranger to the human condition. Into a world of separation comes our text which speaks unequivocally and forcefully of the unbreakable union established by God in Christ with every believer. In an age of insecurity and anxiety about the stability and permanence of relationships, St. Paul anchors us firmly in the unchanging commitment of God to love us in Christ. The hearers should walk away from their encounter with this text steadied in their faith and convinced that, indeed, nothing in all creation is able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

We Are More Than Conquerors

I. We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (v 37); God's love for us is centered in the cross.
   A. From the cross He forgives us.
   B. From the cross He empowers us.

II. We are more than conquerors because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (v 39).
   A. Earthly trials cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (v 35).
      1. Earthly trials may separate us from the things we love.
      2. Earthly trials may even separate us from the people we love.
      3. However, earthly trials can never separate us from the God who loves us.
   B. Spiritual trials cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (v 38).
      1. Spiritual trials may assail our soul.
      2. However, spiritual trials can never separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion: Because of Him who loves us and because nothing can separate us from His love, truly we are more than conquerors!

Mark R. Oien
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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 9:1-5

August 30, 1987

Paul begins by asserting with great emphasis his sorrow over Israel. Having, for the most part , rejected their Messiah, the Jews are without hope, for through unbelief they have forfeited their inheritance. Paul's sorrow is great for he is of the same race and loves them greatly. The text builds to a crescendo as it enumerates God's blessings upon Israel and reaches its climax in verse 5 as it points to the incarnation of the Son of God "who is God over everything." Obviously the text loses a great deal of its power and the meaning is substantially changed if one follows a translation which in verse 5 deprives Jesus of His deity. The traditional translation attributing divinity to Jesus provides a more natural translation and fits well into the general context.

Introduction: God in the flesh! It sounds like a contradiction of terms. How can we even speak of the eternal, almighty, and holy God in the same breath as we speak of mortal, weak, and sinful human beings? But the Word of God reveals to us the greatest wonder of all time—the Son of God in the flesh, but even more, for all flesh.

In the Flesh and for the Flesh

I. God in the flesh.
   A. The Word became flesh (Jn 1:14).
      1. The Word did not simply appear to become flesh (docetism).
      2. This flesh was not simply a man filled in a special way with God's Spirit and blessed with God's favor (adoptionism).
      3. According to Paul, the man Jesus was God over everything, blessed forever (v 5).
   B. The Word became Jewish flesh.
      1. The Jews were God's children (v 4).
      3. Theirs were the promises of the Christ (v 4).
      3. From them according to the flesh came Christ (v 5).

II. God for the flesh.
   A. The Word did not become flesh simply as a "statement" on God's part of His loving nature.
   B. The promises (v 4) made to God's children were to assure them that a Savior was coming for them.

C. Christ, the anointed one who came in the flesh (v 5), was anointed for a purpose.
   1. He was anointed to take the place of all flesh in judgment (Is 53:3-5).
   2. He was anointed to bear and take away the sins of all flesh (Jn 1:29).
   3. He was anointed to bestow everlasting life on all who believe in Him (Jn 11:25-26).

III. God and the flesh.
   A. Although Christ, according to the flesh, came from Israel, Israel rejected the testimony of the Spirit concerning Christ.
   B. The flesh without the Spirit "profiteth nothing" (Jn 6:63).
   C. We were not born God's children according to the flesh (Ps 51:5).
   D. The glory, the covenant, the law, the worship, the promises are not ours according to the flesh (v 4).
   E. We become God's children when the Spirit brings us to faith in Christ (Tt 3:5).
   F. As God's children through faith, we have become the true Israel and the inheritance is ours (Ro 5:6-8).

Conclusion: God's invitation extends to all without exception; God's promise is made for all; God's love is offered to all flesh. For in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Ga 3:28).

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THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

September 6, 1987

The key to this entire discourse of Paul is clearly verse 32, which sums up all of Paul's previous thoughts in this chapter. The point Paul makes is that no one, in and of himself, is able to make any claim upon God. Regardless of station, race, etc., all are disobedient and without God's grace are "bound" in disobedience. (A review of Luther's *Bondage of the Will* would be helpful in preparing to preach on this text.) But God's mercy is also universal. This text, especially verse 32, is an excellent application of both Law and Gospel. It should be noted that the Greek word translated by the KJV as "conclude" actually means "to lock up together."

Introduction: Everyone likes to consider himself unique in one way or another. Whether you are a rich man, poor man, beggar-man, thief, doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief, whether you are a farmer, a businessman, a housewife, a teacher, a student, or a pastor, you probably would not appreciate hearing someone say about you and all the others in your profession or station, "You're all the same."

We do not want to be the same as everyone else. We like to think that somehow we are special, we are different, we are not simply a carbon copy of somebody, of everybody else. But Paul presents us with a striking statement in his Epistle to the Romans. He tells us that before God we are truly all the same. None of us is unique or special. There is no difference at all.

There Is No Difference

I. There is no difference between sinners (v 32a).
   A. All have sinned and have failed in God's sight (Ro 3:23).
   B. All are bound in slavery to sin and in disobedience (v 32).
      1. The Jews have disobeyed (vv 30-31).
         a. They sinned against God (forty years in the wilderness).
         b. They did not believe God (the murder of the prophets, the rejection of the Messiah).
      2. The Gentiles have disobeyed (v 30).
         a. They were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1).
         b. They did not believe (they worshipped false gods).
      3. We have disobeyed.
         a. We have broken God's law (sins of commission).
         b. We have ignored God's commandments (sins of omission).
         c. We have not always trusted completely in Him and in His Word.
   C. Neither the Jews nor the Gentiles nor we can break out of the prison in which we are bound by reason of our sin.
      1. The Jews who had the law and the promises failed.
      2. The Gentiles who did not have the law and the promises failed.
      3. If left to ourselves, we, too, must fail (Ro 7:18-24).

II. There is no difference between sinners before God (v 32b).
   A. The Son of God has come for all.
      1. He lived a life of obedience for all (active obedience).
      2. He died and was punished for sin in the place of all (passive obedience).
   B. The Son of God stands before God in the place of all ("Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness," etc.).
   C. God's mercy is extended to all.
      1. Our salvation has been accomplished (Jn 19:30).
      2. Our sins have been forgiven (2 Cor 5:19).
      3. Heaven is offered (Jn 3:16).

Conclusion: There is no difference. Without Christ we are bound. We lie under the curse of God and are lost. But also from another perspective there is no difference. In Christ we have mercy. We are holy and righteous in God's eyes. Our sins are forgiven. We can say:

Since Christ hath full atonement made and brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad and build on this foundation.
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead, Thy death is now my life, indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom.

Daniel O. S. Preus
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FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 11:33-36

September 13, 1987

The text forms a doxology which fittingly concludes St. Paul's discussion (9:1-11:36) of God's role in Israel's rejection of the Christ. Paul notes how God "has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens" (9:18), but he emphasizes how God makes disobedience to His Law serve the overarching purpose of His grace in Christ. Gentiles, though formerly disobedient to God, have now received God's mercy through faith in Christ. God has brought them salvation by means of the testimony of the remnant in Israel. Similarly, Jews, though presently disobedient to God, having rejected Christ, will later receive God's mercy through faith in Christ. God will offer them salvation through the testimony of the New Israel. It is God who works all in all, for the good of all. This fact evokes the doxology.

The pericope is structured as *chiasmus* (inverted correspondence) and, thus understood, readily suggests the structure and content for the sermon. In verse 33a, riches, wisdom, and knowledge are the individual members of the chiasm (and should be translated coordinately, as in the RSV). Paul stresses how God alone possesses each of these things by asking successive rhetorical questions—in verse 34a about knowledge, in 34b about wisdom, and in 35 about riches. Paul's threefold ascription to God (v 36a) again reflects the pattern—all things are from God (out of His riches), through God (established through His wisdom), and to God (brought to God by His all-actualizing knowledge).

Introduction: Probably the most difficult and thought-provoking questions begin with the simple, little word, "why." Because we want to understand what is going on around us, we often ask, "Why?" But there are times when why-questions should not be asked. A soldier in the heat of a battle must simply trust his commander and obey his orders; he does not ask why. A child must learn to trust his parents and to obey them, even without asking why. And for all people there is a time when why-questions should never be asked: the time when God speaks. When God says that He has brought us His riches, wisdom, and knowledge in Christ, we do not ask why. St. Paul tells us in our text,

Let God Be God!

I. Consider His riches (v 33a).
   A. No one has first given anything to God, so as to have it repaid to him (v 35).
      1. Some think they have given God "their lives" and therefore deserve help from God.
      2. But God says no one has given Him anything (Job 41:11).
   B. Nonetheless, God freely gives us all that we are and have (v 36a).
      1. As a potter gives his clay a form, God has given us a form (Is 64:8).
      2. As a potter forms his clay with a certain purpose, God has formed us with a certain purpose (Ro 9:23a).

Let God be God! Do not presume to ask for what you think you deserve. Instead, trust in God's inexhaustible riches, which He freely gives in Christ. Consider the depth of His riches.

II. Consider His wisdom (v 33a).
   A. No one has ever counseled God on the way He considers and judges all things (v 34b).
      1. Some, in effect, try to advise God on how He should consider or judge people: "God would never condemn to hell a person who did not believe in Jesus, if he never had a chance to hear about Jesus." "God must take into consideration how hard a person tries to do what is right."
      2. But God says that no one counsels Him. His judicial verdicts are His own. God's judgments are "inscrutable" (v 33b), incapable of being searched out or understood.
   B. Nonetheless, through His eternal wisdom, God established salvation for us (v 36a). By His Law (part of His wisdom) God has judged all to be disobedient (v 32a).

Let God be God! Do not presume to call into question how God judges people. Instead, accept His wisdom—His Law and His Gospel. Repent of your disobedience, and trust in Christ for your salvation. Consider the depth of His wisdom.

III. Consider His knowledge (v 33a).
   A. No one has ever measured God's mind (v 34a).
      1. Some think that they have understood God's mind. They "know" why God allows suffering—to punish certain sins. They "know" why God saves some and damns others—those whom He saves are better people, or they resist the Holy Spirit less.
      2. But God says that no one has measured His mind. The "why" behind God's actions and conduct remains hidden to man (Ps 77:19; v 33c).
      3. Those who try to measure God's mind are playing God. God's thoughts are far above man's thoughts.
   B. Nonetheless, by His perfect knowledge, God actually brings us to Himself (v 36a).
      1. God's knowledge of us is complete, down to the minutest details of our changing bodies (Mt 10:30), our secret actions (Mt 6:6), and our deepest needs (Mt 6:8). Most especially, He knows us as His own people.
      2. Because He has also foreknown us as His own, He has called us by the Gospel to believe in Christ as our way to God. "For those whom He has foreknown. . .these He has also called" (Ro 8:29,30). That is the way God brings us to Himself. ". . .and these He has also glorified" (Ro 8:30).

Let God be God! Do not presume to measure God's mind. Instead, depend on His perfect knowledge of you. He has foreknown you as His own and in that foreknowledge has called you to believe in Jesus. Consider the depth of His knowledge.

Conclusion: "To Him be the glory forever" (v 36b). Out of His great riches and wisdom and knowledge, He has condescended to save us in Christ Jesus. Let God be God!

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FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 12:1-8

September 20, 1987

Having just expounded the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, whereby God brings salvation to disobedient sinners, St. Paul turns to the topic (12:1-15:13) of how Christians should then live. Verses 1 and 2 introduce this section and stress the element of change in the Christian's life. The earthly desire to follow the sinful world must give way to the inner, spiritual desire to say yes to God's good will. In verses 3-8 Paul gives his first practical example of what this Christian transformation looks like. Arrogance becomes out of place (v 3a). All grounds for false pride are removed when one considers that callings and abilities (e.g., vv 6b-8) are gifts from God, given out of His grace (vv 3a,6a). Furthermore, "God has divided up to each a measure of faith" (v 3b). God intends differences in calling and ability, and He desires that Christians exercise their faith in different ways. (Bultmann: "As *pistis* individualizes itself into specific attitudes, so divine *charis* individualizes itself into specific gifts of grace.") Finally, Paul appeals to the illustration of the body and its members (vv 4-5) to show that there is no room for arrogance in the church. The body is one, and all its various members are complementary.

Introduction: Many people enjoy playing an occasional game of cards. Depending on the game, certain cards are usually considered better or more valuable than others. But inherently no one card has any more or any less value than any other card. This was made clear on June 4, 1977, when Carter Cummins built a house of cards with fifty-one levels which stood nine-and-a-half feet tall. He used 2,206 playing cards, and every card was vital to the structure of the house. To have thought, for example, that a king was more valuable than a two, or that a three was less valuable than a queen, would have been foolish. Yet that kind of foolish thinking sometimes arises in the church. Some may think of themselves as being better or more valuable members, while others may think of themselves as being worse or less valuable. The reasons vary. One is either a leader or "just a follower." One is either well-to-do or "just average." One is either knowledgeable and experienced or "just a beginner." But in today's text St. Paul brings good news to those who have viewed themselves as less than others and a warning to those who hav viewed themselves as more important than others. He tells us that

God Values All Christians the Same

I. God has made all Christians one in Christ.
   A. God had compassion on us through Christ.
      1. Each of us at times has thought too highly of himself (v 31).
      2. Christ suffered also for our sin of pride. We have received the "compassion of God" (v 1) instead of the punishment deserved.
   B. God has united us through faith in Christ.
      1. Through faith we Christians are one body in Christ (vv 4a,5a). This body is the holy Christian Church.
      2. Through faith we Christians are individually members one of another (vv 4a,5b). We have a stake in what happens to one another.

God has shown how highly He regards each of us by giving the gift of faith. Out of His grace, He gives Christians yet other gifts.

II. God gives all Christians spiritual gifts.
   A. God Himself individualizes His grace into specific gifts.
      1. His gifts are according to the "grace given"(vv 3a,6a), not merit (vv 6b-8).
      2. He has forgotten no one. He gives certain callings and abilities to each member of the body (vv 4b,6a), according to what He knows is best (1 Cor 12:18).
      3. Therefore, arrogant thinking must give way to sensible thinking (v 3a).
   B. God commissions Christians to work together for Him by using these gifts.
      1. He tells us how important our individual gifts are. God divides up the work (v 3b) and gives us each a vital part.
      2. He tells us how to use our gifts. We are to recognize our God-given callings and abilities and to utilize these strengths in the work of the church (vv 6-8 give examples).
      3. He tells us how they work together. We are complementary members of the one body of Christ (vv 4-5).

Conclusion: God values all Christians in the same high way. He has brought them together through faith in Christ's suffering, He gives each of them special gifts, and He commissions them to work together using these gifts. Truly, in the church, God has a place for everyone, and everyone is in God's place.

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SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 13:1-10

September 27, 1987

There are several problems of grammar and thought in this text. Three stand

out. (1.) What is the meaning of *hypotassesthoo* in verse 1? It is often assumed that it means "to obey," but the evidence for this is sketchy (cf. Liddell and Scott), and drawn, in the main, from the New Testament itself. It is probably better to see its meaning as "to be subject to." In the words of Cranfield (ICC, *Romans II*, 662): "in the NT *hypotassesthai tini* can denote the recognition that the other person, as Christ's representative to one, has an infinitely greater claim upon one than one has upon oneself and the conduct which flows naturally from such a recognition." This principle applies to the state as well as to individuals, and does not mean an uncritical obedience of every command of the state, for "the final arbiter of what constitutes *hypotassesthai* in a particular situation is not the civil authority but God." (2.) How do we handle the apparent difficulty in verse three that Paul seems not to allow for the fact that the state might be unjust, rewarding that which is evil and punishing that which is good? One explanation is that Paul had such overwhelmingly good experiences with the Roman authorities that such a possibility never occurred to him. This idea seems unlikely, considering his own experiences (cf. Ac 16:22ff.) and the experience of his Lord. It may be better to see this verse as saying that the state, whether it knows it or not, will, in fact, honor the Christian even if it intends (improperly) to punish him, for he will be honored by God (either here or in eternity); while if the Christian does evil, he will be punished, even if temporarily he seems to be honored. This is not an easy verse to handle completely satisfactorily. (3.) The verb *teleite* in verse 6 is almost surely an indicative mood form and not an imperative (though in theory it could be either). Note the *gar* after *dia touto*, which renders an imperative extremely unlikely

The Paradoxical State of the Christian

I. In bondage to everyone, including sin.
   A. Man is a (fallen) creature.
      1. He is centrifugal, designed to love and serve God and to love and serve his neighbor.
      2. Our creaturely obligations extend beyond the religious sphere to include the political.
         a. We have obligations to the state, established by God.
         b. Therefore, we ought to be subject, for it is both God-pleasing and useful.
      3. Since the fall man is centripetal, self-centered and turned away from both God and neighbor alike.
   B. The Law of God is a mirror which shows us our sin, holding up to our vision the loving service for which we were designed.
   C. A summary of the Law is useful: "Love is the fulfilling of the Law."
      1. It keeps us from getting caught up in "keeping the rules."
      2. It is factual: love does fulfill all obligations, because love does no harm to anyone but seeks the other's welfare.

II. Free from bondage, including sin.
   A. In God's Son is full perfection and fulfilment of all the requirements of God.
      1. God's Son loved perfectly—for us.
      2. God's Son lived perfectly—for us.
      3. God's Son fulfilled the will of God perfectly—for us.

B. In Him we see the contours of how love fulfills the whole Law.

James W. Voelz

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 14:5-9

October 4, 1987

In this text Paul is addressing the problem, not of varying beliefs within a congregation, but of the difficulties encountered by Christians from differing religious backgrounds as they seek to live together (the same problem addressed by the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15). The problem is not that which Paul encountered in Galatia, where some felt that certain works were needed to supplement faith for salvation. Rather, some (the "eaters") felt that, since the Christ had come, who was the goal and substance of the Old Testament laws, the portions of the Torah which we often characterize as "ceremonial laws' no longer needed to be obeyed. Others (those who did not eat, the "weak") felt that their response of faith to Jesus Christ included continued obedience to all Old Covenant laws, though not in the sense (cf. Galatia) that such observance earned salvation before their God. There is a great similarity in both vocabulary and thought between Romans 14:1-15:13 and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 (the chapters dealing with food sacrificed to idols). The problem in Romans is probably more general, however, since otherwise it would be odd that Paul in Romans would never use the word *eidoolodytos* even one time. (Also, there is the matter of the observance of "days.") Cranfield (ICC, *Romans II*, 697) is probably right when he observes that *pistis* (cf. also *pisteuoo*) in this section means neither *fides qua* nor *fides quae* but "confidence" to take a certain course of action.

