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Contemporary Christian Music: An Evaluation

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Johnny, a sixteen-year old high schooler, has just brought home the latest record by Iron Maiden. On the cover is a ghastly, hellish figure leering and drooling, apparently over the prospects of bringing Johnny home for a visit. The song titles leave little to be imagined. They speak of violence, sadistic perversion, satanism, and irrepressible sex. The names of Johnny's other musical artists are also alarming: Black Sabbath, Motley Crue, Judas Priest, Blue Oyster Cult, Cheap Trick, AC-DC, and KISS, which you have been told stands for Kids in Satan's Service. Their songs offer screaming, driving music which advocates just about everything Johnny ought to avoid, from homosexual perversion to satanic sacrifice, from suicide to dabbling in drugs.

Then, providentially it seems, one stumbles upon a flier promoting a dance for high school students at the church. Contemporary Christian musicians will be featured with cuts from Amy Grant, RezBand, Stryper, Keith Green, and more. Subsequently one discovers that an entire genre of music is available to Johnny at the local Christian bookstore. Johnny can have a heavy metal sound, a break-dance beat, a mellow folk sound, Country-Western, Rhythm and Blues, an Elvis 'fifties sound, or basically anything he wants without the ungodly lyrics. Church, district, and congregational newsletters offer critiques of the latest releases. In most metropolitan areas Johnny can find an FM station which plays contemporary Christian music all day long. This music claims to offer a viable and valuable substitute for those young people of America who want to encounter "God, the Rock that makes me roll."[1]

I. The Theology of Contemporary Christian Music

As an apparent alternative, contemporary Christian music seems a god-send. It speaks of commitment to God and others, of love, of faith, and many other Christian virtues. And despite its varied artists it has a fairly consistent theological theme and a coherence which contrasts markedly with the inchoate machinations of other contemporary rock music. Because of its increasing appeal, its use in our church, and its claims to Gospel truth, contemporary Christian music is worthy of our understanding and evaluation. Like many notable expressions of Protestantism, the predominant message of contemporary Christian music can be expressed under five points.

A. *The Predicament of Humanity*

Contemporary Christian music in most of its forms either explicitly states or presupposes a troubled world. People are lost, confused, uncertain, and unhappy. The world is quickly closing in, suicide is becoming an attractive alternative, apathy reigns. Relationships are fractured, marriages broken, and no hope for love is immediately apparent. The Resurrection Band, for example, in its album, *Mommy Don't Love Daddy Anymore,* besides the title cut has songs entitled, "Alienated," "Stark-Spare," "The Chair," "First Degree Apathy," and "Can't Do It on My Own." Degarmo and Key, a very talented Grammy-nominated duo, complain:

> Apathy alert.
> I hear a voice inside shouting to my heart,
> Apathy alert.
> It's time to do what's right,
> It's time for me to do my part—
> Broken dreams and breaking hearts
> Every place you look, but who can change it?
> What can I do all by myself?
> I'm not a King and I'm no Prophet.[2]

So also Silverwind, a trio of one man and two women, who sound remarkably similar to ABBA, describes the human predicament:

> Do the days seem to drag on, has love become an old song,
> Cries and sorrows fill your night?
> All alone, no one caring,
> Tired of living and scared of sharing?
> Fear rules inside of your soul?
>
> And you feel like dying, but someone is crying,
> Give him your heart child, He'll lead you home.
> Give him your heart child, He'll lead you home.
>
> Family's divided, yours is just surviving,
> Mealtime conversation seems a chore.
> There's been cheating, there's been lying,
> Living ain't worth trying,
> You're telling me there's nowhere you belong.[3]

AD, another popular group, which features Kenny Livgren and Dave Hope, both formerly of the popular group "Kansas," can characterize the world's progress as moving backward and downward until "we defile and we desecrate, we destroy and we annihilate, we entangle and complicate," all because "separation from our Creator brought decay."[4] Sin is pictured as a force which prevents

full happiness and causes the grief of this world. Sin is the inability to "make it on my own," or it is the slavery to harmful habits such as sex[5] or drugs.[6]

B. *Jesus*

Jesus offers the solution to the world's problem. According to contemporary Christian music, He offers help to overcome the troubles and afflictions of humanity. He is the promised Messiah, true God Himself, who came to the world to save us. He does this by coming into our lives with His power. He enables us to do what sin made us unable to do. Jesus "will lead you home."[7] He is the "love" who finds a way out of sin and enables us to change and squelch any sinful and spiteful habits we might have.[8] Because of Jesus "we don't need no drugs to help push on; we've got His power in our souls."[9] Jesus loved us so much that, to prove His love, He was crucified. His sacrifice, while not necessarily an event with inherent blessings, is a proof of God's strength and providential care in our lives. For example, Amy Grant, the queen of contemporary Christian music, sings:

> If our God, His Son not sparing,
> Came to rescue you,
> Is there any circumstance
> That He can't see you through?[10]

Degarmo and Key employ the cross in the same way,

> When I think back to the cross ...
> And the man who gave his life,
> I want to live for more than things that rust or die.
> I don't want to struggle for those things that pass away.
> I want to live my life for the things that never fade.[11]

Thus, the primary purpose of Christ and His cross is to provide either the assurance of God's care or a powerful motive for our own sacrificial Christian living.

C. *Coming to Faith*

The help and encouragement of Jesus, according to contemporary Christian music, is futile if we fail to do our part by inviting Him into our lives or making a decision for Him. The decision doctrine is the central theological theme of contemporary Christian music and the article of faith which gives the whole system meaning. Consequently, contemporary Christian music has developed many ways in which to encourage troubled people to get Jesus into their lives.

Often an artist will encourage the sinners to perform their part in salvation, since Jesus can be trusted to perform His part. David Meese, with an Elton John sound, croons,

> Time, time is runnin' out
> And your life, yes, your life is still in doubt.
> Well, it's all up to you,
> Everything you say and do.
> Will you face the truth
> Or be lost in certain doom?[12]

One of contemporary Christian music's wildest groups, RezBand, echoes the same idea:

> The news is spreading all over town;
> You tore all of my roadblocks down.
> I can hardly eat, I can hardly sleep.
> I'm over my head in a love so deep.
> I heard what you said, you told me what could be,
> And then you left it up to me.
> But once I realized it was true,
> Jesus, I belong to you.[13]

More common is the practice of mentioning the cross with a hastily added condition that the hearer has to choose before the promised power of the cross can be effective. For example, Petra, perhaps the most prolific of contemporary Christian musical artists, sings:

> They nailed his hands and his feet to the wood.
> At the foot of his cross all his enemies stood.
> He said "Father forgive them"—
> He gave them all he could give.
> Then he gave up his life and they watched him die.
> They laid his body in a rich man's tomb,
> But he rose from the dead and he's coming back soon.
> You can choose to believe it,
> You can choose to receive it,
> You can choose to believe that he died over you.[14]

Amy Grant maintains the same theme:

> Listen, there's no need to waiver;
> Long ago a Savior died for you so ...
> Tell me, does the fear of losing
> Keep your heart from choosing who has hold of you?[15]

Others refer to the altar call as the place in which the decision for Jesus was made. Carmen, an Elvis Presley sound-alike, sings:

A preacher man in a three-piece suit,
Two-tone shoes and a tie to boot,
He said, "God sent His only Son
To save us from the evil one."

If you're not born again don't stall,
Come down when I give the altar call.
Well, I felt my feet shuffle down the aisle
While sinners marched down single file.

Then someone drove me to my knees
Like a divine electricity.
I said with my hands held high,
I began to cry and I said these words out loud,
I'm saved. Born all over again.[16]

Keith Green, the leading contemporary Christian music male vocalist until his untimely death in 1980, explains the conditional nature of forgiveness in his recorded "Altar call": "The Gospel is simply this, Jesus will forgive all your sins if you'll come to Him humbly, lay down at His feet and say, 'You're the Lord and I'll follow You the rest of my life on earth so that I can have the rest of eternity with You and the glory of Your Father.' "[17]

Most artists are content to require a decision, a giving, a yielding, a surrender, a reaching, or some other action in which God and the sinner cooperate in the conversion. The Darrell Mansfield Band, a rip-roaring rock and roll group reminiscent of Credence Clearwater Revival, shouts:

Everybody's a Prophet, they tell you they know the way,
But once they've picked your pocket, they got nothing to say.

They say I'm narrow minded when it comes to being lost,
The path is wide to destruction, so I count the cost.

You gotta make a decision some day;
Don't let nobody stand in your way.
I see you pointing your finger at the faith I possess.
Well, my God's alive, you know, He passed the test.[18]

Stryper, the celebrated heavy metal group equipped in skin-tight clothes, make-up, studs, spikes, and sundry other weapons, wails:

I was looking for the answer all the time,
Always looking, never finding.
I was empty inside,
Falling into darkness,
Needing the light to see,
Reaching out for shelter.
He set me free.

I reached out, you reach out, He'll reach out today.
I reached out, you reach out, He'll reach out today.[19]

You can have it all tonight.
Pick it up and make it right.
Oh, you can be free;
In the dark you need a light.
Do you want to make it right?