Living Together As Christians

I. Living together in Christ: the problem.
   A. In the early church Gentile and Jewish believers often clashed.
      1. Gentiles made no distinction between what could and could not be eaten (v 6), in the observance of days (v 5), etc.
      2. Many Jewish believers (the "weak") were bound to old ways and found it difficult to give up observance of dietary laws, special days, etc. (vv 5,6).
   B. Today this problem can often arise in our own midst, especially with converts from other denominations or with people from strict "blue laws" backgrounds.
      1. Lutherans can be very "antinomian" in life-style.
      2. Converts may be bound to beliefs assumed to be biblical: abstinence from alcohol, work on Sunday, dancing, card playing, etc.

II. Living together: the solution.
  A. Theory.
    1. We are the Lord's faithful slaves.
      a. We all belong to the Lord (v 4).
      b. We all live to the Lord (v 8).
    2. Therefore, we all are equal before the Lord.
  B. Practice.
    1. Because we are the Lord's, each should and can be convinced in his own mind concerning his course of action (v 5).
    2. Because we are the Lord's, each should and can be tolerant of the other (vv 1-3).

III. The overarching truth (v 9).
  A. Jesus died and rose again to forgive all breaking of all rules and regulations.
  B. Jesus died and rose again to fulfill all rules and regulations.
  C. Jesus died and rose again so that our life might be in Him, conformed not to laws but to His loving will.

James W. Voelz

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Philippians 1:1-5 (6-11), 19-27

October 11, 1987

The faithful undershepherd concerns himself with joyous living of the flock entrusted to him. To show them abundant life he must first deal with their fear of death. The epistles for the next four Sundays give us preachers opportunity to present Paul's joy of living in Christ in times of trouble and death.

Introduction: A hundred years before Paul sat in jail an important battle was fought near Philippi. On one side was the army of Antony and Octavian, on the other the forces of Brutus and Cassius. That battle determined the fate of an empire and Octavian became Caesar Augustus. Paul wrote of a more important battle. Today the Holy Spirit, through Paul, urges us:

Living or Dying, Advance the Cause of Christ

I. Would your death advance the cause of Christ?
  A. Many Christians do not like to talk about death. We have two fears: death itself and the process of dying. We know that God "has begun a good work in us;" yet our old natures and the devil cause us to doubt He will "carry it on to completion." We hear that "to die is gain" and yet we have no personal experience of it. We confess that "to depart and be with Christ is far better;" but we fear the unknown.

B. Death is a time of transition for family and friends as well as for the one who dies. The details surrounding your death will give you a wonderful opportunity to witness to people who are especially open to the Gospel.
   1. We want to "set our house" in order by writing a last will and testament. Here is a wonderful opportunity to include a Christian preamble.
   2. Now is the time to make sure that your funeral will witness to your faith in Jesus as your Savior who died on the cross for you and rose again. Surely you want to discuss with your pastor the hymns and the text of your resurrection celebration.

Some people avoid thinking about wills and funerals because they think such talk is morbid. How much better it is to make your own final arrangements as a plan for living today.

II. Does your living advance the cause of Christ?
   A. Live by means of the Gospel (v 5).
      1. You have received the grace of God—in the worship service of the church, in family devotions, in baptism, in Sunday School, in your personal study of the Word.
      2. Let that love in you abound more and more in knowledge and insight (v 9). Paul's prayer of joy celebrated total stewardship by the Philippians. We too show the effect of the Gospel on our lives, not only in the use of our pocketbooks, but also 168 hours a week, even in routine everyday activities.
   B. Live worthy of the Gospel (v 27).
      1. Live worthy of Jesus, not to gain salvation, but because you already have it!
      2. Live worthy of the Gospel by standing firm in one spirit. Put aside the internal dissension that troubles some congregations. Rather, reach out to your community with one mind, the mind of Christ.

Conclusion: At the death of a life-long church member, a fellow office worker said, "I never knew he was Christian!" God forbid that such a charge should ever be laid to us. To advance the cause of Christ in your dying, advance His cause in your living.

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NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Philippians 2:5-11

October 18, 1987

Introduction: People usually try to excuse themselves by placing the blame on other people [cite some current examples]. Where we try to place the blame on others, the Holy Spirit through St. Paul urges us to

Take the Mind of Christ

I. The "mind of Christ" does not grasp (vv 5-6).
   A. People of the world are forever grasping at excuses.
      1. The child says, "Mommy is making me cry because she won't let me have my way!"
      2. Adam blamed Eve, even God, for his own sin (Gn 3:12).
   B. Our attitude is to be the same as Jesus'—not grasping. Remember who Jesus was (Jn 1:1; 2 Cor 4:4b)! Yet He did not think that His divine attributes were something to be exploited to His own advantage (Ro 15:3).

But it runs against our nature not to grab all we can (cf. Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed; Ro 8:3).

II. The "mind of Christ" comes from Jesus' obedience (vv 5-8).
   A. Jesus willingly died for you (Jn 10:18a; Mt 26:39b,42b; 2 Cor 8:9; Mt 20:28). It had to be this way (He 2:17).
   B. Perhaps we can get some idea of Jesus' attitude by remembering the little girl who had a beautiful mother with scarred hands; those hands had been burned saving the baby girl from fire.
   C. Jesus offered more than His hands for you (Ro 5:19). He rose with a glorified body, yet marked in hands, feet, and side. Even today the only man-made things in heaven are the scars He wears for you.

In those scars we find power to take the mind of Christ.

III. The "mind of Christ" comes from spending time with Him (vv 9-11).
   A. The newly-hired office boy was told to spend his days following the bank president. As the wise man went about his work, the boy listened and observed. Just by being with him, the boy became like the important man.
   B. You take the mind of Christ as you fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 45:23b. Bow your knee and confess with your tongue (He 12:2). Daily rehearse your baptismal and confirmation vows; daily review the passion of our Lord; daily invest time in the love letter He sends you; daily bow your knee and make daily confession your continual attitude.

Conclusion: In a hostile world, Jesus did not blame anybody. Rather than blaming someone else, He volunteered to take your blame. Now you need not take the blame before God because you are forgiven in Jesus. You need not place the blame on other people because they are forgiven in Jesus. Living daily in Christ, you take the mind of Christ. Jesus promises rest from placing the blame elsewhere (Mt 11:29).

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TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Philippians 3:12-21

October 25, 1987

The first part of chapter three serves as a prelude to the section under consideration. Paul was concerned that his friends at Philippi might follow the example of people who had perverted the Gospel. The Gospel had been perverted by two different ideas of Christian perfection. "Perfection" to some (3:2-5) was having a status under the law that was impeccable. "Perfection" to the others (3:18,19) was freedom to use everything in creation as they pleased. "Perfection," according to the Gospel, however, actually consists in being transformed in mind and body into the likeness of Christ. This perfection will not become a reality in this life. Paul, therefore, makes perfection a goal, not to be earned, but for which we are to strive, the ultimate prize that Jesus will give to those who are in Him.

Introduction: Christians are very often engaged in vigorous competition. Frequently, however, it is competition with each other to see who is the best, the most authentic, or the largest in number. This kind of competition separates, tears down, and even creates enemies. Paul did not appreciate a competitive Christianity which tore people apart and perverted the Gospel. Yet Paul knew how important a competitive spirit was in attaining the final prize. His kind of competitive spirit is our goal as we hear Paul's word for us today.

Competitive Christianity

I. We need to eliminate "earthly" competition.
   A. One form of "earthly" competition is based on a legal scorecard.
      1. "Perfection" would mean that a Christian would have to have perfect credentials (3:4,5).
      2. "Perfection" would mean that a Christian would have to have kept the law completely (3:6, "legalistic righteousness").
      3. "Perfection" would mean that a Christian would have to show overflowing zeal (3:6).
   B. Another form of "earthly" competition is based on unrestricted freedom.
      1. "Perfection" would mean an uninhibited fulfilment of our wants (3:19).
      2. "Perfection" would mean the elimination of sin by stating that wrong is good (3:19).
      3. "Perfection" would mean the secularization of religious concern (3:19).
   C. This kind of competition will end in loss.
      1. Christ would not be our Savior, for we should be trying to save ourselves.
      2. Christ—like behavior would not result.
      3. Our competition would end in separation from God and separation from others.

II. We need "heavenly" competition.
  A. It is reaching for a promise (3:12).
    1. Christ took hold of me for a purpose (3:12).
    2. Christ took hold of me so I may have Him (3:7).
    3. Christ took hold of me to transform me into His likeness (3:21).
  B. It is striving for a prize.
    1. The prize is resurrection (3:11).
    2. The prize is heaven (3:14).
    3. The prize is transformation (3:21).
  C. It is the hope of winning that spurs us on.
    1. It is moving ahead, not looking back (3:13).
    2. It is moving toward a goal (3:14).
    3. It is to experience the purpose of God's call (3:14).

Conclusion: So let us stop competing against each other, using false standards. Rather, let us compete against the lure of Satan and world to win the prize. Let us do everything in the Lord!

David Schlie
Fort Wayne, Indiana

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Philippians 4:4-13

November 1, 1987

The key word in this selection is "rejoice." Not only is this word thematic for the letter; it is also one of Paul's concluding imperatives (3:2). In this third chapter "rejoice in the Lord" stands in contrast to one of Paul's main concerns. That concern is that God's people should not put their confidence in their status under the law. In effect, Paul is saying, "rejoice in the Lord, not in your legal status." Paul is directing the emphasis toward being "in the Lord" rather than in being legally right. In chapter four Paul uses the phrase again. This time, however, the phrase is used not in contrast to a false status, but in harmony with actions and attitudes which flow from union with Christ. Rejoicing then, is expressed in forbearance, lack of anxiety, prayer, and thanksgiving. From these flow the "peace of God." All of the above produce a positive, Christ-like way of thinking and acting. It is the "mind of Christ" at work in the believer.

Introduction: Living in the Lord is the manner in which we must approach life in this world. Unfortunately we sinful humans work too hard at living in earthly ways rather than in heavenly. Rejoice, for in the Lord we can already begin a heaven-like way of living on earth.

Living in the Lord

I. Sorrow and separation are the results of an earth-bent life.
  A. Contention and hostility are the fruits of living like earthbound people (4:2).

1. Families break up because people pursue a self-centered life.
2. Churches become places of contention and factionalism because too many are not concerned about each other.
3. Neighborhoods deteriorate because few care about the problems that exist.

B. Anxiety and stress become common ailments among earthbound people (4:6).
1. Breakups reduce security and cause fear.
2. Relationships are strained, causing stress.
3. Mental and physical health break down because of anxiety, and poor health causes the cycle to get worse.

C. Immorality is judged healthy by earthly—minded people (4:8).
1. What is dirty is thought to be clean.
2. What is degrading is thought to be advanced thinking.
3. What is ugly is pictured as being beautiful.

II. Joy flows out of the believer who is living in the Lord.

A. Peace rather than contention and anxiety will flow from living in the Lord.
1. It is a peace that transcends all understanding.
2. It guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

B. Positive thinking which elevates mind and body will flow from living in the Lord.
1. Our minds are directed toward "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is praiseworthy."
2. Our actions will copy the apostle.

C. This is a happy way to live.

Conclusion: We make so much sorrow for ourselves by living outside the Lord and following earthly ways. Joy is in the Lord, who leads us to ways of living which come from above; and it is all ours for the asking.

David Schlie
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THIRD LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

1 Thessalonians 2:8-13

November 8, 1987

The two letters of Paul to the Thessalonians were written fairly early in Paul's ministry to a congregation which was created by God through Paul's ministry. Despite the faith of the people (1:4-10) there were forces which sought to undermine both Paul and his message. The apostolic defense then is not only personal but theological. His personal defense involves reminding the Thessalonians of his hard work, his integrity, and his self-sacrifice along with Silas and Timothy. The theological defense is in 7:13. This verse is important because it

teaches both the normative authority of God's Word and also its causative authority or power. A reasonable sermon outline, then, would center on the authority of the Word.

Introduction: Many messages make claims on people—television, films, books, and so on. Many "authorities" push themselves forward as worthy of our attention, such as television, evangelists, salesmen, politicians, representatives of philanthropic causes, and so on. Now Paul comes with a message which he claims is more important than any other and even all others put together. This is the apostolic message (1 Th 2:4,6) of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of Christ's death, resurrection,and return (1 Th 4:13).

What Good Is God's Message?

I. God's Bible message shows us God's will.
   A. Our sinfulness makes us unable to discover God's will ourselves.
      1. Without the Word we would follow idols (1:9).
      2. We could never know God's grace.
   B. The Bible is not the word of men only (v 13).
      1. The apostles were approved by God to speak His will (v 14).
      2. The apostles sought only to please God (vv 5-6).
      3. The apostles sought only to represent God in their message (vv 8-12).
   C. The Bible tells us of God's gracious will in Christ.
      1. It teaches us the doctrine of Christ's redemption (1:10).
      2. It tells us stories of faith, e.g., Paul.

Transition: But the Bible does not just inform us of Christ and wait for us to respond.

II. God's Bible message also accomplishes God's will (Ps 55:10-11).
   A. Wherever Christ is proclaimed, God is powerful.
      1. He creates faith by His Word (e.g., David, Ps 51:10; 1 Pe 1:23ff.).
      2. He produces works with His Word (Col 1:5-6).
   B. In fact, all God's power is in His Word of Christ.
      1. Power to forgive.
      2. Power to live (Eph 1:29-30).

Application: People in the quest for spiritual power look to their prayers, their experiences, their decisions, their feelings, or even the sincerity of their faith. Paul tells us to look to the Gospel of Jesus.

Conclusion: Be a cynic or a critic or even an unbeliever when it comes to all the other messages you might receive [refer to the introduction]. But expect something different from God's Word. His Word is special. His Word is good—because it tells us God's will, because it accomplishes God's will.

Klemet Preus
Grand Forks, North Dakota

SECOND LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

1 Thessalonians 3:7-13

November 15, 1987

Paul had preached the word to his church in Thessalonica. But before this preaching was complete, he was wrenched away from them (1 Th 2:17). Consequently, he had to endure a time of uncertainty as he waited to hear from Timothy, his messenger, whether the ministry in Thessalonica had borne fruit. The news brought him joy. His joy is really the topic of discussion in 1 Thessalonians 3. It seems appropriate therefore to discuss not only Paul's joy but the joy of all true pastors. That which made Paul joyful should make pastors joyful today.

The word "blameless" in verse 13 is not to be understood as morally righteous nor as having perfectionistic overtones. It refers to a public reputation similar to the "above reproach" enjoined upon pastors. The idea is that God's choice of us as His children and His work in us will be apparent upon Christ's return since He will let others see our good deeds or blamelessness.

Introduction: Everyone, deep down, wants to make the pastor happy. There are many ways: You could pay him more, but he would just spend it. You could send him on a trip to the Holy Land, but he would, in time, forget it. You could tell him how well he preaches, but he already knows how well or poorly he does. You could give him a new washer or dryer which would probably make his wife happy. But I shall tell you what really will make your pastor happy.

What Makes Your Pastor Happy

I. The faith of God's people makes the pastor happy (vv 7-9).
   A. Christian faith is a sign of effective ministry.
      1. Without faith in Christ our sin condemns us.
         a. God is angry.
         b. Satan has his way (1 Th 3:5).
         c. The work of the ministry is wasted (1 Th 3:5).
      2. Faith in Christ is the proof that the Word has been effective.
         a. This is especially important if preaching was cut short.
         b. Paul's case provides an example (1 Th 2:17).
   B. Christian faith means salvation, for it grabs hold of Christ.
      1. Who has forgiven us by His life and death (1 Th 5:9-11).
      2. For whom we wait.

Transition: Pastors are happy when they see the faith of Christians. It shows their work is not wasted and it means salvation for people, but there is more that makes the pastor happy.

II. Pastors are happy when they supply what is lacking in faith (v 10) (i.e., when they continue to teach and train Christians in the Bible).

A. Bible study makes pastors happy because it leads to more mature faith.
   1. More informed faith, e.g., the doctrine of the last things (1 Th 4:13ff).
   2. Stronger faith during tribulation.
B. Bible study makes pastors happy because it is a sign of Christian maturity.
   1. It shows that Christians have their priorities in order.
   2. It shows that Christians want to please God.
C. Bible study makes pastors happy because it is what they are called and trained to do best.
   1. Ephesians 4:11, 2 Timothy 2:15.
   2. Congregational Bible study opportunities.

Transition: Thus Bible study makes the pastor happy. It also prepares people for Christ.

III. Pastors are happiest when Christians are prepared for Christ's coming.
   A. Christians are set apart by God—holy.
      1. Which happens through the Word.
      2. Which happens by grace alone.
   B. Christians are to be blameless.
      1. This does not mean sinless or morally perfect.
      2. Rather, it involves the good works pointed out at Christ's return.
      3. Our sins have been forgiven.
   C. Nothing will make the pastor happier than the end.
      1. He will see his congregation behold Christ.
      2. He will hear their works mentioned.
      3. He will know his ministry was responsible.

Conclusion: So go ahead, give the pastor a raise, send him on a trip to the Holy Land, tell him you like his sermons, buy him a new television. All these will make him happy. But remember what makes him happiest. When Christians have faith, when Christians are supplied with spiritual nourishment, when Christians are prepared for Christ.

Klemet Preus
Grand Forks, North Dakota

LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

I Corinthians 15:20-28

November 22, 1987

The reason for Paul's presentation and defense of the resurrection is not only doctrinal, but motivational. Ever the realist, Paul knows there must be a reason—an adequate reason—to "put up with" the struggle of the Christian life! The final verse of chapter 15 shows this emphasis. Without the doctrine of the resurrection, the Christian faith would be a pitiable deception (v 19), and we would have no reason to "fight the good fight" (vv 30-32).

Introduction: It is not done yet, the repair job is not finished. It is true of our world and in our life's experience. Struggle and sin, pain and powerlessness, are all around to see for those who do not shrink from facing the reality of our world. But one day it will be finished. Through Jesus Christ, God will one day complete the repair of our world. There is reason for faith, for hope, for endurance, and for obedience.

Our King Will Finish the Job He Began

I. Jesus began and guaranteed the work by rising from the dead.
   A. We are free from sin.
      1. He has already released us.
      2. We rejoice now in a perfect relationship with God—we are His holy people.
   B. We have help in time of need from the living Redeemer (Hymn 200).
      1. We may pour out our hearts before God (Ps 62:8).
      2. Every enemy is not yet under His feet (v 25)—but nothing can chase Him away. The work has been promised and guaranteed by Jesus' rising from the dead.

Transition: Our King will finish the job He began! Remember that the guarantee, the "first fruits;" is Jesus' rising from the dead. We already have that gift of righteousness and a right standing with God the Father. And there is certainty of more to come.

II. Jesus will complete the job by abolishing death, the last enemy.
   A. This separation interrupts the full enjoyment of God's grace.
      1. All of life's separations are "little deaths." We all know of their pain. All of us have felt overwhelmed and defeated.
      2. That great enemy, and all his little soldiers, will be removed. Death itself will be gone.
   B. God will be all in all. Everything and everyone found in Christ will be perfectly in tune with the perfect will of God, open to giving and receiving His unconditional love.

Jeffrey A. Gibbs
Scappoose, Oregon

Book Reviews

THE GIFT OF LOVE. By Vladimir Berzonsky. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986. $6.95.

The author takes us on a personal, devotional journey through the biblical concept of love. The first impression of this reviewer is the need for the church to continuously explain and define love for God's people. Today His people are bombarded with the words *love* and *freedom,* but their meanings are beclouded and perverted by a sinful world. Berzonsky does not deal with the concept of freedom, but he gives us much food for thought on God's view of *love.* The book is written in a devotional style and proves helpful and enlightening. The work is divided into three parts: Solomon's Song of Songs, 1 Corinthians 13, and other sections of Holy Scripture that deal with the topic. His first section was this reviewer's favorite. Lutherans do not use Song of Songs very often for preaching, teaching, or devotional material. Author Berzonsky handles it well and profitably for the reader.

One suggestion of the reviewer would be to place the third section first. This section seems to lay an excellent basis for the first two sections which demonstrate love in action. I recommend the book for some fine insights on Christian love. Some references to the Blessed Virgin Mary do not reflect the theology of the Lutheran church, since Berzonsky is of the Eastern tradition. One quote should help the reader gauge the nuances and insights which the writer offers: "The tragedy of envy and boasting lies in the fact that neither type of person afflicted with those weaknesses ever comes to learn from the lessons and experiences of life on this earth; that is to say, the kind of person God had in mind when man was uniquely created. To go through this world measuring one's self by what we see in others is to miss finding out who *I* am" (p. 77).

George Kraus

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE: A POPULAR INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS. By Terrance O. Keegan. New York: Paulist Press, 1985. 177 pages.

This is a book for anyone who confuses mythemes with actantial models, the implied reader with the ideal reader or actual reader. Seriously, if anyone is even a little displeased with the approach of historical criticism, which treats the text as a "window" to look through and not as a "mirror" to look at, then this book is for him. It is an introduction to several new methodologies, especially structuralism and reader-response criticism, and it very effectively explains their origins, tells how they work, and gives actual examples. It also introduces canonical criticism and concludes with a thought-provoking chapter on the Bible in the church today.

The main portion of this book is devoted to a presentation of structuralism and reader-response criticism, and both of these rather new methodologies are presented as clearly as I have ever seen. Keegan has a good grasp of what structuralism entails: on the one hand, it is a *synchronic* not diachronic procedure, i.e., it treats its material as constituting a meaningful system at a given time (p. 172), rather than as one stage in a temporal process or historical development. On the other hand, it concerns, not *surface structure* (i.e., the words and syntax of the language as they are seen), but *deep structure,* the "fixed struc-

tures that are proper not merely to a given people at a given time and place in history but that are proper to human beings as such. There are fixed and determined deep structures that are used by anyone composing [any] narrative. . . .These structures. . . pre-exist and are operative in the work of composition whether one is conscious of them or not. These deep structures are like the principles of aerodynamics that were there when the first boomerang was designed, whether or not anyone was aware of them or not" (p. 49).

What are these deep structures? They are both narrative and mythical. That is, a narrative (what Keegan concerns himself with in the main, and what is of interest to those dealing with gospel criticism) is formulated after certain patterns common to all stories, no matter what the topic, no matter what the culture (whether the story be an episode of Magnum P.I., a Russian folk tale, or the Gospel of Matthew). Lying beneath these narrative structures, however, are symbolic or mythical structures. These comprise elements which speak to the deepest needs of man. In the words of Keegan (pp. 61-62):

> A myth is a way of coping with the fundamental oppositions that one constantly faces in the course of human living. The elements of the myth, in a pure myth, are simply arranged in some kind of meaningless story. The meaning of myth is to be found entirely in the manner in which the oppositions, fundamental oppositions like life and death, are overcome. . . . These are fundamental oppositions that are so radically opposed that there is no middle ground, there is no way logical minds can bring the two together. Myths overcome these oppositions by providing corresponding oppositions, parallel oppositions, that can be overcome, that do admit of mediation. There is no mediation between life and death. Something or someone is either alive or dead. The way a typical myth would overcome this opposition. . .would be to replace it with another, parallel opposition that does admit of mediation, e.g., the oppositions between agriculture and warfare. . . . Agriculture supports life since it involves gathering food, while warfare brings death since it involves killing enemies. Agriculture and warfare are opposed as are life and death, yet they are not so radically opposed that they do not admit of mediation. The mytheme agriculture and the mytheme warfare can be mediated in the mytheme hunting, which like warfare involves killing, but like agriculture involves providing food. Hence, the primary opposition, life and death, which cannot be mediated, is mediated in a myth by the mediation that hunting provides between agriculture and warfare.

In other words, structuralism reads a text in a different way. To use the phrase of Martin Scharlemann, it involves a new insight into "*how* a text means;" and it does not concern itself with the *intention* of the author, for it is convinced that "the real power of a text is to be found in the system of convictions that precedes the conscious intentions of the author" (p. 51). For structuralist afficionados, let me add that Keegan's description and use of "pertinent transformation" (p. 66) in this book is quite helpful.

Equally clear and concise is this book's presentation of the approach of reader-response criticism. This fairly new enterprise, taken from the field of literature (rather than from the field of linguistics or anthropology, as is structuralism), is a reaction to the New Criticism, which spurned the traditional analysis of

authorial intention and sought a purely objective interpretation of the objective work under consideration. Reader-response criticism, while agreeing that authorial subjectivity is a fruitless field on enquiry, denies New Criticism's claim that a given work has an objective meaning apart from the activity of the reader. On the contrary, it asserts, the full meaning of literature is created by the very act of reading itself. In the words of Keegan (p. 82):

> Every truly literary work has both an artisitic pole and an aesthetic pole. The artistic pole is the accomplishment of the author, namely, the piece of writing.... That, however, is simply one of the poles. The other pole, the aesthetic pole, is the work of the reader. Both of these poles are necessary. Without both of them operating, the literary work is simply a potentiality. Its potentiality becomes an actuality when both of these poles are operating, when a reader picks up the work of an author and actually reads it. In actually reading it, it comes into being....

Key to the procedure here described is the phenomenon known as "filling in the gaps" (an insight of Wolfgang Iser). What this means is that an author does not tell his readers everything (this applies, again, especially well to narrative), which means that the readers are forced to draw conclusions which make sense out of the data presented, the facts of the story at hand (p. 85):

> Readers fill in these gaps by making assumptions which quite often will subsequently be challenged by further information supplied by the author. The reader must then revise, reformulate, or discard the assumption. By the end of the narrative, the reader will have a complete picture in which what was supplied by the text was filled out by what was supplied and revised by the reader. Not every reader, however, will have the same picture.

But is there no control? Ah, that is the question! Keegan's answer is most definite: "the reader simply is not free to impose any meaning on a given text" (p. 88). To put it into conventional reader-response terminology: every work has an "implied reader," i.e., certain presuppositions are made concerning and certain expectations are made of the reader by the text, and only the reader who accepts the role mandated by the text (becomes the implied reader) can be a true reader of the text. Such a reader can be called a "slave of the text," and "if one does not become a slave of the text, share the ideology of the text, one simply cannot read it" (p. 97). Who, then,is the implied reader (i.e., who can become a true reader) of the biblical text? Keegan's answer is both reassuring and disturbing. Only the Christian can read the text, for only Christians can assume the role called for by the text: "Having been changed into God's likeness, they can become the reader of that text" (p. 89). His use of 2 Corinthians 3:15—Paul's discussion of the Jews' inability to read Moses—is most helpful here (p. 89):

> They can read the words of the Pentateuch but they cannot appreciate them. They are unable to assume the role called forth from them by the text. Christians, however, can. Why? Because Christians have the Spirit, because the very being of a Chrisitan has been changed.

But these readers are not in isolation (pp. 146-147):

> What reader-response critics today maintain is that the activity of reading is a social activity. Private interpretation, the work of autonomous individuals who read a work and understand it by themselves, is an impossibility even for those who think they are doing it. All readers come to a book, any book, with convictions, with beliefs, with concerns, with values that arise out of a social atmosphere. . . . Everyone is part of a believing community, and the faith of that community is part of the reading process. Furthermore, one who does not participate in the faith community that is presupposed of the implied reader of a given text simply cannot read that text.

Indeed, also the text is not in isolation (p. 158):

> The Church came first. It was the Church, understanding itself, that later saw itself as the implied reader of this whole array of works. . . . It was the Church that saw the Spirit by which it lives as the Spirit which is involved in the implied author of these works. Precisely because the same Spirit by which the Church lives is the Spirit by which these books live, the Church saw itself as the implied reader of these books and took these books into its life. It accepted these books and canonized these books. These books have meaning and validity in the life of the Church because the Church accepts them, because the Church canonizes them. Apart from the Church they would have had no meaning, no existence. . . .

These are, as I say, both reassuring and disturbing thoughts. For they obviate the necessity of finding that ever-elusive "objective method" which will give an "objective meaning" to the Scriptures, since the Scriptures can no longer be separated from and set against the church herself. Indeed, who *can* interpret except him who believes? But if this is true, what of the Reformation? What of an appeal to Scripture, *against* the teachings of the church? Keegan's challenge, especially in his final chapter, "The Bible in the Church Today," from which the last two and the following two quotations are drawn, is very clear (p. 146, 148):

> The Reformation churches desperately needed the Bible for solidity, for stability, because the Bible was all they had. They had eliminated or significantly curtailed the effectiveness and meaningfulness of the hierarchical, sacramental Church. They had the Bible, but they needed a Bible that could provide a reliable and firm foundation for their faith and life. The subsequent development at the time of the Enlightenment is not hard to understand. It was easy, if not almost necessary, to entrust the Bible to the scholars' study where the methods of Enlightenment scholarship could be used to make the Bible something solid and objective on which Reformation Christianity could stand. When Scripture is separated from the Church and compelled somehow to stand on its own, then there is a need for some kind of a critical method that will give to Scripture an objective meaning. If Scripture is the Church's book, if Scripture is canonized precisely because it is

> seen as speaking to the Church, as coming forth from the Church, then the needed guarantee of objectivity is to be found in the Church. The reliability of the Church is far more important than an objectively verifiable critical methodology.

Will we respond to these words?

James W. Voelz

THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THEOLOGY—EVANGELICAL OPTIONS. Edited by Robert K. Johnston. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985. 257 pages. Paperback.

For the past two hundred years the Christian church has spent much time and energy trying to determine exactly what place the Bible should have in the formation of its theology and life. Over the past one hundred years answers given to such considerations have often been categorized under two heads. There are the conservatives and fundamentalists, who hope to maintain the traditional view of the church toward the Scriptures even within the context of the rapidly changing twentieth century. Then there are the liberals or critics who feel that modern thought patterns demand some degree of accommodation or adjustment of traditional views of the Bible if the church is to gain a credible hearing in today's marketplace of ideas. In an attempt to moderate between the more extreme expressions of these two viewpoints a group of Christian theologians have come forth since the mid-1940's who have identified themselves by the term "Evangelical" or, to be more precise, "New or Neo-Evangelical," to distinguish themselves from the revivalistic mainline evangelicalism of nineteenth-century America.

The book under review is a compilation of the ways in which some of the more prominent twentieth-century evangelicals use the Bible in the performance of their task as theologians. If the names of Clark H. Pinnock, James I. Packer, Russell P. Spittler, Donald G. Bloesch, John Howard Yoder, Donald W. Dayton, Robert E. Webber, William A. Dyrness, David F. Wells, and Gabriel Fackre mean anything and, if anyone would like the opportunity of peeking over their shoulders and watching as they set about shaping the data of Scripture into the matter of theology, then perhaps this is the book for him. The title of the book is indicative of its purpose and presentations. Not the *nature* of the Bible but the *use* made of the Bible in the construction of theology is investigated. The emphasis is on use, function, and methodology. The purpose of the book is summed up in the following questions posed by the editor, Robert K. Johnson (p. viii):

> How do we evangelicals interpret the authoritative Word? In doing theology, what is the role of the imagination? Reason? Tradition? The believing community? The Holy Spirit? The wider culture? How do we evangelicals use the Bible for faith and life? In what sense is theology necessarily constructive in its approach rather than merely descriptive?

In answering such questions the book illustrates both the unity and the diversity in Evangelical theology. The point of unity is that Evangelicals accept "as

axiomatic the Bible's inherent authority" (p. 3). The diversity comes from observing the methodology of such different men as John H. Yoder, whose name appears in the list of contributing editors for the left-of-center Evangelical magazine, *Sojourners*, to the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy stalwart, James I. Packer.

Of special interest were the chapters on "An Evangelical and Catholic Methodology," by Wheaton College professor, Robert E. Webber; "The Nature and Function of Theology," by Gordon-Conwell's David F. Wells; "The Use of Scripture in the Wesleyan Tradition," by Northern Baptist Donald W. Dayton; and "The Use of Scripture in My Work in Systematics," by Gabriel Fackre of Andover-Newton Theological School. The Dayton article provided a helpful insight by setting the use of Scripture within the context of the three basic historical variations of the term "evangelical"—"evangelical" as in the sixteenth-century Lutheran or Protestant reformation, "evangelical" as in the eighteenth-century Wesleyan revival, and "evangelical" as in the twentieth-century fundamentalist reaction. Against this historical background Dayton summarizes the Wesleyan use of Scripture in terms of the so-called "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience (p. 134). For those who agree that "trend watchers are telling us that the next important issue in evangelical churches is worship" (p. 138) the article by Robert E. Webber will be of interest. Webber summarizes the causes which led to the "false conceptions of worship in the evangelical community" and suggests ways to restore a "biblical-theological and historical perspective" of worship (p. 143ff.). The article by David F. Wells struggles with the perennial problem of the relationship between a timeless God and His changeless Word and the historically conditioned human culture into which this Word is directed. The discussion centers on the distinction between "doctrine" and "theology" which Wells defines as follows: "Theology differs from doctrine as what is unrevealed does from what is revealed, fallible from what is infallible, derived from what is original, relative from what is certain, culturally determined from what is divinely given" (p. 188). Gabriel Fackre, in "The Use of Scripture in My Work in Systematics," deals with another variation of the same problem examined by Wells. For Fackre the concern shifts to a consideration of the tension between the particularity of "the soteriological singularity of the Christian faith" and the universality of a "heightened awareness of religious pluralism" (pp. 200 and 223). His conclusion is in the form of a chart which traces critical theological reflection from its setting in the world through the church, tradition, the Bible, and the Gospel to the Christ who in His particularity is the norm of the Christian faith (pp. 220-226).

As with most books which consist of variations on a theme coordinated by an editor there is an element of unevenness both in theological perspective and in the method of dealing with the subject at hand. This is not the kind of book one would ordinarily read from cover to cover. For those who are interested in how the Bible is applied by those who identify themselves as Evangelical theologians there is much from which to choose regardless of one's specific area of interest. The titles of the chapters do not always prepare the reader for the exact treatment presented. Fortunately the highly visible section headings within each chapter are helpful for those who are willing to take the time to search the materials before settling down to read and ponder. To those readers willing to ponder the book offers rewards.

Richard E. Muller

EVANGELICALS ON THE CANTERBURY TRAIL. Why Evangelicals are Attracted to the Liturgical Church. By Robert E. Webber. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985. 174 pages.

On the whole "chatty" and informal in style, this symposium volume offers some pleasant theological light reading. Its first half is taken up with an account of Dr. Webber's pilgrimage from Baptist to Episcopalian Christendom, its second half with considerably briefer reports of the movement from similar backgrounds to the same haven on the part of six kindred spirits of his acquaintance. The common denominator in all seven autobiographical pieces is the anguished discovery of the deficiencies inherent in a spirituality focused exclusively on the preached Word, along with the common sense of relief and fulfilment at receiving a balanced diet of Word and Sacrament within the Episcopal fold. Commendable sentiments are expressed throughout the volume concerning the value of the church year and the concomitant extended Scripture readings in liturgical worship, and one can only concur with the contrast brought out by Dr. Webber and his colleagues between the "man-centered" worship of the "Word alone," with its inevitable propensity to degenerate into the worship of the preacher alone, and the God-centered worship of "Word and Sacrament," which elevates Christ above the preacher. Even so, when confronted with the authors' claim to have preserved the best of their "evangelical" heritage while reclaiming the fullness of historic Christianity, the confessional Lutheran reader is inclined to ask, first, whether Dr. Webber and his colleagues have thoroughly sloughed off their Reformed skins and, secondly, whether what they have reclaimed is, in fact, the genuine article. Clearly, the authors have fallen under the spell of historic liturgical and sacramental forms, but have they mistaken the husk for the kernel? Dr. Webber, for instance, has manifestly moved in a salutary direction with his realization that the Lord's Supper is not something which we do for God, but rather "God doing something for me" (p. 83); but for him the sacramental elements remain hazily symbolic instead of being plainly acknowledged as the Lord's true body and blood. The only clear avowal of the real presence in these pages comes in the contribution by Michael Anderson, who writes the best chapter in the book. He has excellent things to say concerning the incarnation, brings out the gnostic-dualist roots of Reformed antisacramentalism in a manner that would do credit to a Lutheran, and writes with high eloquence on the Sacrament of the Altar (especially pp. 94-98). An ongoing Reformed bias is discernible in Dr. Webber's apologia for sacramental confession, whose value he locates in the confessor's spiritual direction of the penitent and not in absolution as a dominically instituted means of grace according to John 20:23 (which does not even get a mention in this context.)