Oh, Jesus is the lover of your soul
And he wants to give you all you need.
So freely surrender;
Open up unto his majesty.[20]

White Heart, another heavy group, pictures faith as the first step in the salavation process:

But in your heart you know;
Still you won't give it up, let it go.
Your life's a hollow lie
It's time for you to realize.

You gotta be a believer.
Step one, be a believer.
You gotta look to the Savior
To find that only answer.
You gotta be a believer,
That's when you'll discover
The love you're missing.
You know that there's no other way.
You gotta be a believer.[21]

And if break-dance is needed, the Rap'sures can move your feet with the lyrics:

Nicodemus thought he was a righteous man,
But in the eyes of God he could not stand.
When it comes to salvation we're all the same.
To be saved from sin we must be born again.
Yah Jesus is coming and it's gonna be soon,
For one more sinner there's always room.
So give him your heart; he will see you thru,
From birth number one to birth number two.
You must be born again.
Jesus said, "You must be born again."[22]

In contemporary Christian music conversion is viewed both as something the sinner must accomplish on his own and as something the sinner does to fulfill a condition placed on the forgiveness of

sins. In his *Songs from the Shepherd* Keith Green sings a song called "The Promise Song." On the album jacket the lyrics are printed. He introduces them with the assertion that God never gives promises unconditionally but always attaches a condition to His promise. The song demonstrates his point:

> And if you'll do my will, I'll make you living stones
> To build up in my Father's house, if you'll serve me alone.
>
> And if you'll love all men, especially the least,
> I'll raise you up the lowest one, and make you kings and priests.
>
> And if you'll seek my face, and set your life apart,
> I'll let myself be found by you, when you look with all your heart.
>
> And if you never turn aside, to the left or to the right,
> I'll be a lamp unto your feet and keep you on the paths of light.[23]

Since, in contemporary Christian music, the Gospel's effectiveness depends on the hearer's response, the inherent power of the Gospel is rarely, if ever, mentioned. The sacraments are mentioned either not at all or disparagingly as things on which we cannot rely.[24] Instead we must "do," "serve," "love," "seek," "look," and "never turn aside" before the promise of God can be ours.

D. *The Nature of Faith*

Faith, according to contemporary Christian music, is valued for its emotional aspects or by the emotions it induces. These emotions, in turn, are viewed as the true sign of Christian commitment or faith. Carmen sings a song entitled "Som-O-Dat," which tells of a man who has "some-o-dat." In the song various other people want "some-o-dat" but are unwilling to humble themselves or pray or fulfill other prerequisites. Carmen concludes:

> Well you can't find it in a bottle
> Or even when you pop a pill or two.
> You can't find it smoking dope that's free,
> 'Cause one fine day you're gonna see
> That the dope that's being smoked, my friend, is you.
>
> Well, if you're depressed, then get used to it,
> Because without Jesus you have blew it.
> He's the only one who can give you som-o-dat.
> Why not try the Lord for goodness sake?
> You'll be happy as a dog with a T-bone steak.
> Then you can say, "Hey, I got som-o-dat."[25]

The impression is given that Jesus will do for you what the bottle, pills, or dope once did. Keith Green is more explicit:

> You know I can't explain to you how He really does it. But He proved Himself to me in such a holy way, such a complete way that I'd die for that faith, that I'd die for that belief because it's more than a belief. He lives in my heart and that's the only proof, it's the only proof that I can give you 'cause He lives in my heart. Those people that knew me before didn't know that I could believe something so strong.[26]

AD also makes faith a heart-felt feeling:

> From the clamor and confusion we live in
> There lies a refuge from the threatening time,
> A cool oasis in the heat of the desert,
> A resurrection from this graveyard of pride.
> If you tell me it's just imagination,
> I won't believe it,
> 'Cause my heart tells me this is for real,
> The reveille and fascination.
> When destiny draws near — the future holds no fear
> I'm standing on the last frontier—
> The heartland is the last frontier.[27]

Thus, the certainty of faith comes from within the heart. The heart informs the believer that his faith, as opposed to other feelings, is real.

A common way in which contemporary Christian music mixes faith and emotion is by using words with sexual connotations to describe it. Silverwind, for example, sings:

> Then I looked into your eyes and
> La, la, la, la, la, la, la . . .
> You took my hand and I gave you my heart.
> Then I looked into your eyes.[28]

More overtly in their song, "I am in Love," the trio happily boasts:

> I am, I am, I am, I am deep in love with Christ.
> I'll be, I'll be, I'll be in love the rest of my life.
> I am, I am, I am, I am deep in love with Christ.
> I'll be, I'll be, I'll be in love the rest of my life.[29]

Amy grant does the same:

> Tell me, have you felt a yearning
> Deep inside a burning need for love . . . ?

Don't run away;
He wants your heart now.
Hear what I say
And play it smart now.
Wise up today
And give him all of your love.[30]

Or consider the lyrics of Stryper's "First Love":

There is no love like the love of your first love.
It's so true, it's for you as you are,
Tears in the night filled with pain.
You're running from love
That you once had before — your first love.
Someone to hold you thru the pain,
To make you smile again
And to protect you forever . . .[31]

These sexual or emotional lyrics turn Christ into the best love or the most faithful lover or the drug with the highest high or the quickest rush.

E. *The Christian Life*

Contemporary Christian music views the Christian life, not as a gradual process of sanctification by God, but as a two-tiered Christian experience. Sometimes this two-tiered Christianity is expressed in Pentecostal terms. Petra sings:

Long distance run from darkness,
Headed into the sun,
It seems like an eternity
Till this race is won.
Sullen spirit weak and weary,
Strength was almost gone,
When a soothing, gentle breeze
Carried me farther on.
I've got my second wind;
Spirit's coming again.
I've got a new revelation from the King of kings,
Found my second wind;
I feel my strength returning again, returning again.[32]

Noteworthy also is the reference to Acts 2 in the title hit "More Power to You," in which the Pentecostal experience is employed as an example of sanctification. In this respect Petra is consistent

with classical Pentecostal theology:

> You say you've been feeling weaker, weaker by the day;
> You say you can't make the joy of your salvation stay.
> But good things come to them that wait,
> Not to those who hesitate;
> So hurry up and wait upon the Lord.
> More power to you, when you're standing on His Word,
> When you're trusting with your whole heart
> In the message you have heard.
> More power to you, when we're all in one accord;
> They that wait upon the Lord,
> They shall renew, they shall renew their strength.
>
> Jesus promised His disciples He'd give strength to them;
> Jesus told them all to tarry in Jerusalem.
> When they were all in one accord,
> The power of the Spirit poured
> And they began to turn the world around.[33]

Contemporary Christian music is not always Pentecostal, but it consistently interprets the Christian life as consisting of two levels of Christianity. On the first level are carnal Christians, those Christians who may have faith but who lead defeated or unproductive lives. Once the second level is reached, then true Christian maturity can occur. Degarmo and Key sing a song called "Casual Christian":

> It's more than a wish, more than a daydream;
> It's more than just a passing whim.
> Yes, I said this all before,
> A thousand times or more;
> I don't want to waste my life in chains of sin.
>
> I don't want to be,
> I don't want to be a casual Christian;
> I don't want to live,
> I don't want to live a lukewarm life,
> 'Cause I want to light up the night
> With an everlasting light.
> I don't want to live a casual Christian life.
>
> This life is filled with strong distractions;
> One pulls from the left, one from the right.
> I've already made up my mind,
> Gonna leave this world behind;
> I'm gonna make my life a living sacrifice.[34]

These lyrics leave the impression that many Christians are "wasting

their lives in chains of sin." Amy Grant implies the same in her oft heard "I Have Decided":

> I have decided
> I'm gonna live like a believer,
> Turn my back on the deceiver;
> I'm gonna live what I believe.
> I have decided
> Being good is just a fable;
> I just can't 'cause I'm not able.
> I'm gonna leave it to the Lord.
>
> There's a wealth of things that I profess.
> I said that I believe,
> But deep inside I never changed.
> I guess I've been deceived.
> 'Cause a voice inside kept telling me
> That I'd changed by and by,
> But the Spirit made it clear to me
> That kind of life's a lie.[35]

Either Amy Grant is speaking of conversion, in which case the song is synergistic, or, as seems more likely, she envisions faith as "step one" in the process of salvation and a decision to change as "step two." The same can be said of her "Fat Baby":

> I know a man maybe you know him too—
> You never can tell he might even be you.
> He knelt at the altar and that was the end;
> He's saved and that's all that matters to him . . .
>
> He's been baptized, sanctified, redeemed by the blood,
> But his daily devotions are stuck in the mud.
> He knows the books of the Bible and John 3:16;
> He's got the biggest King James you've ever seen . . .
>
> He's just a fat little baby;
> He wants his bottle and he don't mean maybe.
> He sampled solid food, maybe once or twice,
> But he said doctrine leaves him cold as ice.[36]

Amy Grant pictures a man who is saved, baptized, sanctified, redeemed, and yet indifferent to God. She can talk this way because in contemporary Christian music's scheme of things baptism, salvation, redemption, and often even sanctification are all first level experiences, while commitment belongs to the second level. Often contemporary Christian music will exhort the listener to make Jesus Lord since it is "not enough just to make Him Savior." Consequently,

words are used to describe baptized and saved Christians which are usually reserved for unbelievers. One more example of two-tiered theology may help. AD sings:

> Only your grace will keep me from treason now.
> My head is reeling in the wake of a delusion;
> Left to myself, I'm so quickly undone.
> Wayward I wander again and again
> Still haunted by sin.
> Who will deliver the unreconciled, the prodigal child?
>
> I can't begin to account for my condition,
> Questions with answers I just can't explain.
> Utterly helpless and nothing to do,
> I'm lost without You; spare the old man and raise up the new
> When his time is due.[37]

The song is about a weak, pathetic Christian who is incapable of any good without a second blessing or some type of religious renewal. While on the surface it may appear as though many of contemporary Christian music's two-blessing songs are referring simply to conversion, usually the lyrics preclude this understanding by talking of "weak faith," or "faith nearly rejected," or "near treason."