Episcopalianism's appeal to Dr. Webber at least would seem to have something to do with the non-denominational (or perhaps rather non-confessional) character of Anglican Christendom. His own move from the Baptist to the Episcopal fold was precipitated by his rejection of what we would call "propositional revelation" in the ferment of the late sixties (pp. 25-30). For him, a theology with all the answers gave way to a perception of mystery, and he maintains that within the Anglican Communion people can be genuinely "united in matters of faith" while allowing for diversity of opinion on such matters as the nature of Holy Scripture, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar (p. 74). Others of us, of course, fail to see the incompatibility of dogmatic certainty with perception of mystery, nor could we identify doctrinal unity with doctrinal

discord! Quite the oddest feature of a volume which celebrates the reappropriation of historic Christianity is the lack of concern for the implications of the ordination of women in the Episcopal church. A charismatic Episcopal deaconess armed with a phial of holy oil crops up now and then (e.g., p. 44), but nowhere do the authors confront one of the fundamental issues of our day.

Clearly, the doctrinal clarity of confessional Lutheranism would rule out the LCMS becoming a haven for the discontented "evangelicals" who write in this book. This said, one must be grateful for their loving embrace of traditional liturgical forms which are fitting vessels for heavenly treasures. They sound a timely note with their insistence that "evangelism" may not "become a substitute for worship" (p. 34). And who cannot but echo John Skillen's justified horror at the mindless use of the adverb "just" in "evangelical" extempore prayer? A reading of this book might point out to us some neglected areas of concern that ought to be addressed and would certainly show forth the wisdom of those of our congregations which have called for deeper liturgical study and training at our seminaries. And while confessional Lutheranism can have no appeal for those addicted to doctrinal latitudinarianism, might not a recovery within our circles of the "reverence" spoken of by the confessions in connection with Holy Communion (FC SD VII, 44; XXIV, 1), to say nothing of a serious grasping of the centrality of the Holy Supper in the life of the Church (AC XXIV, 34; Apol. XXIV, 1), render it forever impossible for any informed writer to dub the Episcopal church *the* liturgical church?

John R. Stephenson
Lewiston, New York

PASTORS ON THE GROW. By Stephen J. Carter. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 91 pages.

More than ever before all church pressures and crises require pastors to keep on top of the leadership hill to avoid the many difficulties that may arise from stress, opposition, traditionalism, and inertia in congregations. Dr. Carter does not ask how busy one is, but how one is growing as a minister to meet the requirements of a pastor in today's world.

The author contends that growth is measured by whether a pastor matures personally, spiritually, mentally, socially, and professionally. He writes to capture the pastor's imagination, to stimulate reflection on personal needs, and to motivate toward positive action, professional growth, and more effective ministry. I believe he achieves his objectives in this matter that is so vital for a rewarding ministry for the pastor and his members. A number of valuable insights provide sound solutions to the difficulties of a stressful occupation. Problems are clearly defined and targets for effective ministry are placed as reasonable goals. Helpful suggestions for further reading are offered for greater skill development. Important is the section on the pastor communicating his growth needs to the laity and planning his professional growth strategy together with the congregation. Through sharing his personal learning plan, the pastor will forge a partnership with the parish. The link between seminary and parish is also shown.

While the book is intended for pastors and perhaps a few key parish leders, its message will have a great effect on churches as it is taken seriously. It offers valuable information, motivation, identification, and resources for a vital matter.

Waldo J. Werning

EZEKIEL. By Donald E. Gowan. Knox Preaching Guides; John H. Hayes, editor. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985. 147 pages. Paper.

The Book of Ezekiel has not normally been a favorite of preachers. The bizarre visions, the lengthy and sometimes coarse allegories, and the unusual symbolic acts of the prophet combine to make the book seem forbidding as a homiletical resource. This situation may change for those who purchase this brief, but interesting volume by Donald Gowan. Gowan, a professor of Old Testament at Pittsburg Theological Seminary, has previously authored *Reclaiming the Old Testament for the Christian Pulpit*, and this present work can help reclaim the treasures in Ezekiel for many a timid preacher.

The book divides Ezekiel's 48 chapters into sixteen groupings. The symbolic acts are treated all together, as are the various allegories on Jerusalem's sin and fall. The prophet's nine chapters on the new Jerusalem and temple are dealt with in a single chapter, and it can be argued that this section and several others receive too little attention. Nevertheless, the book accomplishes much in a short space. Thankfully, it does not attempt to be another commentary but is content to be a "preaching guide," as the cover claims. This reviewer has long felt a need for such a book, for there comes a moment where the preacher has dealt with the translation and the critical questions and must ask, "How am I going to relate all this to the real lives of my hearers?" Gowan's verdict about some of the chapters in Ezekiel is this: "You probably won't!" Some things simply are not very preachable as isolated texts, he says, and others (like the allegory of the foundling in chapter 16) may be too difficult or explicit and would serve better to reinforce some other primary text. On the other hand, he offers some helpful ideas for applying sometimes-neglected themes—the continuing relevance of "exile" language and God's continuing intense interest in good government and everyday justice being examples.

This book challenged my own tendency to skip over the intervening centuries and arrive too quickly at the cross. Gowan reminded me of the postexilic community's importance. Yet the context of the New Testament and the message of the cross are not neglected here. "The message [of Ezekiel] as a whole teaches us that we are saved by grace alone" is a thread woven through the fabric of the book. Some will feel that this book is written at too simple a level (do we really need a definition of "theophany"?), but on the whole the author's simplicity and down-to-earth style is a plus. The large, readable print is a bonus.

Michael Kasting
Akron, Ohio

RELIGION IN INDIANA: A GUIDE TO RESOURCES. By L. C. Rudolph and Judith E. Endelman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. $22.50.

This work is a useful tool for anyone interested in studying religion in America, including Lutheranism, since Indiana has been the site of such diverse religious phenomena as Robert Owen's New Harmony Colony and the 1881 Synodical Convention that adopted Walther's thirteen theses dealing with predestination. *Religion in Indiana* is a guide to primary and secondary source materials for the study of such phenomena as well as of religious institutions located in Indiana, such as our own Concordia Theological Seminary. The book is divided into three parts: (1) a list of published works about religion in Indiana, arranged alphabetically by author, coded by denomination (if any) and by location of the holding library; (2) descriptions of primarily unpublished materials, e.g., denominational archives; and (3) a register of congregational histories arranged by county and place name. An index completes the volume. All in all, this work is a valuable resource for the serious student of American religion.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

A HISTORY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL. By J. Alberto Soggin. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1984.

J. Alberto Soggin is Professor of Old Testament at the Waldensian Faculty in Rome and visiting Professor at the Pontifical Institute. This volume is translated by John Bowden from the Italian and constitutes the author's fourth contribution to Westminster's *Old Testament Library* (previous volumes include *Joshua, A Commentary*; *Judges, A Commentary;* and *An Introduction to the Old Testament).*

Perhaps the chief virtue of Soggin's study is its forthright discussion of methodology (pp. 18-40). While demonstrating his familiarity with the broad literature on this topic (Wellhausen, Noth, Herrmann, Fohrer, Bright, R. de Vaux), the author asserts his own posture without detailing its supporting rationale: "Where, then, does a history of Israel begin? In other words, is there a time after which the material in the tradition begins to offer credible accounts, information about individuals who existed and events which happened or are at least probable, when it indicates important events in the economic and political sphere, and their consequences?...Now over the course of the last decade I have come to the conclusion that the answer should point to the united kingdom of Judah and Israel under David and Solomon" (p. 26). As inadequate as this perspective will prove to most readers of this journal, there are few other works which so concisely describe the perimeters of the current critical discussion. The fact that Soggin finds the studies of Thompson and Van Seters so helpful (p. 90) sets him over against the more cautious positions of scholars like John Bright.

Two concluding appendices are worthy of note, namely, Diethelm Conrad's "An Introduction to the Archaeology of Syria and Palestine in the Basis of the Israelite Settlement" and H. Tadmor's "The Chronology of the First Temple Period: A Presentation and Evaluation of the Sources." Though clearly consonant with Soggin's approach, these brief distillations will quickly orient the reader to the basic issues. Helpful bibliographies also punctuate every topic and provide speedy access to the key voices within the critical tradition.

Dean O. Wenthe

THE PRIESTLY KINGDOM: SOCIAL ETHICS AS GOSPEL. By John Howard Yoder. University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, 1984. 222 pages. Cloth, $16.95; Paper, $8.95.

Writing out of commitment to the radical reformation tradition, John Yoder has become a powerful theological voice within academic and ecclesiastical circles. In this collection of essays he seeks to free that ("Anabaptist") tradition from a persistent characterization: It is not, he contends, simply a sectarian reaction to "mainstream" forms of Christian faith, nor does it require withdrawal from public concern. Instead, the vision of a free church (made up of believers voluntarily committed to following the way of the Lord Jesus) is "a stance whose claims are rooted intrinsically in the nature of the Christian faith" and offers, therefore, "a paradigm of value for all ages and communions."

These are large claims worthy of consideration, even if (as I would judge) they are not adequately supported by the essays gathered in this volume. The essays are grouped under three general headings ("Foundations,""History," and "The Public Realm"). In these three sections Yoder considers respectively (1) the kind of moral reasoning and argument which will be appropriate from within the tradition of radical reformation, (2) some of the historical emphases of this tradition, and (3) its application to public life in America. Almost all the essays are provocative, but the reader gradually begins to long for a more thorough exposition of points which are made repeatedly but never given thorough argument. Yoder has a penchant for itemizing and categorizing, and it sometimes gets in the way of clear exposition and the thread of an argument.

Yoder wants Christians to take seriously their minority status in our society and to give up their attempts at forging partnerships with power--and *then* to think about society. From such a self-consciously minority perspective we shall not, for example, worry about the "generalizability" problem (i.e., what if the rest of the world were to become non-violent as we Christians are?). Nor, he suggests, shall we permit an "engineering approach to ethics" to dominate in our deliberations (as if results, not faithfulness, were what finally counted). Nor shall we permit national boudaries, which exclude some as outsiders, to become more important than the bond which unites Christians in every place. Yoder never makes clear why, in order to become self-conscious about their minority status, Christians must adopt the radical reformation's ecclesiastical model of a voluntary church composed of those who have committed themselves as adults. One seeks but does not find in the essays an explanation of how this adult commitment untarnished by pedobaptism but molded sometimes by quite structured and disciplined communities is to be called "voluntary." And one looks in vain for contemporary examples of those voluntary communities which we might take as models. Indeed, in the introduction Yoder distances himself to some extent from the radical reformation communities with which the reader might be tempted to identify him. But then the church of which he speaks tends to lose its historical location.

The reader wanting a more systematic development of Yoder's position might begin with his earlier work, *The Politics of Jesus.* The essays in this volume merit careful reading, however, because they stimulate thought about how we should live as Christians in a world that is no longer Christendom, and they will, by provoking reaction, help us to consider how characteristic Lutheran emphases (upon Jesus as Savior,

not just Example or Lord; upon infant baptism as a freely given grace in which one can grow; upon God's *two* ways of governing the world and preserving it against Satan) may lead to a somewhat different social ethic.

Gilbert Meilaender
Oberlin College

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR UNDERSTANDING. By Robert G. Hoerber. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Paper. 211 pages.

Dr. Hoerber brings to his study of the New Testament a rich academic background as professor of classics at Westminster College (Missouri) and as professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His purpose is to introduce the reader to some of the critical issues of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament within the severe limitations of 211 pages. He succeeds admirably. For each book he presents the isagogical questions of authorship, time and place of writing, and the intended audience. Unique in Hoerber's approach is that he begins the subsections with study questions directed to biblical references in which the reader must himself do the research. Thus the reader is not simply told what the New Testament teaches but is guided by the author to find the answer himself. The reader reinforces the author's conclusions. One suspects that Hoerber, a lifelong pedagogue, has used this approach in lecturing to his college and seminary students. The intended audience is lay people in Bible classes, but they are confronted with some of the most contemporary work being done in New Testament studies. On this account it could be used profitably by students beginning their seminary studies for the purpose of general introduction. The seventeen chapters could easily be spread over twice the number of classes for lay use. Taking a more careful look at Matthew would give a good idea of Hoerber's approach. Study question one concerns the addressees. For clues the reader is referred to the genealogy and the frequent use of Old Testament passages. The second question concerns universal grace and the third question the arrangement of the Gospel. Attention is called to the groupings of the sayings of Jesus into five parts to match the fivefold division of the Pentateuch. Study question four handles Jesus as the new Moses and the leader of a new Israel. Though the author does not include a scholarly bibliography, it seems as if here he may have used Gundry and R. T. France. In any event his approach is most up-to-date. Parallels between the life of Moses and Jesus are noted, e.g., the Egyptian stay, the slaughter of the children, and the escape from Egypt. About time and place of authorship, Hoerber presents both a 85 A.D. date and one before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. The reader must decide for himself. Dogmaticism is out of place in some questions. Finally a somewhat detailed outline of the entire Gospel of Matthew is given centering on the five discourses of Jesus preceded by an introduction (genealogy, birth narratives, etc.) and followed by the conclusion with the passion and resurrection. What makes Hoerber's approach so refreshing is that with his working knowledge of contemporary New Testament studies he is able to introduce the lay person to more of the complex issues, but in a way that the reader is able to grasp them at first reading.

David P. Scaer

AGAINST THE NATIONS: WAR AND SURVIVAL IN A LIBERAL SOCIETY. By Stanley Hauerwas. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985. 208 pages. $19.95.

In this provocative collection of essays, Hauerwas is offering a quite different sort of *Contra Gentes* than that of St. Thomas. He states in his introduction that he is trying to extend into ethics the theological program outlined by George Lindbeck in *The Nature of Doctrine.* What this means in practice is an emphasis on what is distinctive about the church's way of life, a focus on discontinuity between Christian morality and the morality of our society, and a freeing of Christian ethics from attempts to serve or undergird the ethos of a nation state. Hauerwas then proceeds to exemplify this approach in a set of essays addressing the history of theological ethics in America, the Holocaust, Jonestown, pacifism as an ethic of Jesus' kingdom, and nuclear disarmament.

The chapter "On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological" is important, not only for tracing the development of Hauerwas' views, but also because it offers a reading of the history of Christian ethics in this country. Hauerwas suggests that ethics was not a discipline distinct from theology until quite recent times. With the rules of the social gospel the new discipline of "Christian ethics" served to offer both theological rationale and social strategy for Christianizing the social order. Thus, in its origins, the discipline of Christian ethics in this country was committed to an intimate bond between religion and ethics. Surprisingly and paradoxically, however, within less than a century this same discipline could produce a book (by James Gustafson) titled, *Can Ethics Be Christian*? The paradox seems less perplexing, Hauerwas suggests, if we remember that between Rauschenbusch and Gustafson ours had become an increasingly pluralistic society. Christian ethicists still wanted to instruct and shape the ethos of the larger society (that is, they remained committed to the bond between religion and social ethics). But they found that direct Christian appeals now lacked easy entry and persuasive power in that society. Hence, they looked for ways to separate ethical conclusions from theological framework until the day arrived when that framework seemed irrelevant to the ethic proposed. And then it was logical to ask: Can ethics be Christian? Or can it get along just as well without the theological baggage? Hauerwas thinks something has gone awry here, and he thinks he knows what it is. The basic mistake, he believes, lay in divorcing Christian ethics form its particular theological roots and in trying to use the discipline to support and nourish the American social order. If the church is really a new society living out its history in the old aeon, its ethic must always be "against the nations."

This leads Hauerwas to adopt a pacifist stance, and the last three chapters of the book—in my judgment, the most important ones on particular issues—take up questions of war and nuclear disarmament. Their arguments are too involved to trace here, but they are instructive in many ways. Hauerwas is particularly careful to trace different attitudes toward nuclear war to different understandings of history—and then, in turn, to different eschatologies. If, as I would argue, he does not take seriously enough the demands of living within *both* aeons simultaneously, he is nevertheless a provocative and profound critic of many contemporary views of war. He explores critically the Roman Catholic bishops' pastoral on war (*The Challenge of Peace*) and the thought of nuclear disarmament advocates like Jonathan Schell, whose moral bottom line is the continued survival of the human species. There is much with which to argue

here—whether Hauerwas has really captured the ethical shape of Lindbeck's theological program, whether he has successfully captured the shape which a life of discipleship must take, whether he can still find ways to affirm that God is at work in the whole of creation and not just in the church—but also much to be learned.

Gilbert Meilaender
Oberlin College

ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION. By Paul K. Jewett. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. 147 + xii pages. Paper, $8.95.

This is a very readable book on a complicated topic. The writer supplies an historical overview of the treatment of the subject, gives a not altogether satisfactory summary of the biblical data, and treats with some detail the question of election and Israel and with considerable detail the problem of election and the individual. One is never in doubt as to the writer's meaning and the goal for which he is making, nor is one left in doubt as to the position the writer himself takes. Without being rigid or unyielding, he is undoubtedly biblical and evangelical and Calvinistic. This position comes out especially in the section entitled, "Some Reflections on the Mystery of Grace" (pp. 106-108). Among other things he insists, "The paradox of divine mercy and judgment surely commends humility in those who would honor the data of revelation;" "the truth in the debate is not all on the one side;" "the doctrine is not to be neutralized by nicely balanced, artificially contrived compromises. . .the result is not a doctrine but a committee report;" and "the doctrine must insist that the God of the Scripture is the God whose grace is grounded in his free and sovereign choice which precedes and is independent of the sinner's choice."

However, there are some aspects of the book which are not so good. The Lutheran position, that given symbolical expression in the Formula of Concord, is not presented with any fullness or accuracy. Luther is declared to be given over to a double predestination, while the teaching of the Formula is said to give a "definitive statement" to the "mild Augustinianism" of Melanchthon, earlier described as "the semi-Augustinian synergism of the Middle Ages." Now, this is quite wrong. One wonders whether the care of the writer for once deserted him or whether this is a characterization of Lutheranism which he heard somewhere and which he uncritically retained, or whether he just did not see the possibility of insisting on the pure grace of God in relation to the saved, on the one hand, and of insisting, on the other, that the lost are lost solely through their own fault. To put the last possibility another way, perhaps he does not see that the eternal choice of God of some for salvation does *not* imply a choice of others for the opposite, that election does *not* obviously imply rejection. Lutherans in the Formula insist *both* on the universal grace of God, applying to all men and applying to them seriously, *and* on the sole grace of God in the case of the saved. The lost are described in other terms altogether, not in terms of election and predestination, but in terms of their own fault and their own responsible choice.

Some very bad logic shows up in the writer's discussion of Israel. After describing the view of the Reformers that "Israel" is not Jews but *spiritual* Israel, i.e., all the elect people of God, both Jews and Gentiles, Jewett writes: "The church

no longer shares its status as God's chosen people with Israel. Rather, the church is the people of God in a way that excludes Israel, save for those few Jews who confess Christ and thereby cease to be Jews because they have become Christians" (pp. 36,37). Now this is bad enough for, if to become Christians means to cease to be Jews, then to become Christians also means to cease to be Gentiles. But worse is to come when the author insists: "As we have already noted, this traditional understanding. . . is in fact anti-Semitic" (p. 37). Where is Galatians 3:28 in this judgment? And how can a view which says that the elect among Jews and Gentiles make up the church be anti-Semitic? Jews and Gentiles are put on the same level in this view of things. The view of Jewett is, in effect, anti-Gentile.

Attention is drawn to two rather serious minor blemishes. On page 7 we have *gratia irresistibilus* (instead of *irresistibilis*). And on page 138 we have the phrase "with the *numinosen*" (Otto is referred to in the context.). This seems to be a strange carrying-over of a German adjective form into the English material; better by far would be: "with the numinous."

This reviewer holds that, in spite of the various criticisms that have been made, the book is as a whole very worthwhile. No evangelical Christian could possibly find fault with its concluding paragraph and the final sentences: "Salvation is his work, not ours; it is of grace—all of grace. This is the truth we confess in the doctrine of election and the truth that we seal with a solemn Amen."

H. P. Hamann

THE WESTMINSTER DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS. Edited by James F. Childress and John Macquarrie. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986. 678 pages. $24.95.

In 1977 the *Encyclopedia of Ignorance* was published. Eminent scientists from around the world surveyed some of the many unsolved global problems. Given that educated people do not readily admit ignorance, the publication seemed to bear out the words of the Preacher: "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Eccl. 12:12). One field of study that can generate this "weariness" and where demonstration of this ignorace can be detected (even among the theologically trained) is the discipline of ethics. Formal training in the study of ethics is at best limited for both the pastor and the teacher of our church body, but there is seemingly no limit to the spectrum of theories, practices, issues and questions that confront us as church professionals. *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics* underscores, for the intellectually honest, how ignorant we may be when it comes to topics such as "Pederasty" (the sexual love of children) and "Genetic Screening," while at the same time its well written subject articles can begin to bridge that gap of ignorance.

John Macquarrie's 1967 publication, *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, has been revised and expanded under the skillful direction of bioethicist James Childress. With approximately forty percent of the entries retained from Marquarrie's first edition, the comparative reader will appreciate the wealth of new topics and contributors. Reflecting an international background, the 167 contributors to the 620-entry publication represent a wide range of religious traditions and academic disciplines. Arranged in alphabetical order, the collected articles cover

seven major subject areas: (1) basic ethical concepts, (2) biblical ethics, (3) theological ethics, (4) philosophical traditions, (5) major non-Christian religious traditions in ethics, (6) psychological, sociological, political, and other concepts important for Christian ethics, and (7) substantial ethical problems, such as abortion and war. Most of the articles include bibliographic references for further study and a useful cross-reference system.

It is not expected that the reader will find himself in agreement with every contributor on every subject. As Childress writes in his preface: "The dictionary is designed to indicate what is controversial as well as what is settled in Christian ethical reflection." This is a resource volume (with excellent credentials) and should be used (as well as recommended) for resource purposes, i.e., to provide informational background, to clarify issues, and to stimulate one's own thought process. Christian ethics is that kind of demanding task where ignorance is not bliss.

Randall W. Shields

THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS, JOB, AND ECCLESIASTES. By Derek Kidner. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985. 172 pages. Paper, $5.95.

Derek Kidner, formerly warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, has written a very readable and instructive introduction to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. This effort does not represent Kidner's first venture into the field of *chochmah* literary genre. In 1964 he issued a commentary on Proverbs, written for the *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, a series to which he also contributed commentaries on Genesis and Psalms.

After an introductory chapter entitled, "Meeting of Minds," the author devotes two chapters to each of the three major wisdom books of the Old Testament, namely, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. In his final chapter Kidner contrasts the teachings of the three books with each other. In his three appendices he discusses the extra-canonical wisdom writings of the Near East and the two apocryphal wisdom books, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon (considered deutero-canonical by both the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches). Kidner's bibliography (about five pages), not intended to be exhaustive, gives an excellent selection of books and journal articles. Any person reading these volumes and learned articles will acquire a thorough knowledge of the whole field of Near Eastern and biblical wisdom literature. All Scriptural references appearing in the book are listed in an "Index of Scriptural References."

Kidner is sensitive to both the literary form and the theological contents of the three books discussed. He adequately explains the basic structure and inner character of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. In addition to giving his analysis of these three books, he also devotes a chapter to each, presenting and evaluating the changing views of Old Testament critical scholars concerned with the Old Testament wisdom literature. Kidner refers to over one hundred theologians and biblical specialists who over the years have expressed opinions on the Old Testament's wisdom literature.

The author claims that the sentence, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 6; 7; Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Eccl. 12:13), sets forth the uniqueness of Hebrew wisdom literature as compared with that of Ugarit,

Sumeria, Egypt, and Babylonia. The word "beginning" he claims might be rendered "the first principle." It is this phrase which "keeps the shrewdness of Proverbs from slipping into mere interest, the perplexity of Job from mutiny, and the disillusion of Ecclesiastes from final despair." Kidner rejects the traditional understanding of "wisdom" as a person in Proverbs 8. This book can be of help to the novice as well as to the expert interested in the Old Testament's wisdom literary genre.

Raymond F. Surburg

THE PREACHER AS JACOB: A NEW PARADIGM FOR PREACHING. By Kenneth L. Gibble. Minneapolis: Seabury Press, 1985. 136 pages.

Just as Jacob wrestled with God at Peniel, so the preacher wrestles with God through His Word in the sermon text to discover the will of God and the "turning point" inherent in the Word for his life and the lives of his hearers. This, it seems, is the new paradigm which Gibble offers contemporary preachers in *The Preacher as Jacob.* The most salient concept in this work is Gibble's treatment of the "daimonic." Here he distinguishes the "daimonic" from the demonic by defining the former, in the words of Rollo May, as "the urge in every being to affirm itself, assert itself, perpetuate and increase itself" (p. 1.). Gibble suggests that this "dark side" exists in everyone, including the preacher, and is the underlying cause of all our personal and social ills. In more confessional terms, it seems the author is suggesting that the preacher recognize and confront his "Old Adam" in order to identify and to relate to the dynamics of the personal and social disease intrinsic in the text. It is through this that the preacher begins his "wrestling with God." As he discovers his "dark side," the preacher employs it to confront God and His Word and in the wrestling comes to understand and appreciate the divine will against the "daimonic." Then, in the preaching, the preacher recounts the struggle in terms which relate it to the hearers' own particular wrestlings with God. If this is done, Gibble notes, the preacher can approach and develop his sermon as a healing act.

Gibble asserts that in order for the sermon to be most effective it should be inductively developed and spoken in concrete and relational terms. Gibble prefers the story-drama sermon because it can best convey the dynamics of the wrestling match with its use of conflict and plot development. Though this methodology can be used effectively at times, it seems Gibble's summary dismissal of deductive preaching bespeaks his lack of awareness concerning the power of strong deductive development which communication research has shown to be more effective for both didactic and persuasive purposes. Gibble's comments concerning concrete and relational language are important and should be heeded by today's preachers. He notes that so often the preacher spouts theological jargon, religious abstractions, and pious platitudes which have little meaning for most listeners. Gibble suggests that the preacher's language should be "incarnational"; language which is specific, particular, imagistic and active. Though most confessional readers will wince at Gibble's use of higher

criticism, modern psychological theory, and Tillich, a tempered study of this book may provide the preacher invaluable insights as he seeks to proclaim the Word of God in terms which are readily meaningful and important to his hearers.

Donald L. Rice, Jr.
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GALATIANS. By Edgar Krentz. PHILIPPIANS, PHILEMON. By John Koening. I THESSALONIANS. By Donald H. Juel. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985. Paper. 255 pages.

The foreword tells us that "*The Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* is written for laypeople, students, and pastors." The commentaries in this volume are scholarly productions and will be helpful for students and pastors, but are not likely to be very helpful for laypeople. The language and style used by all the writers, while not strictly technical in character, is still the language of scholars and reflects the situation of the classroom rather than that of the worshipping congregation or the Sunday Bible class. The present reviewer, who has written a number of similar popular commentaries, believes that more attention must be paid to the explanation of major matters of the text than has been done in the present commentaries. The average layman just does not pick up the implication(s) of a short aside as in the second of the two sentences now quoted from Krentz: "The Galatian move shocks because it is so rapid, so drastic (*so quickly*). No measuring point is given." Pastors who have used my own commentaries in Australia report that the average layman finds these too difficult to understand without help. The point is, I think, that the present television-viewing generation has never mastered or has lost the art of connected reading, so that the writing of commentaries that are intelligible to them, no matter how much time is spent on making them readily understandable, is virtually impossible.

To make some comments on the individual writings, Krentz is a reliable guide through the letter to the Galatians, and the many notes are as important and helpful as the commentary proper. Krentz has treated my own commentary on Galatians very generously. It is rather curious that I should have to be critical of him where he has been critical of me—in the outline. Krentz makes quite a point of the claim that his commentary "treats the body of the letter as one argument in three stages" (p. 102). He holds that my own commentary distinguishes what is biographical, doctrinal, and ethical. In this judgment he is quite wrong, for my commentary distinctly marks the theme as "The Gospel of St. Paul, the Only Gospel, is the Gospel of Freedom," and the idea of freedom is highlighted wherever possible. As for Krentz, he finds the theme of the letter in verses 11 and 12 of the first chapter and formulates it as follows: "Paul's Gospel Is Not Determined by Human Standards." The unfolding of that theme, he holds, follows in two parts: one, that his gospel is not from humans (1:13-2:21) and, two, that it is also not proclaimed in accordance with any human standard. Two major arguments demonstrate the latter point: (1) his gospel brings liberty that destroys human legalism, (3:1-5:12) and (2) his gospel impels Christians to true loving service. This theme (can a negative be a theme?) and parts completely mystifies me.

The commentary on Philippians often circles around the meaning rather than hitting it head on. This is particularly true of the discussion of the section 2:5-11. In spite of all the discussion of the hymn and its sources and Paul's treatment of it, the actual exegesis of the hymn itself is disappointing. The method adopted, in my judgment, is all wrong. One must start with the material itself as part of the Philippian letter—if 2:5-11 is a hymn, Paul has either composed it himself or used it approvingly—and only then make some comments on its origin, of which we strictly know nothing. The acceptance of the phrase of the RSV translation, "a thing to be grasped," is to put Paul or the hymn in contradiction with itself, for "in the form of God" and "equality with God" are equivalents, so that it is impossible for one with the form of God to look on equality with God as "a thing to be grasped."

Koening does not want to associate Philemon with Colossians but with Philippians. Nothing depends on the position, but the argumentation for his view operates almost wholly with arguments from silence and neglects the close association between Philemon and Colossians in the common names of those who send greetings and the quite remarkable breadth of treatment of the master-slave relation in Colossians. Koenig sees the epistle to Philemon as being within the long tradition of Judeo-Christian attempts to achieve justice (p. 185). Actually, there is no attempt at all by Paul to broaden the case of Onesimus into the broader problem of slavery. What the epistle does show is that Christian faith and love can overcome all forms of injustice from within, i.e., from within the Christian community. The two-page commentary on Philemon by Emil Brunner in his *Justice and the Social Order* is a necessary complement to this commentary of Koenig.

There are two special comments to make concerning the last commentary, that of Juel on 1 Thessalonians. The first concerns the very critical attitude adopted by him in relation to the Acts of the Apostles. The endeavor to find as much agreement as possible between Acts and Paul is as scholarly as the endeavor to make the differences as irreconcilable as possible. There is no special value in an excessive scepticism. The second special comment has to do with the supposed contradiction between Paul in 1 Thessalonias 2:13-16 and Romans 9-11. Juel sees no other way out of the problem than to speak of a development of Paul's thought on the Jews (pp. 219-221). I do not see the necessity for this solution. Paul is not making fundamental statements on Israel as a whole in the light of God's plan or judgment in 1 Thessalonians. What we have is a simple reaction to bitter experiences of Christians at the hands of some Jews in Macedonia and in Judea. Paul's reaction is less than perfect from the point of view of a Christian morality, but it is natural enough. It is also not anti-Semitic. He could have made the same statement if the persons concerned had been Gentiles.

H.P. Hamann

THEOLOGIANS UNDER HITLER: GERHARD KITTEL, PAUL ALTHAUS, AND EMANUEL HIRSCH. By Robert P. Ericksen. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Univeristy Press, 1985. 245 pages. $20.00.

The three representative theologians in question are Gerhard Kittel of "word book" fame, the Lutheran confessional scholar Paul Althaus, and Emanuel Hirsch. Of the three, Hirsch is by far the most interesting. He was in the 1920's and 1930's ranked as one of the giants of twentieth-century German theology, along with such as Karl Barth, Rudoplf Bultmann, and Emil Brunner. But all three of Ericksen's subjects were eminently respectable figures and all three, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, supported National Socialism. Ericksen's interest is in finding out how it happened that such distinguished thinkers could end up being so disastrously wrong.

Ericksen's answer is just a little limp. He suggests that neither theological orthodoxy nor clear thinking can help very much in making political judgments. Some theologians—Paul Tillich, for example—"jumped left and others jumped right." If his answer is not very satisfactory, Ericksen nonetheless tells the story well, and it is a little-known story that very much needs to be told. As a student and young professor, Hirsch was an intimate friend and intellectual soul-mate of Paul Tillich's. He was, in addition, the premier Kierkegaard scholar of his day, and his political commitments must be understood in terms of the urgency of existential decision about the historically concrete.

Ericksen attempts to make the case that in the early 1930's one could be excused for thinking that National Socialism was the benign revolution for which Hirsch and so many others were looking. Fair enough. But one must also ask whether there were not from the beginning danger signs that, had they been heeded, might have prevented Hirsch from providing a theological rationale for the *Deutschen Christen*, or German Christians, who attempted to capture the church for the Nazi cause. Some of the theological danger signs were lifted up by Paul Tillich in his "open letter" to Emanuel Hirsch of 1934 (published for the first time in its entirety in English in *The Thought of Paul Tillich*, Harper and Row, 1985). In Germany, Tillich and Hirsch had collaborated in developing what Tillich called the "Kairos doctrine." In Tillich's case the doctrine was employed in the service of his "Religious Socialism, " but both thinkers saw it as a useful way of understanding the intersections of historical movements and "the God who acts."

In his open letter, which Ericksen also discusses at some length, Tillich criticizes Hirsch for neglecting "the eschatological proviso" that must accompany all historical judgments and political judgments. As Tillich insisted, there must be both a *reservatum* and an *obligatum* in political commitments. If the "reservation" is swallowed up by the "obligation," the way is opened to "enthusiasm" with its attendant fanaticisms. In this connection, Lutheran readers of *Theologians under Hitler* will be provoked to think again about the uses and abuses of the "two kingdoms" doctrine or, more precisely, the Lutheran teaching of the two-fold rule of God.

And all readers of the present volume should be put in mind of the current debate over sundry liberation theologies. Indeed, there are uncanny analogies of both language and ideas between liberation theology today and the theology of the *Deutschen Christen* as advanced by Hirsch. The analogies are by no means weakened by the fact that Hirsch favored Nazism and current liberation theology is closely associated with Marxist-Leninism. Whatever the political differences

(and, as Hannah Arendt and many others have demonstrated, the differences between Marxism and Nazism are not *that* great), the critical similarity is in theological method and conclusion. In the case of both Hirsch and Juan Luis Segundo theological truth claims are subordinated to the "truth" of the liberationist struggle. Finally, even the "true church" is defined in terms of its solidarity with the cause and its ideology. Thus in Nicaragua today the liberationists posit "the people's church" against the church defined by traditional Roman Catholic theology, much as Hirsch posited the *Deutschen Christen* against both the Confessing Church of Barmen and the Christian communities that remained politically unaliglned. (In truth, most of the Confessing Church, its subsequent image of courageous "resistance" notwithstanding, did not oppose the Third Reich politically.)

This is a profoundly disturbing book, and more especially for Lutherans. Ericksen is admirably consistent in trying to understand these theologians on their own terms and in the context of their times. And that is the spirit in which the book should be read although, of course, judgments must be made. It would be unfortunate, I believe, were the reader to conclude that the remedy for the neglect of the *reservatum* is to forget the *obligatum*. Christians must continue to think theologically about the obligations and limits of politics. And most of us will continue to believe that we must run the risk of making commitments with respect to political ideas and direction. *Theologians under Hitler* is finally a cautionary tale, and those who take it to heart will be better able to engage and help others to engage the political task in a manner that keeps all temporal programs under the judgment of the eternal.

Richard John Neuhaus
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C. S. LEWIS AND THE SEARCH FOR RATIONAL RELIGION. By John Beversluis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. Paperback, 182 pages.

It is the author's considered opinion, and he exerts every effort to prove his point, that "C. S. Lewis needs to be rescued not only from the evils of excessive hostility but also and equally from the evils of excessive loyalty" (p. xiii). It is the latter which seems to occupy the writer above all, seeking to show that Lewis' famed apologetic in behalf of Christian faith was not grounded as securely as many thought, that Lewis' contention that he became a Christian "because the evidence seemed to allow no other alternative" was actually full of holes. Beversluis refers in turn to the various arguments which Lewis mustered for God's existence and His caring love for mankind, the argument from desire, the moral argument (which so impressed Kant), the argument from reason (against naturalism), etc., liberally quoting significant statements by Lewis to illustrate his argumentation. Beversluis is convinced that Lewis tactics over against his opponents involved setting up straw men and then shooting them down with arguments that often begged the question and were fallacious because they set up false dilemmas. Most readers will recall Lewis' famous example that focused on Jesus' claim of being able to forgive sins and of being true God. Many people are willing to accept the statement that Jesus was a great moral teacher, says Lewis, but not that He was true God. Lewis then argues that this is an indefensible position in view of the fact that anyone who said the things that

Jesus said and who was not true God at the same time could not be a great teacher of morality; he would have to be a lunatic. Beversluis quarrels with Lewis on this line of argumentation, as well as virtually all the rest of Lewis's apologetics, and questions whether in the final analysis he contributed as much to the "case for Christianity" as he has been credited with. Late in life Lewis married an American woman with two young sons, entering into what has been described as a very happy union. Yet when Lewis had to endure with her a debilitating illness that finally took her in death, it seems, says Beversluis, that then the argument from pain, on which Lewis had also grounded some of his argument for God's existence and God's caring love for suffering mankind, went into an eclipse and growing cynicism ensued. Yet Beversluis concludes that, although he has poked some holes in the "Lewis cult" balloon, "and although Lewis the man must be distinguished from Lewis the myth, his apologetic writings repay study" even still. Admirers of Lewis will, therefore, want to sift through Beversluis' argumentation for another side of the story.