Contemporary Christian music has other doctrinal themes. The listener encounters a consistent premillenialism with common exhortations to prepare for the rapture.[38] Doctrinal pluralism is viewed as normal or even desirable as long as all Christians have faith.[39] Certain contemporary moral or social questions are broached frequently such as the issues of abortion, suicide, and war, all of which contemporary Christian music opposes.

Other doctrines are virtually ignored by contemporary Christian music. The quest for an even rudimentary ecclesiology is fruitless except that Christians are told to go to church. One listens hour upon hour in vain for any positive reference to the Lord's Supper or baptism. The absence of any baptismal theology is especially notable since the central article of contemporary Christian music is the doctrine of the new birth. Also, perhaps surprisingly, no doctrine of the Word of God is obvious. While there are references to Bible verses, neither the normative authority of Scriptures nor the inherent power of God's Word are emphasized by contemporary Christian music.

II. An Evaluation of Contemporary Christian Music

The five-point scheme of trouble, Jesus, decision, emotion, and second blessing remains both the predominant emphasis of contemporary Christian music and a scheme which requires the most serious evaluation. The theology of contemporary Christian music is a musical expression of the Arminian Baptistic "evangelicalism" which dominates conservative Reformed Protestantism today. It is a theology with which most Baptists would be quite comfortable but which Lutherans would find deficient at each of the five major points.

A. *The Predicament of Humanity*

Lutherans do not view sin primarily as a weakness or a lack of potential happiness. Using Ephesians 2:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:26, 2 Corintians 4:4, and other Bible references, Lutherans believe that sin is a rebellion against God inherited from our first parents which results in the complete spiritual depravity of all people and which causes God to be consumed with wrath. Lutherans would be troubled with the view of sin promoted by contemporary Christian music since neither God's anger nor our inherent guilt are emphasized. Especially offensive to Lutherans is the implication that natural man is capable of any intelligent spiritual choice.

B. *Jesus*

Lutherans have always viewed the work of Christ as the central theme of the Bible. Christ, according to the Scriptures, was offered by God as our substitute. He came to live a perfect life in our place. He died, suffering God's anger in our place. All people are set right with God through the forgiveness of sins accomplished by Christ on the cross (2 Corinthians 5, Romans 3). Unfortunately, in contemporary Christian music, Jesus is simply not presented in this way. The theology of contemporary Christian music more closely resembles Baptistic theology. Jesus saves, not by His work for us, but by His work in us. He is the way we get strength to go on. He gives us grace to "get us through." Jesus changes our lives enough for us to have confidence. But the objective forgiveness of the cross is consistently overlooked. Ironically even the group Stryper, which derives its name from the healing stripes of Christ in Isaiah 53, rarely expresses the vicarious satisfaction of Jesus Christ.

C. *Coming to Faith*

Lutherans view regeneration as an act of God exclusively. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit turns us toward Christ by grace alone. Without His grace "the unregenerate man cannot by any native or natural powers in any way understand, believe, accept,

imagine, will, begin, accomplish, do, effect, or cooperate."[40] Natural man is unable to decide, make a commitment, invite Jesus into his heart, surrender, yield, or fulfill any other conditions for salvation. The Holy Spirit employs baptism and the Word to work this miracle of new birth in us (John 1:13, John 3:3-5, Titus 3:5). The theology of contemporary Christian music is consistently and overtly unbiblical at this point. It contradicts Scripture because it attributes the new birth either in part or entirely to the will or work of those who are saved. By so doing contemporary Christian music also denies the Reformation Gospel of grace alone. Contemporary Christian music further displays its rejection of the biblical doctrine of faith by teaching that faith fulfills a condition of the Gospel while Scripture teaches that God loves us and forgives us unconditionally because of Christ's cross. The obvious reluctance of contemporary Christian music to mention the sacraments, especially baptism, is another way in which it betrays a baptistic and unscriptural attitude toward the new birth. The Scriptures teach that baptism is the cause of salvation and rebirth (1 Peter 3:21, Titus 3:5). To encourage conversion almost endlessly but never mention the means of this conversion is an implicit denial of the regenerative power of baptism. It would be similar to a lengthy discussion of freeway travel with no mention of cars.

D. *The Nature of Faith*

Lutherans understand faith to be "trust in God's mercy which forgives sins for Christ's sake."[41] While faith may or may not be emotional, it is certainly neither valued for the emotions it engenders nor identified by these feelings. Lutherans value faith because it clings to Christ and identify its existence by the Word and sacraments which create it. Luther says, "When you no longer accord the Word greater validity than your every feeling, your eyes, your sense, and your heart, you are doomed and you can no longer be helped . . . If I were to judge according to my feeling, I would perish . . . But the Word conveys a different message, namely, that I have a gracious God through Christ."[42] Unfortunately, contemporary Christian music leaves the strong impression that without strong "heart feelings," a spiritual "high," or passionate emotions of love faith is in doubt. Faith is often valued and identified by its visible or sensory manifestations.

E. *The Christian Life*

Lutherans are reluctant to speak of two levels of Christianity. They recognize that all who have been baptized into Christ are complete,

as the apostle says (Colossians 2:10). And while the old sinful flesh will always encumber Christians on this side of the grave, every Christian, no matter how weak, is a member of Christ's body and "a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses."[43] When Lutherans sense their weakness or feel temptation they do not wait for "a second wind" or "make up their minds to leave the world behind." Lutherans do not periodically decide to live like believers or disparage those who have not grown up but have been merely "baptized, sanctified, redeemed by the blood." Lutherans seek their strength from Christ through His Supper where they "receive . . . forgiveness of sin, which contains and brings with it the grace of God and the Spirit with all His gifts, protection, shelter, and power against death and the devil and all misfortune."[44] The two-level doctrine of contemporary Christian music contradicts the Scripture on three accounts. First, it teaches that some Christians do not possess all of Christ's blessings even though baptized and saved. Secondly, it visualizes an indifferent, defeated, apathetic person who intends not to serve God and lives in chains of sin as still a Christian. The Holy Spirit does not create that kind of faith. Thirdly, it often implies that Christians can escape the inclinations of the flesh this side of the grave.

III. Conclusions

Lutherans, then, find the theology of contemporary Christian music deficient at almost every point. And Lutherans, it would seem, will be as cool in their support of contemporary Christian music as they have traditionally been in support of local Baptist congregational ministries, Baptist Sunday schools, Baptist tract ministries, Baptist television evangelists or Baptist missionary work.

A conscientious Lutheran pastor will caution against contemporary music even if reasons to advocate it seem to commend themselves. Perhaps there are many excellent songs which are biblical and entertaining. But Baptist hymnals contain many such songs and Lutherans have not encouraged their use. Perhaps many Lutheran advocates of contemporary Christian music employ the medium only to praise God and not to offer doctrinal instruction. But the songs offer enough false doctrine to make their value negligible. And few people will place the tape on fast forward each time heterodoxy negates doxology. Perhaps isolated songs or albums or even artists will express little overt false doctrine. But the predominant themes are Baptist. When we advocate one song or album, we often implicitly advocate the entire genre. Even the Rolling Stones, normally bawdy and disgusting, have a beautiful song entitled "The Prodigal Son."[45]

We do not, however, talk of the Stones as a Christian alternative to rock music. Perhaps this or that Christian claims to have grown spiritually through contemporary Christian music or to have gained insight into things spiritual. But Lutherans evaluate their insights and spiritual growth only by God's Word. Perhaps contemporary Christian music is preferable to the satanic and sex-laden expressions of some pop-rock. Parents would rather have Petra in the house than Judas Priest. Amy is better than Ozzy. But teenagers today have more choices than either satanism or synergism. Christians do not make moral or theological choices by asking which of two evils is better. We do not smoke marijuana because it is better than alcoholism. False dichotomies should be exposed, not indulged. The only Lutheran response to contemporary Christian music is to inform people that it is predominantly Baptist theology which undermines the Gospel and does not glorify Christ. The arguments favoring its use do not stand.