E. F. Klug

GREEK ACCENTS: A STUDENT'S MANUAL. By D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985. 167 pages.

It is both surprising and gratifying to be confronted by a book on Greek accents in an age of computers and MTV. Perhaps the niceties of the ancient world are not completely lost, even in our benighted world! Don Carson, a prolific writer of wide-ranging interests has, in this volume, sought to introduce the student to the mysteries of accenting, because, he suspects, "more than half the students who study beginning Greek, especially New Testament Greek, are not taught the rudiments of accentuation. . ." (p. 9). Furthermore, he laments, "the introductory grammars which deal with accents scatter their information throughout their pages . . ." (p. 10), while "some of that information [is] correct for Attic Greek but incorrect for the Greek of the New Testament" (p. 10). The book is simply organized. It contains chapters much like an elementary Greek grammar, with separate lessons on the various parts of the Greek language (e.g., second declension adjectives, imperfect indicative active, third declension neuter nouns, etc.); each has an explanation followed by one or more exercises; and the book concludes with a summary of all the accenting rules and an answer key for all exercises.

Carson has succeeded, I believe, quite well. His presentation is nothing if not complete, especially his exhaustive treatment of small and troublesome words such as *ouk* and *estin*. Particularly valuable for this reviewer was Lesson 9, "Enclitics and Proclitics," an excellent summary of the often arcane rules for accenting "words without accents." It tells clearly what one does with a string of enclitics: each one throws an acute accent onto the word before (p. 49)! I may also note Carson's fully correct treatment of the accenting of strong aorist imperatives, especially the exceptions relating to *eipe* and *elthe* (Lesson 17).

There are, however, several problems with this book. The first is that it indulges in overkill. Most chapters are not needed as separate chapters, e.g., Lesson 18 (Liquid Verbs), Lesson 21 (Third Declension Neuter Nouns), Lesson 26 (Perfect and Pluperfect). They give an exaggerated sense of importance to this subject and are, in fact, chapters on *morphology* rather than chapters on ac-

centing *per se*. Second, the explanation of contract verb accenting (first principal part) is still too complicated (Lesson 4). One need only say: If the accent on the uncontracted form falls on the short vowel at the end of the stem, it will become a circumflex on the contracted syllable in the contracted form (e.g., *philéesthe–phileisthe*). In all other cases, the accent remains where and as it is (e.g., *ephíleon–ephíloun* and *ephileómetha–ephiloúmetha*). Finally, I have never had any sympathy for arranging the cases as nominative, *accusative*, genitive, dative. I know the English delight in this arrangement but, given the listing of the "principle parts" of nouns as nominative and *genitive*, it seems to me quite silly. The order becomes bothersome, I think, for American users of a text.

James W. Voelz

SUPPLY-SIDE STEWARDSHIP: A CALL TO BIBLICAL PRIORITIES. By Waldo J. Werning. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.

Dynamic renewal in the church stems from Biblical stewardship based on God's grace in Christ. In his latest book Dr. Werning suggests that many churches practice maintenance stewardship based on survival concerns and the tyranny of the urgent. A companion volume to *Christian Stewards: Confronted and Committed* (CPH, 1982), this stimulating volume describes the characteristics of supply-side stewardship based on biblical priorities in sharp contrast to traditional or man-centered stewardship.

Werning conceptualizes a broad application of supply-side stewardship in the local parish. A balance is needed between Word and worship, fellowship, and stewardship and evangelism methodology. An over-emphasis on any of the elements or a neglect of one of these biblical ingredients leads to distortion and a shriveling of the church's mission. In an interesting discussion, Werning uses the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to describe the flow of God's supply in the Christian life.

Building on stewards as servants, justified and sanctified, the book describes a Biblical education process of preparation, proclamation, persuasion, and participation. Creative, spiritual leadership stresses a serving approach which disciples others to lead in the same servant style. Based on God's unending source of supply through Word and Sacraments, God's people give the best they can give as good stewards of the mysteries of God. Like its predecessor, this new book offers every pastor and thoughtful lay leader a thoroughly biblical guideline for stewardship in the parish. Werning's sage advice will help advance the mission of the church in a Lutheran context.

Stephen J. Carter

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE. Theories of Inspiration, Revelation, and the Canon of Scripture. By Robert Gnuse. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985.

This book "presents a general overview of the different models for biblical authority proposed within the greater Christian traditions through the ages," according to its jacket. It is written as an "introduction to the basic issues of the Bible as God's Word." The author perceives the modern views concerning biblical authority to be classified according to five different models: (1) inspiration, (2) holy history, (3) existentialism, (4) Christological, and (5) what he calls "models of limitation." The author is a graduate of Seminex and teaches Old Testament at Loyola University in New Orleans.

The outline of the book is good and is perhaps the one redeeming feature. Once the author has established his outline, however, the enterprise founders, and with the precipitiousness of the Titanic in its maiden voyage. Although the last four "models" which Gnuse treats are done with considerable detail and accuracy, the chapter which deals with "inspiration as a general model for authority" is a masterpiece of distortion. The reader is able to glean only the predilections and animadversions of Dr. Gnuse on what is the traditional, orthodox, catholic, and certainly Lutheran doctrine of the authority of the Bible. I will not burden the reader with specifics except to say that a paragraph on page 29, which contains five sentences, contains six errors in logic or in fact; and a paragraph on page 31, which contains eight sentences, contains eight such errors.

Gnuse's treatment of salvation history as the basis of authority is a great deal more accurate and discerning. For instance, he points out that, if history is the authority for the church, then the Bible is not, and that will never do. He disagrees with the idea of Cullmann, Richardson, and Dodd that the Bible is in some sense authoritative for the church as it assesses and proclaims God's acts in history. His mentor for his critique of these scholars is James Barr, who is not known for his devotion to objectivity. The author's treatment of the existentialist doctrine of authority is quite fair, as far as it goes, although brief. Unfortunately, he falls into the same old mystical, noncognitive understanding of the function of biblical and theological language which has marked the subjectivistic madness of neoorthodoxy and existentialistic theology from Karl Barth's Romans Commentary to our present day. A chapter on "Christocentric Models" of authority discusses Christ as the center of authority for the church. Those listed as espousing this view and some kind of Christocentric approach to Scripture are Luther, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl, Martin Kahler, Ernst Troelsch, and Albert Schweitzer. As the author presents this view, it assumes the aura of denominationalism and Marcionism. The final theory of authority to engage Gnuse's attention he calls "models of limitation." Under this formal category he includes not only post-Reformation Roman Catholicism, which limited biblical authority by stressing ecclesiastical authority, but also romantics such as Herder and Michaelis. *Lineamentum praeter nihil*: the book has little of value beyond a good outline.

Robert Preus

BAKER ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PSYCHOLOGY. Edited by David G. Benner. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985. 1223 pages.

David G. Benner is a professor of psychology at Wheaton College. He holds a Ph.D. degree in clinical psychology from York University, Toronto. He studied theology at Ontario Theological Seminary and psychoanalytic psychology at the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis. He maintains a part-time private practice of psychotherapy in the Chicago area and serves as a staff psychologist at Glendale Heights Community Hospital.

Under Dr. Benner's guidance, as editor, psychologists from various disciplines and practices contributed articles ranging all the way from "Abnormal Psychology" to "Z-Process Attachment Therapy." Individual articles present psychological research and psychological principles in a manner understandable to college-educated readers. Theological comments and evaluation help the reader to correlate psychological principles with relevant theological considerations. Such insights will be useful to the parish pastor as he tries to understand various human behaviors with which he comes into contact in everyday life as well as in problem and crisis situations. Information in this encyclopedia can be helpful to the parish pastor as he goes about his special counseling duties. It can also help him with concepts and principles used by physicians and psychiatrists who are providing their professional services to the same people to whom the pastor ministers. While the limits of an encyclopedia must be recognized by anyone who wants to pursue depth, this volume can certainly serve as a good introduction to psychological considerations for the pastor who did not major in psychology during his college years. This should be a helpful reference in a parish pastor's study.

Edgar Walz

PRAYER: PERSONAL AND LITURGICAL. By Agnes Cunningham, SSCM. Message of the Fathers of the Church, 16. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1985. 147 pages. Paper.

At first glance, this little book seems like a meager attempt towards a theology of prayer in the early fathers, since there is not much analysis here of the writings of the fathers. But Agnes Cunningham's purpose is not to formulate a theology of prayer on the basis of an extensive examination of the "message" of the fathers, for she allows the fathers to speak for themselves. By the time we are in the midst of this book, we have to agree with her decision to let us "hear" the fathers on prayer, for any extensive examination of their theology of prayer could not yield as much fruit as their very words of prayer.

This does not mean to say that Prof. Cunningham's brief analysis is not worth the price of the book. Part I of the book entitled "The Patristic Doctrine of Christian Prayer" is her evaluation of the development of a theology of prayer in the fathers. She makes precise formulations concerning the difference between supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings; between liturgical prayer and personal prayer, both of which were formal and communal, consciously done within the context of a full and embracing ecclesiology; and between "existential" prayers, which concern "the daily confession of faith in a spirit of eschatological readiness for the Second Coming or for martyrdom

and of intercession for the needs of the Church and the world," and "mystical" prayer, which "enables us to relive that crossing into the spiritual world which we have already experienced in a mysterious and hidden way in baptism." Her final chapter in Part I shows how early Christian prayer developed, becoming "progressively theological and increasingly holistic or integrated." Prof. Cunningham classifies the theology of prayer in the early fathers under three headings: mission (prayers for the mission of the church), mysticism (prayers for the living out of one's baptism) , and memorial (prayers for full participation in the eucharistic life).

In light of the pentecostal and pietistic problems that have plagued the church, Prof. Cunningham's book is enlightening and a great contribution towards understanding the theology of prayer in the fathers. She argues very persuasively that the early fathers centered their lives of prayer around the Lord's Prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist:

> Tertullian insisted that in Jesus Christ, a new kind of prayer had been given to humanity. This prayer was to be found most clearly exemplified in the formula known as the Lord's Prayer. The significance of this prayer was marked by the place assigned to it in the eucharistic celebration from earliest times and by the attention given it in treatises and commentaries during the patristic age. . . for Christians of the pre-Nicene era, the whole of their participation in the eucharistic liturgy was symbolized in their AMEN. . .the eucharistic supper enshrined in Prayer and Word became the focus of all Christian worship and the central experience of Christian spirituality. . .Christian prayer, as understood and taught by the Fathers, was, essentially, christological—therefore, biblical and ecclesiological—therefore, sacramental.

If Prof. Cunningham is right, it is easy to see how today's emphasis on personal and individualistic prayer, on non-ecclesiological and non-communal prayer is not in any way consistent with the theology of prayer articulated by the fathers. The prayers of the fathers, according to Prof. Cunningham, were always communal, eucharistic, in imitation of the Lord's Prayer, and in the context of the church.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this book is the selection of writings from the fathers that illustrates the discussion of the patristic doctrine of Christian prayer. Before each selection, Prof. Cunningham gives a short introduction to the author and the context of the writing that is very helpful in understanding the writings of the fathers. The selections themselves are excellent. Two chapters stand out in particular. In chapter 6, entitled "The Lord's Prayer," Prof. Cunningham has given us access to the thinking of Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian of Carthage, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cyril of Jerusalem on the Lord's Prayer; and in chapter 7, entitled "Poets and Musicians Pray," a literary dimension to prayer is demonstrated through the magnificent poetry of Clement of Alexandria, Marius Victorinus, Ephrem the Syrian, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose of Milan, Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, and Romanos Melodos. In both these selections of the fathers, as well as the other selections Prof. Cunningham has chosen, it is clear that the deep and abiding biblical theology of the early fathers gave them an eschatological vision in their prayers of the restoration of the world to its Source through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Aurelius Prudentius Clemens concludes in "A Hymn Before Sleep":

We seek, in sleep, refreshment,
Renewal of toil-wearied bodies;
We hope for protection
From dark, threatening phantoms.
  Remember this, Christian;
  You have been washed
  In the saving water of baptism,
  Anointed with holy oil.
When beckoned by sleep,
You approach an unsullied bed,
Place on your head and your heart
The sign of the cross of salvation.
  Sin is cast out by the cross,
  Darkness and evil, dispelled.
  The mind and the spirit find peace
  Under this sacred sign.
Depart, then, tormenting dreams!
Be gone, deceiver of souls!
Off with your evil phantoms!
Peace to the sleeper!
  Let the false serpent be gone—
  Depart with seductions and fantasies;
  Let no evil beset
  The heart of the sleeper!
Here is the Christ.
Evil, in all forms, be gone!
Before the conquering sign
Let the enemy retreat!
While the body seeks rest from fatigue,
Short though the peaceful hours be,
Even in sleep,
Let our thoughts be of Christ!

Arthur Just

KARL BARTH'S CHRISTOLOGY. ITS BASIC ALEXANDRIAN CHARACTER. By Charles T. Waldrop. Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1984. Hard cover, $40.45. 265 pages.

In his published doctoral dissertation, Dr. Waldrop offers a pleasingly written and, on the whole, meticulously researched account of the main features of Karl Barth's Christology. Those who regard Barth as the foremost twentieth-century heir of the thought of John Calvin will react with surprise to Dr. Waldrop's conclusion that the Basel theologian's Christology belongs in the Alexandrian rather than in the Antiochene camp when it is considered in patristic perspective. Of course, all hinges on the definition of key terms, so that it is well to begin by examining the sense given by Dr. Waldrop to "Alexandrian Christology." The latter exists, we are told, when one identifies our Lord as the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, who took a complete human nature into the unity of His person at the incarnation, with the result

that "Jesus" denotes not a human person distinct from God, but God's incarnate Son (p. 194). That Barth advocated this position is amply demonstrated in the chapters "Barth's Alexandrian Christological Doctrine" and "Barth's Alexdandrian Christological Language." In this way, however, Dr. Waldrop has proved merely that the structure of Barth's Christology meets the minimum requirements of Christian orthodoxy. He has not by a long chalk indicated the Alexandrian credentials of the substance of Barth's Christology.

Reflection on the mystery of Christ's person can only be hampered when central concepts are rendered intentionally vague, as is the case when Dr. Waldrop operates with two distinct definitions of the term "Antiochian." On the one hand, it refers to the fifth-century theologians of Antioch who taught some kind of union between the man conceived in Mary's womb and the divine person of the eternal Logos. On the other hand, it also denotes the post- Enlightenment "Christology" which posits some association between "the person God" and "the person Jesus." When Dr. Waldrop begins his book by outlining the divergent views of the contemporary scholars Welch and McIntyre, the confusion is only made worse. The reader is not quite sure whether these gentlemen are talking for themselves or for Barth. Nor is one's bewilderment cleared up when one finds Barth himself claiming that only "God" is a "Person" and not, as has traditionally been supposed, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That Barth can bounce back with talk of the intra-divine relations of three "modes of being" is evidence of the tantalizing ambiguity that marks his whole thought.

In simply linguistic terms, Dr. Waldrop makes a convincing case that Barth's Christology is what he is pleased to call "Alexandrian" but, when one presses through the words to the underlying realities, one is inclined to think that the early chapter, "An Antiochian Interpretation of Barth's Christology," has more to be said for it than its author supposes. This chapter brings out those aspects of Barth's thought that have been most distasteful to conservative Lutherans, namely, his teaching that Holy Scripture and proclamation only "become" God's Word in the "event of revelation." Lurking around in the background seems to be some subliminal Hegelianism which becomes eloquent on the wings of Barth's rhetoric but is unmasked as sheer nonsense when carefully scrutinized. Thus Barth can dazzle us by pronouncing that our Lord's person and work are identical and that He assumed a sinful humanity which was nevertheless sinless! Within an overall structure which avows the anhypostasis of Jesus' manhood and its enhypostasis in the Logos, Barth's Christology nevertheless takes a Nestorian turn by speaking of the obedience of Christ's human to His divine nature (rather than of the obedience of the one divine-human person to the Father) and by telling us of the "confrontation" and "fellowship" of the natures with each other (rather than of the permeation of the manhood by the Godhead). Again, Barth refers the state of humiliation to the divine nature (rather than speaking scripturally of the humiliation of the one divine-human person, whose manhood was from the outset "in the form of God"). Barth's Calvinism shines through in the statement that the incarnation itself (rather than the Lord becoming our substitute) is a humiliation of the divine essence. And for Barth the analogy of two planks of wood glued together actually overdoes the unity of our Lord's person (cf. *FC SD* VIII, 14; *Tappert*, p. 594). Each of the major chapters documents Barth's fierce hostility to distinctively Lutheran Christology,

so that his putative "Alexandrianism" cannot be construed as including any affinity for the most distinguished representative of that school, St. Cyril of Alexandria himself.

Dr. Waldrop's greatest blunder occurs in his closing pages (178-190), where he ponders whether or not Barth's theology as a whole is to be labelled "Alexandrian." In the negative column he enters Barth's pronounced differences from the famous theologians of Alexandria, Clement and Origen. Thus the gnostically-inclined so-called "Christian Platonists of Alexandria" are placed in the same ball-park as the great doctors of the church, St. Athanasius and St. Cyril! This unsightly blemish notwithstanding, Dr. Waldrop's volume can be commended to the attention of professional systematicians as an indicator of today's theological climate and as a reminder of the enigma that was Karl Barth.

John R. Stephenson
Lewiston, New York

SPIRITUAL CARE. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Translated by Jay C. Rochelle. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. Paperback, 93 pages.

In this text Bonhoeffer does not deal so much with the nuts and bolts of pastoral care as with the basic theological framework in which the pastor serves. He reminds the pastor of who he is and what he is to be. And this for Bonhoeffer involves the proclamation and application of the Word by the pastor himself personally and to every area of his ministerial functions. The need for application of law and gospel is stressed in a fine chapter by that title. But one would object to Bonhoeffer's statement, "There is a principle here for spiritual care: the law must be contained in the gospel and the gospel must be contained in the law" (pp. 43-44). On the other hand, for pastors for whom theology is the *sine qua non*, Bonhoeffer has a sobering admonition: "The greatest difficulty for the pastor stems from his theology. He knows all there is to be known about sin and forgiveness. He knows what the faith is and he talks about it so much that he winds up not living in faith but in thinking about faith. He even knows that his non-faith is the right form of faith: 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief' (Mark 9:24). Knowledge reveals his daimonism. It drives him further and further into factual unbelief. We can then have no experience of faith. Our only experience is reflection on the faith" (pp. 67-68). The book is stimulating and recommended for anyone, especially those engaged in spiritual care.