Lutherans can pray for the day when genuine Lutheran and truly evangelical music dominates the Christian music scene. We can implore God to bestow upon the airwaves music which promotes a sacramental theology. We can petition the Almighty to grace Christian bookstores with albums which give all glory to the Holy Spirit in the new birth. We can beseech our God to bless the top ten Christian songs with lyrics which present the vicarious atonement of Jesus. Until these prayers are answered Lutherans will balk at an endorsement of contemporary Christian music and will expect to hear in it a Gospel unfamiliar to our ears.

Endnotes

1. Stryper, "The Rock That Makes Me Roll," *Soldiers under Command* (Enigma Records, El Segundo, California, 1985).
2. Degarmo and Key, "Apathy Alert," *Commander Sozo and the Charge of the Light Brigade* (Power Discs, Nashville, Tennessee, 1985).
3. Silverwind, "Give Him Your Heart," *Silverwind* (Sparrow Records, Canoga Park, California, 1981).
4. AD, "Progress," *Art of the State* (Kerygma Records, Reseda, California, 1985).
5. Michael Smith, "You Need a Savior," *Michael W. Smith Project* (Reunion Records, Word, Inc., Waco, Texas, 1983).
6. Stryper, "Together Forever," op. cit.; cf. also Carmen, "Som-O-Dat," *Carmen* (Priority Records, New York, New York, 1982).
7. Silverwind, "Give Him Your Heart," op. cit.
8. Amy Grant, "Don't Run Away," *Age to Age* (Word, Inc., Waco, Texas,

1982); "Find A Way," *Unguarded* (Word, Inc., Waco, Texas, 1985).

9. Stryper, "The Rock That Makes Me Roll," *Soldiers under Command,* op. cit.
10. Amy Grant, "Find a Way," *Unguarded,* op. cit.
11. Degarmo and Key, "Temporary Things," op. cit.
12. David Meese, "Are You Ready," *Are You Ready* (Word, Inc., Waco, Texas, 1980).
13. Resurrection Band, "Can't Get You Outta My Mind," *Mommy Don't Love Daddy Anymore* (Light Records, Waco, Texas, 1981).
14. Petra, "All Over Me," *More Power to You* (Star Song Records, Pasadena, Texas, 1982).
15. Amy Grant, "Don't Run Away," *Age to Age,* op. cit.
16. Carmen, "Som-O-Dat," op. cit.
17. Keith Green, "Keith Shares ... Altar Call," *I Only Want to See You There* (Sparrow Records, Canoga Park, California, 1983).
18. Darrell Mansfield, "Don't Let Them Stand in Your Way," *Revelation* (Broken Records, Tapes, and Video, Waco, Texas, 1985.)
19. Stryper, "Reach Out," op. cit.
20. Ibid., "Surrender."
21. White Heart, "Gotta Be a Believer," *Hotline* (Home Sweet Home Records, Waco, Texas, 1982).
22. Rap'Sures, "You Must Be Born Again," *Rap'Sures* (Star Song Records, Houston, Texas, 1985).
23. Keith Green, "Promise Song," *Songs for the Shepherd* (Pretty Good Records-Last Days Ministries, Lindale, Texas, 1982).
24. Amy Grant, "Fat Baby," *Age to Age,* op. cit.
25. Carmen, "Som-O-Dat," op. cit.
26. Ibid., "Surrender."
27. AD, "Heartland," *Art of the State,* op. cit.
28. Silverwind, "When I Looked into Your Eyes," op. cit.
29. Ibid., "I Am in Love," op. cit.
30. Amy Grant, "Don't Run Away," *Age to Age,* op. cit.
31. Stryper, "First Love," op. cit.
32. Petra, "Second Wind," op. cit.
33. Ibid., "More Power to You.
34. Degarmo and Key, "Casual Christian," op. cit.
35. Amy Grant, "I Have Decided," *Age to Age,* op. cit.
36. Ibid., "Fat Baby."
37. AD, "Lead Me to Reason," op. cit.
38. Rap'sures, "Theme Song"; AD, "The Fury"; Degarmo and Key, "Jesus is Coming," op. cit.
39. Amy Grant, "Fat Baby," op. cit.
40. FC-SD II, 7.

41. AC IV.
42. *Luther's Works,* ed. Jaraslov Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press, 1955-1972), 28, p. 71.
43. LC II, 52.
44. LC V, 70.
45. Rolling Stones, "Prodigal Son," *Beggar's Banquet* (London Records, London, England, 1971).

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Parables of Atonement and Assurance: Matthew 13:44-46

Jeffrey A. Gibbs

The purpose of this study will be to take a fresh look at two of the parables of Jesus. The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price (Matt. 13:44-46) form a pair of parables within the context of Matthew's "parable chapter." Although interpreters uniformly have treated this pericope as parables of sanctification which portray the "cost of discipleship," I will argue for a completely different *sensus literalis.* Some years ago, a seminar on the First Gospel raised the possiblity of an alternate meaning for Matthew 13:44-46. That original question has led to this present study. Important insights gleaned from recent studies on the parables of Jesus have helped in determining the exegetical method to be followed in pursuing the meaning of the pericope. The conclusions reached in this study indicate that the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price are parables of the atonement. Offered in their Matthean context to the disciples of Jesus, the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price proclaim the grace of God, and the security that Christ's disciples possess — even in the midst of a fallen hostile world.

The Challenge to the Traditional Exegesis

Let it clearly be stated that virtually every exegete from Irenaeus through modern times has understood Matthew 13:44-46 as descriptive of the value of the kingdom of heaven and of the process by which one lays hold of that kingdom. With only slight variation, the parables are understood in this fashion. The treasure — pearl stands for Jesus and the blessing that he brings as *autobasileia.* Each disciple must discover the value of this great gift. Each disciple willingly must make the kingdom his highest good. Each disciple must "sell all that he has and buy." Most exegetes focus almost exclusively on the meaning of the figures of the treasure and the pearl. Some do not even comment on the significance of the concept of "selling and buying" that occurs in both parables. The majority of exegetes who treat the act of purchasing in the stories refer the act of buying (*agorazein* in both parables) to Christ's call to self-denial and cross-bearing (cf. Matt. 16:24-26).[1] Others are most sensitive to the overtones of purchase and exchange in the repeated phrase, "goes and

sells all that he has and buys." Such writers maintain that *agorazein* in the parables means no more than "to appropriate" (Isaiah 55:1).[2] But regardless of this and other slight differences, the vast weight of centuries of Christian study and exposition supports the view of Christ as the thing of value. We must lay hold of him.[3]

It is no small thing to contradict such a monolith of exegetical tradition. I propose to do just that, however, because the traditional exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46 completely ignores the obvious conceptual core of both the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price. It is obvious that these parables are linked inseparably by a common phrase. Despite their many differences in structure and theme, they communicate a parallel meaning. And the concept that is central to these parables is precisely that theme which has been avoided or diluted by the traditional exegesis. For the meaning of these parables is inextricably intertwined with the meaning of the phrase, "he goes and sells all that he has and buys."

The importance of this repeated theme is emphasized by the remarkable number of differences between these two short parables. The chart below illustrates the number of ways in which the parables are divergent.

Hidden Treasure	*Pearl of Great Price*
Datival introduction with the object acted upon	Datival introduction with the actor in the parable
The themes of "hiddenness" and "joy"	No themes of "hiddenness" or "joy"
No emphasis on "seeking"	Strong emphasis on "seeking"
Use of the historical present	Use of the aorist throughout

With regard to "paired parables" that are as short as these, such divergence is extraordinary. In contrast the other pair of "paired parables" in Matthew 13 contain *no* major differences. Both the Mustard Seed and the Leaven (Matt. 13:31-33) share a common datival introductory reference. Both of them use the aorist. As Matthew presents them, both share the themes of little beginnings and the concept of large growth. Both the Mustard Seed and the Leaven incorporate the important theme of "hiddenness."

Granted, the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price share the theme of "finding," *heuron.* Also a valued object is presented in both parables. But these convergences only exist to support the main theme of both parables. A "finding" necessarily precedes

"selling and buying." It must be a thing of value in order to require "*all* that he had." But without a doubt, the climax of each parable is the closing phrase of each. Conceptually they are identical. Verbally they are extremely close in choice of language. The Hidden Treasure concludes at verse 44, *hupagei kai polei panta hosa echei kai agorazei.* The Pearl of Great Price concludes at verse 46, *apelthon pepraken panta hosa eichen kai egorasen.* The slight variety in vocabulary *(hupagein* and *apelthein; polein* and *peprakenai)* nevertheless communicates an identical meaning. And the precise duplication of *panta hosa echein kai agorazein*[4] demands that we search for the crux of both parables in this common theme. The central thrust of both parables clearly is to be found in this vivid and unmistakable link. Jesus has told two parables about the kingdom of heaven which have the concept of "selling and buying" at the core of their intended sense. Those who dilute the impact of "selling and buying" do so without proper regard for the centrality of this concept in each parable. Jeremias ignores the import of "selling and buying" in typical fashion when he writes,

> The double parable is generally understood as expressing the demand of Jesus for complete self-surrender. In reality, it is completely misunderstood if it is interpreted as an imperious call to heroic action. The key-words are rather *apo tes charas* (v.44; they are not expressly repeated in the case of the merchant, but they apply to him as well).[5]

I will, however, allow the impact of the narratives to remain as it stands in Matthew 13:44-46. I will, therefore, challenge the traditional exegesis of this pericope, primarily on the basis of the composition and structure of the parables themselves.