Norbert H. Mueller

CHURCH, MINISTRY, AND SACRAMENTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. By C. K. Barrett. Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985. Paper. 110 pages.

C. K. Barrett, professor emeritus at Durham University (England), is a well respected name in New Testament studies. The advertising blurb indicates that this present study is the fruit of his participation in the Methodist-Anglican dialogue. It also says that, for the New Testament church, ministry and sacraments are both central and secondary. If this observation is inherently con-

tradictory, or paradoxical, to use a more acceptable theological term, it is so intended. According to Barrett, there are no real structures in the New Testament. The paradox of whether such things really exist in the New Testament brings the reader to the brink of frustration. Traditionally used citations for baptism and the Lord's Supper are reinterpreted. It is impossible to determine with any definiteness who the bishops and deacons (ministers) of Philippians 1:1 are. Corinth was without any local leadership. In the early church all were equal. Paul's authority was personal. Barrett develops his themes according to the separate books or writings, e.g., Pauline, Petrine, Johannine. This is helpful, but the conclusion is the same: the New Testament does not offer definite outlines for the ministry and the sacraments. This book's title promises much, but the book delivers little.

David P. Scaer

THE FOUNDING FATHERS: The Puritans in England and America. By John Adair. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986. Paper. 302 pages.

Dr. Robert Jenson, in a lecture delivered at Concordia Theological Seminary, remarked that because of the heritage of our nation every church was by definition Calvinistic. While no confessional Lutheran would want to think of himself as espousing Reformed theology, it is difficult to deny the reality that our nation was conceived in the womb of the Puritan heritage. Our Americanism with its origin in Puritanism inevitably shapes and influences our religion. Adair traces the origins of Puritanism from its English source through its twin development in both the *old* and the *new* England to its demise in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Though it was not able to maintain itself as a religious movement, its ideas have become part of both the religious and secular American fibre. Certain Puritan ideas are easily identifiable: long *ex corde* prayers, some lasting for an hour; long sermons; two church services each Sunday; strong anti-Roman Catholicism; and simplicity in liturgy. Puritans merged the secular and religious realms in devotion to their work as a divine goal in their lives. Perhaps most importantly, the Puritans understood themselves, as both a church and a society, as God's special people who had a divine destiny. They interpreted the benefits and catastrophes of nature as God's direction of their lives. Such views persist to this day as traditionally American. Though belief in Christ as God and in God as Trinity were tenets of their faith, their devotion was to God without reference to Christ. With an awareness of nature as God's revelation to them and a low practical Christology, Universalism and Unitarianism were not unnatural results of Puritan theology. Adair writes a very readable history. To understand their people, the situation in which they work, and even themselves, Lutheran pastors can greatly benefit from this history of the religious and political origins of our country.

David P. Scaer

MARRIAGE HOMILIES. Edited by Liam Swords. New York: Paulist Press, 1985. 95 pages. Paperback.

Perhaps the kindest way to describe this compilation of homilies is to say that "if you have read one of them you have read them all!" For the most part the "homilies" are not worthy of such an ecclesiastical designation. They could have been written by philosophers or psychologists, marriage counselors or humanists. Generally they are void of basic Roman Catholic theology relative to the "sacrament of marriage."

There are some interesting statements made by the editor: "Marriages, they say, are made in heaven. Marriage homilies, regrettably, have humbler origins." "Ironically, the priest whose homily is a dismal failure too often wows the guests with his after-dinner wit." "If they [the homilies] don't always inspire, they may at least challenge our acceptance of mediocrity." I did not find the sermons to inspire me, nor am I ready to settle for mediocrity concerning the opportunities ministers have in the marriage ceremony for solid theological teaching and Christian witness. These sermons contain outright errors (i.e., concerning the origin of love or the view that God's presence is contingent upon our loving one another) and from time to time indiscreet and even shocking references to marital intimacy. Especially offensive were portions in the homily entitled "Sexual Love." If you can endure the reading of these sermons, perhaps the best that can be hoped from them is a better appreciation of truly biblical sermons grounded on solid theological principles relating to the holy estate of matrimony. But one will have to go elsewhere for those sermons.

Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Ft. Wayne, Indiana

THE SACRAMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH: ESSAYS. A presentation to the Eleventh Consultation of the International Lutheran Conference, meeting at Obot Idim, Uyo, Cross River State, Nigeria, West Africa, on November 2-11, 1984. Edited by Karl Wengenroth. Munich: Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, 1984.

This collection of essays presented to the Eleventh Consultation of the International Lutheran Conference was a serious attempt to address a key issue before the church today—"The Sacraments in the Life of the Church." The essays could be divided into two categories: theological essays dealing with baptism and eucharist in the life of the church and cross-cultural essays that apply baptism and eucharist to specific contexts in the life of the church. The majority of the essays fall into the first category, and unfortunately most of them are simply restatements of the basic Lutheran positions that are familiar to most seminary students and pastors. With the exception of the article introduced by Ralph Bohlmann, a reprint of pages 59-65 of his essay in *Formula of Concord* and pages 8-16 of the CTCR document on "The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship," the theological section is void of any new insights concerning the centrality of the sacraments in the life of the church. Even the pastoral implications of this topic are restatements of the positions of John Fritz in his

Pastoral Theology. Expectations were high for some fresh thinking concerning this vital issue, but in essay after essay the author failed to deliver any new and challenging perspectives.

The second category of the essays was smaller, containing two essays about the particular problems confronted by Lutherans in non-Lutheran contexts. Thomas Batong's piece, entitled "The Ministry and the Administration of the Sacraments in the Life of the Church," dealt specifically with the practical problems of Lutherans in the Philippines. In light of the present situation there, this essay made for interesting reading. So also did the final essay by Udo Etuk, entitled "The Theology of Contexualization and the Challenge of Cultural Revival." This essay was fascinating, extremely well written, and gave us an excellent survey of the history of missions in Africa and the current crisis in "contexualization theology." Although his conclusions also failed to deliver any new insights, the essay itself was very satisfying. It appeared that these final two essays reflected more accurately the capabilities of most of the presenters.

Arthur Just

PEOPLE'S REFORMATION: Magistrates, Clergy, and Commons in Strasbourg, 1500 - 1598. By Lorna Jane Abray. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985. Cloth.

The urban Reformation has played a prominent role in Reformation studies for at least the last twenty-five years. Bernd Moeller's essay, "Imperial Cities and the Reformation" (English translation; Fortress, 1972) prompted much of that interest by explaining the appeal of the Reformaton (especially that of Zwingli and Bucer) in terms of its compatibility with the communal ethos of medieval towns. Steven Ozment, however, offered another explanation in his *Reformation in the Cities* (Yale, 1975) by arguing that the Reformation succeeded by freeing the individual from the burdens and obligations of late medieval religious life. Now, however, Lorna Jane Abray has taken yet another tack, not only by focusing her attention on just one city (and a fascinating one at that, Strasbourg, 1500-1598), but also by showing *how* the Reformation succeeded instead of seeking only to explain *why*. The results are, for the most part, satisfying.

Building upon the work of others who have previously studied the social, political, economic, and cultural milieu of Reformation Strasbourg, e.g., Thomas A. Brady, Jr., and Miriam Usher Chrisman, as well as Francis Rapp for late medieval Strasbourg, Abray very carefully describes the social structure, the religious factions, and the political mechanisms by which the Reformation was effected in Strasbourg. The story is a complicated one—from the 1520's and the repudiation of Rome through the 1530's and the establishing of a reformed church under Bucer all the way to the 1590's and Strasbourg's acceptance of the Formula of Concord—but Abray's account is well organized and is particularly valuable for its explanation of how Strasbourg ended up Lutheran instead of Reformed.

Abray has divided her book into three parts. In the first of these she describes the composition goals, and powers of the three groups responsible for implementing a reformation in Strasbourg—the magistrates, the clergy, and the commons—and outlines the initial religious settlement of the 1530's. In the

second part, she carries the story forward to Strasbourg's acceptance of the Formula of Concord in 1598 by describing the milestones in this evolution, especially as they occurred in the context of pressures from outside the city and of dissent within. Finally, in the last part of her book, Abray analyzes the impact of the Reformation on the values and lives of the Strassburghers.

As her title suggests, Abray's focus throughout her work is upon the laity—whether ruling class or commons—and their perception of the need for reformation and of its effects on their lives and politics. Thus, she eschews any extensive discussion of theological issues on the grounds that it was only the clergy to whom such things really mattered. For example, of the magistrates she concludes that what they "wanted from Lutheranism was not confessional precision but peace and salvation. They avoided doctrinal debate in their own chambers because it fostered division, and they sought to prevent such debate among their subjects for the same reason" (pp. 180-81). What led the citizens of Strasbourg to accept the Formula of Concord was not so much personal conviction regarding its truth but a shift in foreign policy from the Calvinist Swiss and French to the German Lutherans. The Lutheran clergy of the city were successful, therefore, in finally establishing strict orthodoxy in Strasbourg because it contributed to foreign and domestic peace and tranquility.

Abray's analysis is certainly correct as far as it goes. Governments are more concerned about peace and order than they are about doctrinal niceties. But for anyone interested in the theological side of the Reformation story, Abray's book is not the place to look, for *The People's Reformation* is about those who made the Reformation in Strasbourg and how they did so but not about the theology of the movement as a whole. Even so, however, Abray has contributed much to our understanding of how the Reformation took hold in one city, Strasbourg, and why that city eventually became Lutheran not Reformed.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

FOLLOWERS OF THE CROSS: Messages for Lent and Easter. By Harry N. Huxhold. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985. 79 pages. Paper.

Nine messages for Lent and Easter are presented in a biblical perspective that enables the characters to come alive and offers excellent applications for the present-day disciples of our Lord. The nine messages deal with Peter, the fickle follower; John, the timid follower; Simon of Cyrene, the reluctant follower; the mother of our Lord, the related follower; the unnamed women, the sympathetic followers; the Apostle Paul, the non-violent follower; the liturgy in the Upper Room, the aesthetic follower; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the hidden followers; and the followers of the cross in general. One would want to challenge the author's definition of the cross, which treats afflictions unrelated to the Christian faith as crosses (p. 30); his idea of the church's creation at the time of John and Mary's great exchange (p. 40); and his empathy with the hidden followers, which could give encouragement to those who deny the validity of the established church or are indifferent to it (p. 68). I would recommend this sermon series to the parish pastor as one that keeps the cross of Christ central in its proclamation of the Gospel.

Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, Indiana

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF DOGMATICS. By Hendrikus Berkhof. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985. 114 pages. Paperback, $7.95.

Long before Karl Barth appeared on the scene to challenge liberalism's domination of theology in the modern era, Peter Forsyth of England had eloquently and pointedly warned that so-called scientific theology with its higher critical methodology "is a good servant but a deadly master" (*Person and Work of Jesus Christ*, p. 49). Hendrikus Berkhof, a Dutch professor now in retirement, approaches his task with more or less the same awareness. He is best known for the crowning work of his many years of teaching, a one-volume dogmatics, *Christian Faith*, published in translation by Eerdmans in 1979. In writing the present "introduction" Berkhof admits that it may appear as though he is belatedly "ventilating [his] own ideas under the guise of an impartial introduction" (p. 2). In his behalf it should be said that it could or should hardly be otherwise. The two works constitute good matching pairs. Berkhof is naive to think, however, that this compact little book is suited for "young students, just beginning their study of dogmatics." It is probably more an incisive concluding summary for mature students of the dogmatic task as he sees it. Berkhof does not appear to posture arrogantly in an effort to say something strikingly new; for, as he points out, quoting a fellow Dutch thinker (Isaac van Dijk), "to say something that has never been said before you is to run the risk of saying something that will never be said again after you either" (p. 24).

Berkhof successfully pleads the case for retention of the term "dogmatics" in theological curricula, refuting the charge that it must immediately imply heavy-handed authoritarianism. No doubt, he reflects upon his own life and practice when he opines wisely that "a dogmatician should also preach regularly," to keep his theology in touch with the people; otherwise he risks the possibility of being numbered among the "theologians in the bottom of hell," as C. S. Lewis warns, "more interested in their own thoughts about God than in God himself" (p. 15). Berkhof, nevertheless, counts himself among those modern theologians who are open to the so-called assured results of scientific theology, that is, higher criticism, and the ecumenical dimensions that stretch not only to Christian groups but to men of all faiths, Judaism, Islam, etc. As a result, he labels theologies committed to Scripture's authority and inerrancy with the pejorative tag of "biblicistic theology." He passes the same verdict upon those who cling to their confessions with tenacity, unwilling to leave "room for exploration" (p. 20). The dogmatician needs to keep his "ear open to Bible scholarship," Berkhof states, and be more concerned that theology be "related to the situation of the present" than simplistically grounded on "prooftexts" (p. 37). Yet he cautions that "many scholars are so eager to do their theologizing vis-a-vis the themes of our times that they make the gospel into a confirmation if not an echo of answers already available in the culture apart from the gospel" (p. 63). Ultimately Berkhof lets the whole question of authority in religion hang in the balance, reminiscent of theologians who assert Scripture's primacy in their theologizing and at the same time accept neoorthodoxy's (Barth's) judgment that the Bible must be seen as a human product "from below" and not "from above," thus subject to higher critical dissection. In Berkhof's considered opinion, "there [is] too much material in the Bible that [is] not in harmony with the concept of infallibility ascribed to it" (p. 77). He takes the same position in his dogmatics cited above, *Christian Faith* (pp. 96ff.). The identical syndrome

is at work in the final chapter of his present book as he comes to describe some of the *loci* of dogmatics, including the person of Christ. Thus, the Christologies of Hans Kueng, Eduard Schillebeeckx, and Karl Rahner, among many others which he cites, are viewed as viable options in modern theology committed to the posture of viewing Christ only "from below," as the Jew from Nazareth. That is a presupposition which no serious Christian theologian can grant.

E. F. Klug

JOHN 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 1-6. JOHN 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 7-21. By Ernst Haenchen. Translated by Robert W. Funk. Edited by Robert W. Funk and Ulrich Busse. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. 308 and 366 pages. Cloth.

As totally embarassing as any commentary can be, Haenchen's encyclopedic study of the Fourth Gospel is destined to be a storehouse for Johannine studies for the next generation, whether or not his own conclusions are completely convincing. The commentary itself is divided into forty-four chapters, one for each of the identified pericopes. Before discussing the text of the gospel, Haenchen provides a discussion of how the gospel has fared from the age of the early church up to the most recent times. Thus, for the early church period, he traces uses of it in the fathers. Since the nineteenth century the gospel has been dismantled by the modern critics. Kaesemann, the last authority cited, is agnostic about its origins. Other chapters in the introduction cover such matters as text, rearrangement, languages, sources, and its Christologies. For Haenchen, the gospel's author was not a gnostic but grew up in one of the sects which were later incorporated into the church. A final redactor made it accessible to the wider church, which he calls "the great church." Thus, the Fourth Gospel reflects both a theological and political development of church groups as they formed the one church. His theory of this gospel's origins plays a significant role in his exegesis itself, which is hardly the strong point of this commentary. The gnostic interpretation delayed but did not prevent John's final and rightful inclusion in the canon around 200 A.D. Each of these introductory sections, along with the sections on the individual pericopes, is preceded by extensive bibliography. The sections on the pericopes provide a verse-by-verse discussion. Appended to the end of the two volumes is a 113-page bibliography. Students of the Gospel of John will probably find no other work as bibliographically thorough as this one. For such a reason alone, serious scholars will be compelled to include it in their collections. A massive amount of information is placed at one's fingertips.

David P. Scaer

FUNERAL HOMILIES. Edited by Liam Swords. New York: Paulist Press, 1985. 90 pages. Paperback.

There are seven divisions comprising this book of funeral homilies: (1.) "Death of a Young Person," (2.) "Death of a Parent," (3.) "Death of a Single Person,"

(4.) "Tragic Death;" (5.) "Death after a Long Illness;" (6.) "Death of a Handicapped Person;" and (7.) "Death of the Elderly." For the most part these sermons attempt to bring consolation and comfort to the bereaved at the time of the death of a loved one. There are some helpful insights and observations as well as useful illustrations. Surprisingly the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is not noticeable; in fact, there are many statements that, upon the death of a loved one, he or she has gone to be with the Lord and, in fact, is ever with the Lord. The writers have discovered what I also have found to be true, namely, that the funeral not only is an opportunity to comfort the sorrowing but also is one of the finest opportunities for Christian witness to our faith in a gracious God in Christ Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life. The writers of this compilation do a much better piece of work of presenting the Gospel in the context of death than did the writers of the companion volume on marriage.

Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, Indiana

ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FOR MISSIONARIES. By Paul G. Hiebert. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985. 315 pages. Paper, $13.95.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." With these words St. John introduces us to the miracle of God's incarnation—His means of reconciling all aspects of creation to Himself. These words also introduce us to God's way of communicating the Word to unreached people of other lands and cultures. God intends His Word to become incarnate in a person's life, which includes his allegiances, basic presuppositions about life, perception of reality, in short his worldview. This cannot take place unless the Word enters a person's culture-bound world, dwells there, and exercises sole lordship over it. The incarnating of the Gospel in a person's culture, as Paul Hiebert rightly states, can only be a divine act, yet He accomplishes it through human agents. While not ignoring the divine, Hiebert's work focuses on the oft-neglected human dimension of God's redemptive communication. Drawing from his years of experience as a missionary in India and as a professor of anthropology (currently serving at the School of World Mission), Dr. Hiebert offers a plethora of practical insights for both the novice and veteran missionary.

The reader is first provided with the theological and anthropological assumptions underlying the book. We rejoice in Hiebert's clear support of the authority of Scripture, Christocentric interpretation and application of Scripture, and strong emphasis on the church as God's instrument for mission, the priesthood of all believers as God's springboard for missions, and dependence on the Holy Spirit (rather than on man's ability) as God's power for missions. We likewise can appreciate his anthropological assumptions which rise from Christian rather than humanistic presuppositions. With these in place he introduces us, through a highly compressed but helpful presentation, to culture—the organizer and integrater of human life.