The primary question, then, is the meaning of "selling and buying" in Matthew 13:44-46. And, on the face of it, it is unlikely that such a theme in the teaching of Jesus could apply to the action of the disciple with regard to his Master. To anticipate the exegesis below, a brief look at the two verbal parallels to this terminology in the First Gospel leads in a direction directly opposite to the traditional exegesis.

Within Matthew's parabolic material, the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:21-35) contains this same theme of "selling and buying." Only here the phrase refers to the righteous sentence of God over against the sinner. The king confronts his heavily

debted servant, and angrily orders him "to be sold . . . along with all that he had" (Matt. 18:25). *Ekeleusen auton ho kurios prathenai . . . kai panta hosa echei.* Here "selling and buying" is a symbol for the sinner's just condemnation to eternal punishment. And, as the parable progresses, we see that it is this action which is not required of the slave, for "the king, having pity on that slave, released him and forgave him the debt" (Matt. 18:27): *splagnistheis de ho kurios tou doulou ekeinou apelusen auton kai to daneion apheken auto.* The servant is *not* required to "sell and buy."

The other incident to note briefly as a part of the challenge to the traditional exegesis is the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Matt. 19:16-26). Here Jesus challenges a young man to do exactly what the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price describe; "Go, sell your possessions . . ." (Matt. 19:21). But the young man is unable to do what Jesus requires. Indeed, this pericope is about the inability of men to do what Jesus requires in general. Some will be saved, but it is only through the action of God, with whom nothing is impossible (Matt. 19:25-26).

The center of Matthew 13:44-46 is the meaning of the phrase, "going, he sold all that he had and bought . . ." This crucial theme has been ignored or diluted by those exegetes who take the parables as descriptive of the disciple's attitude and action with regard to Jesus and the kingdom. At the very least, the presence of this theme also at Matthew 18:21-35 and 19:16-26 gives cause to reconsider our two parables.

Exegetical Principles Extracted from Recent Parable Studies

Significant changes in the interpretation of the parables have taken place in fairly recently years. Several scholars have brought to light new insights regarding Jesus' parables. Such insights have not always received the recognition due them. Brief mention of several significant studies will be made here, in order to incorporate those concepts into the exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46 below.

Kenneth Bailey's recent work in parable studies has produced important insights into the interpretation of Jesus' parables. In a very commonsense fashion, Bailey notes that every parable presses upon its listeners, in order to elicit a response from them. In order to carry out this function, every parable contains

> a *combination* of theological motifs in the parable that

> together pressed the original listener to make that response . . . Thus, one or more symbols with corresponding referents in the life of the listener impel him to make a single response which has in view a *cluster* of theological motifs.[6]

To paraphrase Bailey, parables contain individual symbols which together combine to create a unified theme or appeal. Most surely, each parable has one major theme, or (to use the hackneyed phrase) one *tertium comparationis.* But in the task of interpreting any given parable, this major theme may not be immediately obvious. Thus, the exegete will examine the individual symbols within the theological cluster, both in light of common parabolic themes (see below), and in the context of the Gospel. A look at the parts may enable us to determine the meaning of the whole. Parables are to be understood according to their own degree of complexity. Each parable will be unique. There will be one central message, supported by a more or less complex matrix of symbols, woven together to create the parable. The first important principle of parable interpretation, then, is this: it is legitimate, and sometimes necessary, to begin the exegesis of the parable with a search for the meaning of individual symbols within the parable.

A second insight of great importance for parable studies was noted by Martin Dibelius, among others, some years ago. Dibelius pointed out that when Jesus taught in parables, he was probably using a form of teaching with which his listeners were extremely familiar. The presence of parables in both the Hebrew Scriptures and extant rabbinic literature indicates that first century Palestinians knew what parables were, and how to hear them.[7] This in itself is a point of no little significance. But of even greater import is Dibelius' observation that rabbinic parables often used a number of "stock" images or mataphors that held a consistent meaning across different parables. Thus, parables about a "king" were understood to be about "God." The figure of the "vineyard" in rabbinic parables stands as a picture of "Israel" (cf. Isaiah 5). Examples could be multiplied. Dibelius commented that

> certain metaphors were already customary in Jewish exhortation, and the hearers were therefore prone to understand the words concerned in the usual sense, even when the parabolic narrative gives no occasion to do so.[8]

The importance of all this is that Jesus also used such stock

metaphors in his parables. A few obvious examples are listed:

King = God	Matthew 18:23; 22:2ff.
Vineyard = Israel	Matthew 20:1-15; 21:28-30; 21:33-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16
Harvest = Eschaton	Matthew 13:24-30; Mark 4:26-29
Wedding = New Age	Matthew 9:15; 22:1-13; 25:1-13; Luke 12:36-38

In her very important treatment of the parables, Madelaine Boucher confidently asserts that Jesus' listeners, when encountering one or more of these clues, would then have been able to interpret Jesus' intended meanings.[9] Thus, our second principle may be stated: exegetes today may search the parabolic teaching of Jesus for common themes as an aid to the interpretation of any given parable.

A third insight into the proper exegesis of parables comes from an article by Norman Huffmann. Along with others, Huffmann has noted that a very large number of Jesus' parables contain elements which are exaggerated, unlikely, or virtually impossible. In a word Jesus' parables are not "true to life stories." A few examples will suffice. In the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), Huffmann notes the foolishness of hiring workers at the eleventh hour and the incredible fact that all the workers receive equal pay. The father's goodness in the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:32) is exceptional; a more conditional love and a more dignified behavior would have been true to life. Huffmann points out that mustard seeds do not become trees (Matt. 13:31-32) and that the woman has leavened enough bread for over one hundred people (Matt. 13:33). A harvest yield of one hundredfold would have been an agricultural miracle in Jesus' day (Matt. 13:8). The entire premise of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) is so unlikely as to be impossible.[10]

The parables of Jesus are not just "comparisons from every day life." In order to communicate their message, the parables can present unique or exaggerated images. Therefore, the criterion as to "what would have been likely" in Jesus' day and time should not be used to raise questions which the parable itself does not ask. Without a doubt insights such as those yielded through Bailey's "Oriental exegesis" must be used to throw light on the implications of the parables' narratives. But if the parable leaves a question unasked, the exegete must not try to answer it in the interests of making

the parable "more true to life." Our third principle, then, is this: the parables of Jesus are original literary creations. They must be interpreted as they stand. Only such "true to life" insights as are *demanded* by the parables' cultural context may be emphasized by the exegete today.

These insights into the interpretation of the parables can be brought together in the form of a general working definition of a parable.[11] A parable is a fictional narrative which contains symbolic elements in need of theological interpretation. The parable may or may not be "true to life." The symbolic elements in the parable require treatment. Careful exegesis will penetrate to the parable's deepest legitimate level of complexity and meaning. When the overall meaning of a parable is uncertain or obscure, the examination of its parts in context will lead the way in the exegetical task. Comparison with other parabolic material in search of common themes will be of primary importance. We turn, then, to Matthew 13:44-46. We will begin with a contextual study to set the stage for the exegesis of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price.

Contextual Study

The central theme of the First Gospel is the proclamation of Jesus as the only Christ, fulfiller of Old Testament prophecy and founder of the New Israel. Against this backdrop, the motif of conflict in Matthew is highly visible, and more forcefully presented than in Mark or Luke. The parables of Matthew 13 stand as a sort of mini-climax within the overall context of the gospel. In an emphatic way, Matthew presents the truth that Jesus' rising conflict with the establishment of Israel has led to the beginning of a *new* Israel. This motif of contrast between "old" and "new," false disciple and true, clearly can be demonstrated.

Matthew uses both structure and the inclusion of unique material to make his point clear. He presents a mounting contrast between Jesus and his disciples and between the Pharisees and leaders of Israel. John the Baptist's fiercest denunciations are aimed directly at the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7; Luke writes only, "he said to the *crowds,*" *elegen ochlois,* Luke 3:7). After his temptation, Jesus returns to Galilee. After choosing the first disciples, he presents to them the Way of the new Messianic Community, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' authority is not to be questioned; it far exceeds that of scribe or Pharisee (cf. Jesus' *ego de lego humin;* also see Matt. 7:29). Jesus' closing words of the Sermon contain repeated

warnings against false disciples. The gate is narrow, false prophets are many, barren trees will be cut down, etc. (Matt. 7:13-17). Following Matthew 8, in which the divine power and authority of Jesus are manifested, the conflict of "old" versus "new" continues to develop. Jesus is accused of blasphemy (Matt. 9:3) and of collaboration with Satan (Matt. 9:34, unique to Matthew). Following this strife with the religious leaders, Jesus calls the Twelve and commissions them; the "new" Israel has formally begun. The extended warning that Jesus gives concerning persecution is uniquely Matthean in location and forcefulness (Matt. 10:5-42). The "old" *will* oppose and hate the "new." But the disciples are not to fear. They are of much value to the Father in heaven (Matt. 10:29-31).

After the Twelve are commissioned, Matthew continues to present the mounting conflict between true and false Israel. Jesus' deeds proclaim him truly to be the Christ (Matt. 11:1-15). The present opposition and apathy toward his ministry in Israel surely will not go unpunished (Matt. 11:16-24). Again the contrast forcefully appears between the "babes" who receive Jesus and the "wise" who reject him (Matt. 11:25). After confrontations concerning the Sabbath law, the Pharisees begin to plan Jesus' destruction (Matt. 12:1-14). The scribes and Pharisees continue their blasphemous opposition to Jesus. They will be condemned for rejecting the new, greater way of the Christ (Matt. 12:24-45, with special force; compare Mark 3 and Luke 11). In starkest contrast the true Israel, Jesus' disciples, are closer to him than the members of his own family (Matt. 12:46-50). It is at this point that Matthew presents the collection of Jesus' parables in chapter 13.

The parables of chapter 13 represent a significant climax in the First Gospel. The rejection of Jesus by Israel's leaders has resulted in the formation of new, faithful Israel. The parables of Matthew 13, viewed in this context, offer a summary of teaching concerning the difference between the disciples and Jesus' opposition. The Sower (Matt. 13:1-9) teaches that only a few will respond appropriately to Jesus' ministry (Matt. 13:18-23). The Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30) and the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50) both emphasize the final, eschatological separation of the wicked from the righteous. Although the progress of Jesus' ministry may seem overshadowed by the rising opposition of the Pharisees, the word that he sows will continue to bear fruit, as the Mustard Seed and the Leaven declare (Matt. 13:31-33). True disciples are able to receive the truth that Jesus proclaims, and to proclaim it themselves (Matt. 13:11,52). The

Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price stand in this context of overwhelming conflict and contrast. We come now to the exegesis of these parables. I will treat the Hidden Treasure first and then use the exegesis of the Pearl of Great Price to draw out the unique features of each parable.

Interpretation of Matthew 13:44

As noted above, the context of Matthew 13:44 provides a starting point for the exegesis of the parable. The stark contrast between those who oppose Jesus and those who follow him reveals Matthew's intention with regard to the Hidden Treasure. Even though the parable receives no explicit interpretation from Jesus in the Gospel, in some way it too must add to Matthew's presentation of true Israel and false Israel. In addition, the concept of the kingdom of heaven as portrayed in the First Gospel provides an important piece of contextual understanding. Both parables in our pericope begin with the formula *homoia estin he basileia ton ouranon* (see also Matt. 13:31, 33, 47; 20:1; also the similar parabolic introductions as 13:24; 18:23; 22:2; and 25:1). In Matthew the kingdom of heaven is spoken of in a variety of ways. For our purposes, it is most important to note Matthew's identification of the kingdom with the person and work of Jesus. The act of following Jesus is equated with entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 19: 16-26). Because the Pharisees oppose Jesus, they shut the kingdom of heaven to themselves and to others (Matt. 23:13). The Pharisees flirt with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because they refuse to acknowledge that the kingdom has come upon them through the ministry of Jesus (Matt. 12:22-32). Jesus' ministry *is* the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, parables about the kingdom of heaven will be parables about the person and ministry of Jesus.

As we turn to the text of verse 44, it should be noted that the presence of the dative *thesauro* does not force the equation of *thesauro* with *he basileia ton ouranon.* Rather, the entire action of the parable is "what the kingdom of heaven is like." Paul Fiebig has pointed out many examples from rabbinic literature in which parables begin, "the matter is like 'X' . . ." but 'X' is not really the focal point of the parable at all.[12] The interpretation of Matthew 13:44 should not begin with the "treasure," but with the meaning of "he went and sold all that he had and bought that field." Parallels to this theme in the parabolic teaching of Jesus will first be examined. Then, the synoptics and the rest of the New Testa-

ment will be examined.

In terms of Matthew's parabolic material, only in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:23-35) does parallel use of this language occur, as was noted above. In Matthew 18 the verbal and conceptual parallel is extremely close. The meaning of the parabolic symbol in Matthew 18:25 is precisely that of exchange and purchase. There the "sell and buy" concept represents the debt which men owe to God. We are able to identify with the first servant, whose debt was so great that his master ordered him to be sold, along with all that he had: *auton . . . prathenai . . . kai panta hosa echei* (Matt. 18:25).

The message of the Unforgiving Servant, however, is not that this price is required of those who desire to enter the kingdom of heaven. The "selling all that he had" stands for the punishment of God against the sin of men. But men need not undergo this sentence. The ministry of Jesus has brought to light the mercy of God, by which the great debt that we owe is forgiven (Matt. 18:27). The kingdom of heaven does *not* demand that we pay our debt. We are *not* required to "give all that we have." This one parabolic parallel to the Hidden Treasure's central theme shows us what the theme does *not* mean. "Going and selling all that he has" is a requirement from which men are freed by the coming of the kingdom. They, in turn, are required to free others. As they have been forgiven, they also must forgive.

There are no other parallels to the "sell and buy" theme in the parabolic material in the First Gospel. With regard to the Gospel as a whole, three significant conceptual parallels occur within the narrative and teaching material. The incident of the Rich Young Ruler was mentioned above (Matt. 19:16-26). A second important parallel is Matthew's use of *lutron* at Matthew 20:28. There, Jesus summarizes the purpose of his ministry: *ho huios tou anthropou ouk elthen diakonethenai alla diakonesai kai dounai ten psuchen autou lutron anti pollon.* The *lutron* of Jesus' own life is a ransom, a payment. Clearly the payment is made to God.[13] The presence of *anti pollon* in this saying accentuates the substitutionary overtones of exchange already present in the use of *lutron.* The meaning of *anti,* unless otherwise demanded by contextual factors, is "in the place of," "instead of."[14] Jesus offers his life as a payment. The many do not have to offer up their lives, for his life is an exchange for theirs. He pays the necessary price. In this saying, the concept of "sell and buy" describes the redemption by which Jesus brings freedom

from sin, death, and devil.

The ransom saying in Matthew 20:28 also points us to the third conceptual parallel in the First Gospel. In Matthew 16:26 Jesus points to the utter futility of man's attempt to go his own way, or to save himself. It is the man who follows Jesus and, as a result, "loses" his life who will "find" it (16:25). But this is no "price" by which a man "purchases" his redemption. On the contrary, those who attempt such a transaction will discover that it cannot be done. There is no price that a man can pay in order to purchase his own life (v. 26). Buchsel correctly correlates this logion and the ransom saying in Matthew 20:28:

> The ransom saying undoubtedly implies substitution. For even if the *anti* be translated "to the advantage of", the death of Jesus means that there happens to Him what would have had to happen to the many. Hence, He takes their place. The saying plainly looks back to Mk. 8:37, Mt. 16:26 . . . What no man can do, He, the unique Son of God, achieves.[15]

Once again, as at Matthew 18:25 and 19:21, Jesus' teaching denies that any man can "sell and buy" his life for entrance into the kingdom. No one can offer an exchange *antallagia* for his life.

Thus, the four parallels in the First Gospel to the central theme of the Hidden Treasure uniformly oppose the traditional understanding of this parable. Within the parabolic material of the gospel the use of "selling all that he had" at Matthew 18:25 denies that this is the way that leads to the kingdom. Rather, it is the penalty that leads to damnation.[16] Both Matthew 16:26 and 19:21 also reject the notion of any man "selling and buying" in order to become a disciple. The remarkable saying at Matthew 20:28, however, offers an example of what "selling and buying" can mean. Jesus has come to exchange his life for others. This is why he has come. This is his earthly ministry. This is the central meaning of the kingdom of heaven. Clearly, this evidence culled from the gospel indicates that the phrase *polei panta hosa echei kai agorazei* at Matthew 13:44 most probably refers to the activity of Jesus on behalf of others.

When we turn our attention to the other synoptics and to John, we discover that, aside from passages parallel to those already considered, there is no other material in which the concept of "sell and buy" occurs. In the remainder of the New Testament, however, it is the use of *agorazein* that is most significant for our study. In Paul,

Peter, and the Revelation to John *agorazein* is used to describe the work of Jesus on behalf of men. At 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23 both the act of "buying" and the "price" are mentioned: *egorasthete times.* In Revelation 5:9, the required price is explicitly stated: *egoras to theo en to haimati sou.* The "purchasing" of men by Christ is also taught at 2 Peter 2:1 and Revelation 14:3-4, although the price is not specifically mentioned there. The only metaphorical use of *agorazein* in the New Testament that does refer to man's action over against God is Revelation 3:18. This passage clearly alludes to Isaiah 55:1. With regard to the use of *exagorazein,* at Galatians 3:13 it refers to the work of Christ, specifically mentioning the exchange and substitution that has taken place. Galatians 4:5 echoes this passage's use of *exagorazein.* Twice (Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5) the middle voice of *exagorazein* occurs in a phrase of uncertain meaning, *exagorazomenoi ton kairon.* A probable rendering of this phrase is, "making the most of the time."[17]

When this weight of evidence from the remainder of the New Testament is added to Matthew's use of the "sell and buy" concept, it reinforces the contention that *polei panta hosa echei kai agorazei* at Matthew 13:44 refers to Jesus' action on behalf of men. We turn now to the other themes in the parable of the Hidden Treasure, aware that the traditional exegetical position is now "on the defensive." It will require an extraordinary weight of evidence to counterbalance what we have discovered with regard to the probable meaning of "sell and buy" in the parable of the Hidden Treasure.