Cultural differences greatly affect the three components of the communication process—sender, Gospel message, receptor—and so the book is organized to explore each in detail. In looking at cultural differences and the missionary a number of valuable insights are presented. The treatment of the causes, effects,

and cures for culture shock will leave anyone who has passed through such trauma thinking,"I wish I had known this before I went overseas. How much grief I might have been spared!" The chapter on Western cultural assumptions challenges anyone involved in Gospel proclamation to re-examine, in the light of God's revealed Truth, aspects of his culture which previously he had accepted uncritically.

The necessity of submitting all aspects of life and culture to the Word forms the basis of Hiebert's discussion of cultural differences and the Gospel message. The missionary is reminded, however, that he sees through a glass darkly and cannot assume that his own church's exposition of the Word (theology) has addressed all the realities of life that people in other cultures face. Hiebert carefully lays out the process for churches in other cultures to build a biblical theology that rests only on Christ and serves the prophetic and priestly roles needed in that cultural context. At the same time he points out that the development of an incarnational church cannot take place in cultural or theological isolation from the rest of Christ's universal church. This premise underlies the thinking on the final link of the communication chain—cultural differences and the receptor community. The conclusion drawn at the end of these pages is that both missionary and receiving community remain co-students of the Holy Spirit as He leads them into the truth.

The excellent content of the book is equalled by its presentation. Each chapter is carefully arranged with topics and sub-topics clearly delineated for quick referral. This makes the book quite useful as a primary text for courses dealing with cross-cultural ministry and reference work for particular missionary concerns. Contributing a great deal to the writing are numerous illustrations, charts, and diagrams. Study exercises, short case studies and devotional material provide ample resource for reflection at the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual levels.

The incarnation of the Gospel into another culture is no simple matter. Paul Hiebert has aided the church tremendously by pulling together, into an understandable whole, the many complexities that make up this God-commissioned task. Any person concerned with reaching all peoples with the Gospel will be valuably informed and edified by reading this book. He will realize beyond a shadow of a doubt the necessity of an incarnational approach in Gospel proclamation. When the Word does not become flesh, that is, when it remains unrecognizable as God's Word and does not dwell at the center of a person's life, it remains for him a meaningless, irrelevant message.

Robert Newton
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS CANON: AN INTRODUCTION. By Brevard S. Childs. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

As early as 1970, Brevard S. Childs was calling for a new direction in Biblical scholarship. In that year his *Biblical Theology in Crisis* chronicled the conceptual inadequacy which marked the so-called *Biblical Theology Movement.*

A decade later, Childs provided an alternative for those who shared his misgivings about certain of the methodological assumptions of historical-critical scholarship in an *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Fortress, 1979). This work begins with the statement: "I am thoroughly convinced that the rela-

tion between historical-critical study of the Bible and its theological use as religious literature within the community of faith and practice needs to be completely rethought" (IOTS, 15) . The rethinking that Childs provided in this *magnum opus* (already adumbrated in his *Exodus* commentary of 1974), caused major ripples through the world of Old Testament scholarship. Colleagues like James Sanders of Claremont, whose own *Torah and Canon* struck a consonant note, were most positive and receptive. Among the gainsayers, the most vigorous critique was offered by James Barr in his *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Westminster, 1983).

What is at issue? To oversimplify, Childs suggests that the almost exclusive concern of historical critical scholarship with *diachronic* questions has led it away from its duty to place the final form of the text in its distinctive position as the normative document for the community of faith. It should be made clear that Childs is not suggesting a return to precritical scholarhsip. On the contrary both his work on the Old Testament and the present volume on the New Testament provide some of the most lucid descriptions of the development of the critical discussion which can be found. (Often Childs identifies himself with the reconstructions most forthrightly.)

Rather than a return to precritical methodologies, Childs is really attacking what he sees as dichotomy between the "historically reconstructed text and authoritative Scripture;" i.e., the final form of the text loses its integrity as a guide for the community of faith. In a more recent review of the issues Childs has said: "By a canonical approach to exegesis I am suggesting an interpretation which is consonant with the shape which Israel gave its Sacred Scripture, but which also involves the interpretative activity of the modern reader in confrontation with an ancient canon which is heard in a fresh way by each generation" (*Interpretation*, 1984, p. 69).

All of this places *The New Testament As Canon: An Introduction* in its proper historical framework. Indeed, this work also advances Childs' claim that "what is needed is a new vision of the biblical text which does justice not only to the demands of a thoroughly post-Enlightenment age, but also to the confessional stance of the Christian faith for which the sacred scriptures provide a true and faithful vehicle for understanding the will of God" (p. 37). The continuity with the programmatic of IOTS is immediately evident.

Several aspects of this work should be held up as models of scholarly craftsmanship. First, Childs' command of the secondary literature is massive. His summaries are characterized by balance and succinctness so that the reader gains an accurate overview of complex discussions. This difficult achievement is made all the more remarkable by fact that Childs' chief focus has been Old Testament scholarship. Thus, simply on the level of the *status questionis*, this work ranks with the studies of Kummel (the German perspective) and Neil (British) though its length is more abbreviated.

Secondly, this reviewer would suggest that Childs is perhaps the most suggestive author on the whole hermeneutical question within the contemporary academic community. For example, he addresses probing critiques to Krentz, Stuhlmacher, and Braun with their apologies for historical criticism (pp. 44-47). He is equally clear in his rejection of the Gerhard Maier position (*The End of the Historical Method*).

Thirdly, the standard concerns of this journal's readership will include authenticity, and here Childs' path is an interesting attempt to place the question within a different framework. The canonical approach, Childs asserts, "seeks to pay

close attention to the theological function of the eyewitness claims (Luke 1:3, John 21:24) without immediately translating the biblical testimony into a question of historical referentiality. Similarly it attempts to interpret the function of a claim to Pauline authorship of a letter which appears to have extended the witness beyond the historical period of Paul's ministry (cf. the Pastorals)'' (p. 52). It's at this sensitive point that one wants to ask *when* the question of historical referentially or pseudepigraphy becomes significant in the canonical process? Or, do these questions lose their gravity in view of the larger canonical process which is at work?

Finally, it is refreshing to read about the importance of the larger canonical context for each book (e.g., Jude, p. 493) and to meet such respect for the often forgotten exegetes of a more cautious approach (e.g., the appeal to Adolf Schlatter, p. 434 and *passim*.).

One's differences with the specific postures which Childs espouses do not diminish the importance of *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction.* It is required reading for all who seek to be informed on contemporary issues in Biblical interpretation.

Dean O. Wenthe

THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, VOLUME V. Edited by Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986. 521 pages.

This volume continues the Old Testament counterpart of Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Though this latter work undoubtedly provided the inspiration for TDOT, there are significant differences in the manner in which the ''word-studies'' have been executed. The lucid critique of James Barr's *Semantics of Biblical Language* (1961) continues to bear fruit in the broader focus of TDOT on semantic fields and actual usage rather than the sometimes narrowly etymological emphasis of TDNT. The present volume goes from the root *hmr* to the tetragrammaton *YHWH.* Often an individual entry is subdivided into sections which are authored by different specialists. Hence, Gamberoni describes the larger meaning *hapar* and Botterweck its translated equivalents in the Septuagint (pp. 107-111).

A particularly useful feature of TDOT is its information on cognates and semantic parallels in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Sumerian, Hittite, and Egyptian. Since each of these languages sometimes renders valuable data on the larger linguistic context of a biblical term, the serious student of the Old Testament is provided with an overview which would otherwise not be readily available. For example, the discussion of the root *tal* as it appears in the Ugaritic texts provides connotations with which many Israelites may have been all too familiar (pp. 327-30). Any theological dictionary faces problematic methodological choices. TDOT, perhaps due to the relative uncertainty in dating the rabbinic texts, has chosen largely to ignore this corpus. While this is readily understandable, the decision to provide only a minimal commentary on the occurrences at Qumran and the equivalents in the LXX seems less fortunate.

By any measure, however, TDOT is a major contribution for which the publishers are to be congratulated. The evenness of the prose (though many of the articles are translations), the format, and the refined approach in assess-

ing the actual semantic freight of a term (insofar as these factors are still accessible to us at such great historical and cultural distances) are to be commended. While one may differ with the inferences sometimes drawn from the data, it will be necessary for those who propose alternatives to take into account the contours drawn in TDOT. Without doubt, the exegetically astute pastor will want this resource on his shelf.

Dean O. Wenthe

EZRA, NEHEMIAH . By H. G. M. Williamson. Waco: Word Books, 1985. 417 + lii pp.

British Old Testament scholarship frequently has provided a focus on the Second Temple Period which was lacking in German circles, where this epoch was regarded as a downward spiral from the prophets to the legalism of priestly and scribal schools. The Albright archeological dimension of American scholarship similarly stressed the earlier Bronze period and directed its major energies there. The prolific pen of P. R. Ackroyd of the University of London (so outstanding in its sustained analysis of Second Temple texts) is now joined by that of his fellow-countryman H. G. M. Williamson of Cambridge University.

Ezra-Nehemiah is volume 16 in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, a series which has already published thirteen of the projected fifty-two volumes on the Old and New Testaments. Hence the format follows that commentary's sequence of a fresh translation, textual notes, bibliographic survey, form, structure, setting, comment, and a concluding "explanation." The great plus in this ordering of the exposition is that it permits the reader to dig in at a particular point of interest without surveying the entire text.

The parish pastor or serious student of *Ezra-Nehemiah* will find this a stimulating study for several reasons. First, Williamson achieves a remarkable degree of readability as he discusses the interpretative options. The clarity of his prose reminded this reviewer of John Bright's *History of Israel*. Secondly, while the author is clearly within the historical-critical framework of assumptions, his discussion displays remarkable balance. For example, he refers the reader to the "excellent sketch" in D. Kidner's more conservative work (p. xlviii). Thirdly, the breadth of the citations is so extensive that one is provided an excellent window on the "state of the discussion."

With respect to specific issues, Williamson lucidly underscores the labyrinth of introductory questions which attend the interpretation of these two books (xxi-lii). It is noteworthy that he aligns himself with ancient tradition in regarding Ezra-Nehemiah as two parts of a complete work (rather than a extension of the Chronicler's work with the prevailing "scholarly consensus"). There is also an independence in the commentary's defence of "the view that Neh. 13:6 is historically accurate in saying that Nehemiah was governor of Jerusalem for twelve years, then had a break in Babylon, and later returned to Jerusalem" (p. xxvi). In this same vein, Ezra is credited with a key role in the narrative's formation: "This looks much more like the writing of someone trying to justify his record than it does like the work of a later pious and idealizing biographer" (p. xxxii).

This framework of decisions on introductory matters sets the stage for the rich discussion of the commentary. Particularly the comment sections will reward

the reader with a wealth of data for use in Bible classes or sermon preparation. For example, the description of the reading of the law (Neh. 7:72-8:18) explores the theological, cultural, and social components of the event with insight and unsurpassed thoroughness (pp. 286-97).

While one might raise a question here or there (e.g., the two-redaction schema of 400 and 300, p. xxxvi), this commentary will surely serve as a standard for some time. This concluding accolade is in order not simply for Williamson's scholarly paradigm, which is impressive in its own right, but also for the theological profundity which marks his linkage of such things as the completion of Jerusalem's wall and the larger meaning for the kingdom of God. To put it in Lutheran terms, Williamson sees Israel's history as incarnational in a manner parallel to Horace Hummel's *The Word Becoming Flesh*. Word and Sacrament are, as it were, held together when one reads (pp. 376-7):

> The dedication of the newly built wall of Jerusalem is a climax to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.... It may be felt by some, however, that this is all too physical.... Is not the physical merely a framework for the spiritual? The biblical author will not entertain such a dichotomy! If the spiritual be not expressed through the physical, he seems to say, then it is not spiritual at all but mere hypocrisy. But equally, if the physical is not inbred with commitment to and dependence upon God, then it is, quite simply, an arrogant materialism.

Dean O. Wenthe

LAW AND NARRATIVE IN THE BIBLE. The Evidence of the Deuteronomic Laws and the Decalogue. By Calum M. Carmichael. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985. 356 pages. Cloth, $35.00.

Perhaps the best one can say for this curious and idiosyncratic study is that it well exemplifies the current chaos in non-traditional biblical study. If Carmichael of Cornell University can be said to make any forward steps, however, he makes at least as many backward ones at the same time. It will immediately strike the conservative reader's eye that Carmichael shares the widespread frustration, also in many academic circles, with traditional historical-critical approaches. In this book he is especially incensed at the carelessness, if not stupidity, usually ascribed to the compilers and "redactors" of the laws in Deuteronomy 12-26 (p. 14):

> With a little distance we can see just how shaky the historical method is....the attempt at historical illumination has in fact, despite the spate of recent research, produced little that is agreed to.... The procedure is a dispiriting one, dull to read, difficult to follow, and largely ilusory given the paucity of the results and the conjectured historical realities dotted here and there over a vast span of time. Its most depressing aspect is the no doubt unintentional demeaning of the intelligence of the lawgiver who was responsible for the presentation of the material available to us.

But what does Carmichael have to offer as an alternative? In his own words he summarizes his thesis as follows (pp. 17-18):

> The laws in both Deuteronomy and the decalogue arise not as a direct, practical response to the conditions of life and worship in Israel's past, as is almost universally held, but from a scrutiny of historical records about

> these conditions. The link is between law and literary account, not between law and actual life.... This lawgiver sees himself in the prophetic line....He is 'a prophet like unto me,' namely, Moses (Deut. 18:15). He sincerely believes he has authority to make judgments on issues that arose in his nation's past because he possesses the mind of Israel's first lawgiver.... The procedure should be compared with the manifest fiction of the prophetic judgment to be followd by its fulfillment in the writing up of the history of the kings....The events had already taken place, but a hindsight based upon a certain ideological perspective sees their inevitability and casts it in the form of prophetic foresight.

Already this limited sampling will alert the reader that Carmichael's own "ideological perspective" is still very much "historical-critical." His quarrel is with the way it has usually been executed, not with its heremeneutical underpinnings. Perhaps his approach could be classified under the umbrella term of "rhetorical criticism," that is, one of the many relatively more holistic and synchronic approaches to the traditional text as we have it, which are currently quite popular.

But, if so, it is also clear that Carmichael retains much more of the traditional historical-critical baggage than do many other "rhetorical critics." In broad outline, at least, he simply assumes the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch and, specifically, a form of Noth's hypothesis of a single "Deuteronomic" writer or school (Carmichael prefers the former) responsible for both the book of Deuteronomy and the "Deuteronomic history" (Joshua through Kings). Hermeneutically, he is every bit as skeptical of facticity and as relativizing of the authority of Scripture as his predecessors.

It is not easy to summarize in more detail Carmichael's method. But, by his lights, the sequences in Deuteronomy's laws are determined by various associations of word or topic with earlier "events" in Israel's history. We shall attempt one summarizing illustration. The three laws in Deuteronomy 25:4-12 (the unmuzzled ox, a man's refusal to perform his levirate duty, and a woman's immodest grabbing the genitals of her husband's opponent) are all alleged to be dependent upon the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. A literal reading of the prohibition of muzzling the ox is allegedly nonsense because the ox would eat or destroy it all, and no "seed" would be left. Hence, the text itself "invites an original figurative sense" (p. 292). Since "tread" is figurative of sexual intercourse, the law must have been stimulated by reflection on Tamar's difficulty in getting someone to "tread" her and produce "seed." Since Onan's failure to his duty by Tamar led to his death, that reminiscence next suggests to the lawgiver "the task of devising a penalty appropriate to an Israelite who proved disloyal to his dead brother" (p. 295) . In the ceremony prescribed, "the shoe represents the female genitals, the foot the male organ, and the spitting semen" (p. 296). Then, for balance, there is "a desire to contrast a shameful female with a shameful male" (p. 298), the "idiosyncratic" occasion triggered by the fact that Tamar too was "in contention" with her father-in-law when she seduced him!

And so it goes throughout the Deuteronomic laws (chapters 12-26). Even the decalogue must be similarly occasioned, argues Carmichael. The critical failure to disentangle "Deuteronomic language" from the decalogue and reconstruct some primitive pre-Deuteronomic form must mean that it too was probably composed by the "Deuteronomist" in comparable fashion. (The details are no more convincing, but here we will at least applaud Carmichael's much needed in-

sistence that "Ten Commandments" is a misnomer, because we really have "ten utterances" in a narrative framework (pp. 14, 313-15, and 318).

Has Carmichael accomplished anything in his investigation (somewhat of a synthesis of his own frequently cited essays and the labors of his mentor, David Daube)? In our judgment, very little, if anything. There is ample reason, both internally (in the Bible) and externally (other ancient literature) to presume that the Orient had different ideas of organizing literature than those familiar to us in the modern West. But we need a plausible alternative! One cannot but wonder if Carmichael's own model is not the halakic and haggadic procedures of the Talmud, which traditional Judaism tends to view as an outgrowth of and sequel to the "TaNak" (the Old Testament). In any case, although there may be occasional exceptions (e.g., in the transition suggested between the first and second laws above), on the whole this reviewer finds Carmichael's thesis contrived, artificial, far-fetched—in short, most unconvincing. From neither literary nor theological viewpoints does he offer anything superior to run-of-the-mill higher criticism.

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St. Louis, Missouri

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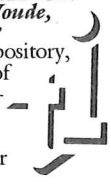
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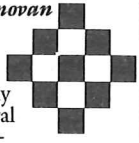
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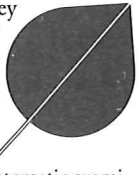

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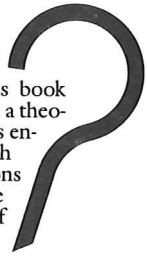

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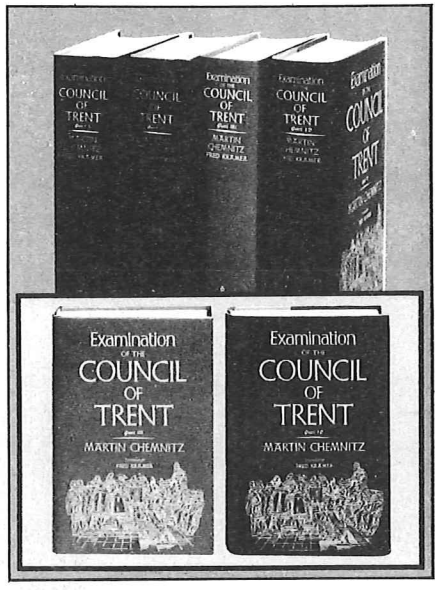

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