The theme of "finding" *(heuron)* is present in the parable, as well as in the Pearl of Great Price. As noted above, its presence is virtually required by the central theme. In order to have something to "sell and buy," one first must "find." It is significant, however, that Jesus uses the theme of "finding" in other parabolic teaching. At Matthew 18:13 Jesus describes his ministry, and the ministry of his disciples after him, as "finding" of lost sheep. In the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard the owner of the vineyard goes out the eleventh hour and "finds" more workers (Matt. 20:6). In the parable of the Wedding Feast the king sends his servants to "find" guests for the feast (Matt. 22:9, 10). Within the parabolic material in Matthew, then, "finding" *always* refers to God's activity through Jesus to reach out to the lost. True, "finding" can also refer to the disciples' search for Jesus, as at Matthew 7:7; 11:29; 16:25. But the First Gospel's use of the theme in parabolic material exclusively refers

to God's activity in Jesus. And in our parable it is Jesus who finds in order that he may purchase.

With regard to other parabolic use of "finding," Luke 15 adds confirmation to Matthew's usage. All three of the parables in this chapter have God in Christ "finding" the lost sinner (Luke 15:4, 5, 6; 15:8, 9; and 15:24, 32). Luke also contains a parallel to Mathew's "seek and you will find" (Luke 11:9). But within the parabolic teaching of Jesus, "finding" seems always to refer to God's active search for men, and not the opposite.

There is no real development of this theme in the remainder of the New Testament. Both Philippians 3:9 and 2 Peter 3:14 speak of "being found in Christ," especially on the last day. Hebrews 9:12 says that Christ, having entered the holy place once and for all, "has found eternal redemption" *(aionian lutrosin heuramenos).*

Thus far our exegesis has indicated that the parable of the Hidden Treasure tells the story of God's activity in Jesus to purchase and possess his disciples. Our examination of the themes of "sell and buy" and "finding" has yielded this result. We now turn to the theme of the "treasure," the third common element which the Hidden Treasure shares with the Pearl of Great Price. Treatment of this theme will be most important, for this is the focal point of the traditional exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46. For centuries it has been assumed that the "treasure" must refer to the treasure of Christ, the Gospel, the Sacrament, or some such point of reference. But we shall show that it is not inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus for the point of reference of the "treasure" to be the disciples of Jesus. Indeed, the concept of God's own people as precious in his sight is present in the Old Testament as well. Jesus simply transfers the concept from "old" Israel to the "new" Israel of his disciples.

To most commentators, the understanding of *thesauros* in Matthew 13:44 comes automatically and requires no explanation. Tasker's unquestioning approach is completely typical:

> Finally, because the kingdom of heaven is the only lasting reality, and its worth so incalculably precious, the person who is really eager to obtain its benefits . . . will readily and joyfully make the necessary sacrifice . . . That is the teaching of the twin parables of the costly pearl and the hidden treasure.[18]

But Matthew does not employ the noun *thesauros,* nor the concept

of "a thing valued," with any such automatic theological meaning. When Jesus teaches about "treasure" in the First Gospel, the word means "that which is valuable to one." Thus, there is a *good* man with *good* treasure — and an *evil* man with *evil* treasure (Matt. 12:35; Luke 6:43). There is also a contrast between "earthly" treasure and "heavenly" treasure (Matt. 6:19-20; Luke 12:33). Certainly, the disciples of Jesus are exhorted to seek after heavenly treasure (also Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21; and Luke 18:22). But whatever choice is made, it remains the person's treasure (Matt. 6:21). The blessings of the kingdom must be designated as *heavenly* treasure (Matt. 6:20; 19:21) or *good* treasure (Matt. 12:35). On the basis of the use of *thesauros* in Matthew alone, it is not permissible to invest any particular use of the term with a pre-determined meaning. The context must decide.

The use of *thesauros* in the remainder of the New Testament is limited to two Pauline citations which do refer to Christ or his kingdom or spiritual blessings as *thesauros* (2 Cor. 4:7, Col. 2:3). But this is not a strong case for an automatic Christological meaning with regard to the use of *thesauros* at Matthew 13:44. Neither can such a case be made from the use of *thesauros* in the Septuagint. In the Septuagint *thesauros* once refers to God as a "wealth of salvation, wisdom, and understanding" (Is. 33:6). Twice the reference of *thesauros* is to wisdom and her blessings (Prov. 2:4; 21:20). But *thesauros* is also used as a metaphor for God's stored-up wrath (Deut. 32:34; Jer. 27:25; 50:25 MT) and for death (Job 3:21). The most frequent use of *thesauros* in the Septuagint is as a reference to the sky, where God stores the rain and the snow (Deut. 28:12; Job 38:22; Ps. 32:7, 33:7 MT; 134:7, 135:7 MT; Jer. 10:13, Jer. 28:16, 51:16 MT).

Thus, the use of the Greek vocable *thesauros* in the New Testament and in the Septuagint does not invest a heavy amount of automatic meaning into the term. Examination of the Hebrew Scriptures also demonstrates that the concept of "treasure" does not always refer to God and his ways. Of the Hebrew words which the Septuagint translates *thesauros* only two of them are used with any metaphorical meaning. The word *'osar,* "treasure, store, treasury,"[19] very often refers to literal treasure and treasuries. But it also refers to wisdom (Prov. 21:20), salvation, and knowledge (Is. 33:6), the armory of the Lord (Jer. 50:25), the wrath of the Lord (Deut. 32:34), and the sky (Deut. 28:12; Job 38:22; Jer. 10:13; 51:16; Ps. 135:7). The word *matmon,* "hidden treasure, treasure,"[20] refers to death

(Job 3:21) and to wisdom (Prov. 2:4).

Both the paucity of usage and the variety of reference in the metaphorical use of these terms prevents us from finding a thematic use of "treasure" in the Hebrew Scriptures as a symbol for God. There is, however, another word which the Hebrew Scriptures do use as a fairly consistent metaphorical expression of "treasure." The noun *segullah* may also be translated "possession, property; valued property, peculiar treasure; treasure."[21] Occurring eight times in the Hebrew Scriptures, twice it refers to literal treasure (1 Chron. 29:3; Eccles. 2:8). But five times *segullah* is used as a reference to Israel as God's chosen people (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6, 14:3, 26:18; Ps. 135:4), and once, in a passage that is extremely important for our purposes, *segullah* refers to the righteous within apostate Israel (Mal. 3:17).

Israel is the Lord's chosen people, picked out from among all other nations (Ex. 19:5). Because of their identity, the Israelites must refrain from the idol worship of the nations around them (Deut. 7:6) and from their detestable practices (Deut. 14:2). Israel has made a solemn covenant with the Lord their God, and he will give them fame, praise, and honor above all other peoples (Deut. 26:18). The praise and worship of Israel's God also includes gratefulness that he has chosen them as his own possession (Ps. 135:4). Whereas the use of *'osar* and *matmon* does not become focused, the use of *segullah* in the Hebrew Scriptures does focus upon Israel as God's treasure. Granted, nowhere does the Septuagint translate *segullah* with *thesauros.* But the concept is present and used often enough to be obvious. The Septuagint translates *segullah* with *periousios* at Exodus 19:5 and Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18. (At Psalm 135:4 the Greek translation is *periousiasmos* and at Malachi 3:17 it is *peripoiesis.*) Indeed, in his brief article on *periousios,* Preisker has a fortuitous choice of expression:

> *periousios* is the people which constitutes the crown jewel of God. Because Israel is the precious stone, the pearl in His possession, it has a duty to avoid idolatry (Dt. 14:2) and to keep the commandments and statutes of Yahweh (Ex. 19:5; 23:22; Dt. 7:6-11; 26:18).[22]

The importance of this theme of the people of God as his "treasured possession" is illustrated when we realize that the New Testament epistles twice make specific and direct use of the theme. At Titus 2:14 Paul writes that Jesus Christ "gave himself on our behalf, in order that he might ransom us from all lawlessness,

and purify to himself a precious people *(laon periousion),* zealous for good works." Here Paul clearly echoes the phrase *laos periousios* from Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18. Peter does the same thing at 1 Peter 2:9, echoing the use of *peripoiesis* at Malachi 3:17 as well. The crucial shift that has taken place here is obvious. It is the disciples of Jesus, and not Israel, who are now God's "special, treasured possession."

It is also important to note than an explicit part of this motif of the people of God as his "treasure" is the contrast between God's people and the wicked around them. Thus, Egypt (Deut. 19:5), Israel's neighbors (Deut. 7:6; 14:2), and the nations of the earth (Deut. 26:18) are held up as contrasts to the chosen people. However, in the passage from Malachi 3:17 the contrast receives further development. In Malachi 3 the contrast is between the righteous and the wicked *within Israel.* For the Lord is coming to purify Israel (Mal. 3:1-4). The wicked among the covenant people will be judged (Mal. 3:5-9). Those who hear the call to repentance will be prepared as God's own special possession on the day when God distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked (Mal. 3:10-18). The righteous will then belong to the Lord as his own special treasure, his *segullah* (LXX, peripoiesis).

It is in this context of the distinction between the righteous and the wicked that the Hebrew Scriptures and the Septuagint designate true Israel as God's "special possession," God's "treasure." This motif occurs in the Gospel of Matthew as well. Jesus calls his disciples to a life-style that rejects the earthly priorities of unbelievers (Matt. 6:24-32). In so doing, he reminds them, in ironic fashion, that they are valuable to the Father in heaven: "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matt. 6:26; Luke 12:24). This use of *diapherein* to express the disciples' value is repeated at Matthew 10:31. Again the context is the security and value of the disciples in the face of opposition by the wicked: "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul . . . Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? . . . Therefore, do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:31; Luke 12:7).

The First Gospel employs the motif of contrasting the righteous with the wicked. The righteous, Jesus' disciples, are of much value to the Father. Indeed, as noted above in the contextual study of our pericope, Matthew has emphasized this tension between true and

false Israel more than Mark or Luke. The theme of the parables of Matthew 13 as a whole is the distinction between the righteous and the wicked. Even the significant passage from Malachi 3 occurs within the context of Matthew 13. At Matthew 11:10 Jesus proclaims the ministry of John the Baptizer as a fulfilment of God's visitation upon Israel to prepare a purified people (Mal. 3:1-4). As indicated by both the Malachi reference and the structure of the Gospel, part of this preparation is the resulting separation between the "gold and silver" of the righteous (Mal. 3:3) and the wicked, who will be rejected.

To summarize, the evidence for regarding the "treasure" of Matthew 13:44 as a figure for the disciples of Jesus may be presented thus: (1.) Neither the Hebrew Scriptures nor the New Testament anywhere develop the theme of God or Jesus or his kingdom as the believer's treasure. The concept obviously exists. But it is not often present, and we are not compelled to understand *thesauros* at Matthew 13:44 in this way. (2.) The Hebrew Scriptures do portray Israel as God's treasure by a consistent use of *segullah* (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 26:18; Ps. 135:4). Once it is the righteous within Israel who are thus portrayed (Mal. 3:17). The New Testament twice utilizes this theme directly, substituting the church for Israel (Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). (3.) As noted by Feldman and Jones, the rabbinic literature also appropriates and uses this theme of Israel as God's treasure — in parabolic form.[23] (4.) It is Israel on the righteous, as they are distinguished from other nations of the wicked, which receives the approbation as God's special possession and treasure. (5.) Matthew's Gospel twice uses this motif, applying it to the disciples (Matt. 6:26, 10:31). The crucial passage from Malachi 3 also occurs within the framework of the First Gospel's portrayal of true Israel versus false Israel.

All of this in itself seems sufficient to demonstrate the meaning of *thesauros* at Matthew 13:44. The final verification, however, occurs in the pericope immediately preceding our text. In the explanation of the parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:36-43) the righteous and the wicked are separated at the end of the age. The wicked will be cast into the fire, there to weep and gnash their teeth (Matt. 13:42). But the righteous, as God's own special treasure, will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43). The quotation from Daniel 12:3 once again contrasts the righteous with the wicked. The righteous are precious, beautiful, and valued. And in the parable of the Hidden Treasure it is the disciples of Jesus

who are the treasure, the valued possession of Jesus, the "kingdom-in-himself." He has found them, given his all, and purchased them.

What of the theme of being "hidden in the field"? The treasure is hidden *(kekrummeno)* when found by the man. In turn, he hides it again (the intent of *ekrupsen.*)[24] The theme of something being "hidden" or "planted" in a field occurs in the parables of Jesus as a figure for those in the world who hear his word and grow in response. Examples of this include the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9), the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, especially the interpretation, v. 38), the Mustard Seed (Matt. 13:31) and the Spontaneous Seed (Mark 4:26-29). It is possible that the use of *kruptein* in the Hidden Treasure has overtones of persecution or obscurity for the disciples of Jesus. Not only is the treasure discovered while hidden, but it remains hidden, even after the man purchases the field. However, the use of *egkruptein* in the Leaven (Matt. 13:33) may mean that the hiddenness of the treasure adds no particular emphasis to the Hidden Treasure. On the whole, I would suggest a probable theme of persecution as a result of Jesus' use of *kruptein.* I would relate the theme of joy over the discovery of the treasure *(apo tes charas autou)* to such Scriptures as Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:6,9,32, and Hebrews 12:2, which speak of Christ's joy over those whom he has found and saved.

To sum up the interpretation of Matthew 13:44, the kingdom of heaven here described is the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth on behalf of his disciples. Jesus portrays himself as a man who rejoices at finding a treasure hidden in a field. So he rejoices over his disciples, "found" as they have heard Jesus' call to follow him. Jesus' disciples are valued by him to the extent that he will be willing to sacrifice himself to possess them. He will "go, sell all that he has, and buy the field." As his possession Jesus' disciples will not expect to be protected and insulated from the pressure and opposition of those who hate their Master. Rather, they remain in the world, just as they were found by Jesus. But they need not fear that they have been forgotten, even when they seem to be "buried." They are his treasure. He has purchased the entire field in order to possess them.[25]

The Interpretation of Matthew 13:45-46

As noted above, the parable of the Pearl of Great Price, as short as it is, contains a striking number of features in contrast to its "partner parable," the Hidden Treasure. All the more important, then, is that connecting link that is the center of both parables: *panta hosa*

echein kai agorazein. As we turn, then, to the exegesis of Matthew 13:45-46, it is assumed that this parable also concerns itself with the kingdom of heaven as God's action in Jesus to find and save His people, the disciples of Jesus. The unique theme in Pearl of Great Price is the emphasis upon searching. The process leading up to the discovery of the treasure in Matthew 13:44 is unknown and, therefore, outside the concern of the exegete. But in verse 45 the parable describes *anthropo emporo zetounti kalous margaritas.* We must search, then, for the meaning of the theme of "seeking."

Once again, as with the theme of "finding" treated above, the theme of "seeking" may stand for one of two things within the teaching of Jesus. Jesus uses this picture to describe both the action of God with respect to men and vice versa. In the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples are told to seek the kingdom, knowing that they will find that for which they search (Matt. 6:33, 7:7; Lucan parallels are Luke 12:31; 11:9.) At Luke 13:29 Jesus exhorts those following him to strive to enter by the narrow door, for many will one day seek it and not be able to enter. With regard to these exhortations for disciples to "seek," it is crucial to note that these passages do not speak of entrance into the kingdom. Spoken to those who are already disciples (Matt. 5:1; Luke 13:22-23), these sayings of Jesus are encouragements to those already following Jesus. Here, Jesus calls disciples to maturity and endurance.

But when Jesus uses the image of "seeking" with regard to God's action toward men, he does refer to entrance into the kingdom. At Matthew 18:12, the shepherd searches *(zetei)* for the *lost* sheep. At Luke 15:8 the woman searches carefully *(zetei epimelos)* for the *lost* coin. And, in describing his own mission, Jesus declares that he has come *zetesai kai sosai to apololos* (Luke 19:10). Jesus taught that God, through him, was seeking out men in order to save them. The presence of this motif in the teaching of Jesus supports this present interpretation of Matthew 13:45-46. Although the idea of "seeking" as used throughout the teaching of Jesus does not demand such a meaning here, such a view is certain in the light of the entire exegesis of the pericope.

And what of the pearl, *margarites?* We saw above that "treasure" at verse 44 clearly reflects the Biblical theme of God's people as his own "precious possession." Clearly a "pearl" is just one specific kind of "treasure." But is there more involved in the use of *margarites* here, especially with regard to other passages in the New Testament? Perhaps there is. The term *margarites* is not found in

the Septuagint. Hauck notes that the rabbis spoke of the utterance of wise sayings as "the mouth which produces pearls."[26] Outside our pericope there are two other instances in the New Testament in which *margarites* is used figuratively. In Revelation 21:21 the twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem are each a giant pearl. On each of the pearls is written the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12). In addition, the twelve foundation stones of the city have the names of the twelve apostles written upon them (Rev. 21:14). Each of the foundation stones is adorned with precious stones (Rev. 21:19-20). The connection here in Revelation 21 is between the honored saints of God and the glory they will possess in the new heaven and earth. Along with other precious stones, *margarites* is used as a symbol for the glorious chosen of God, who comprise the holy city. This use, obviously, is not inconsistent with our contention that *margarites* and *thesauros* refer to the disciples of Jesus at Matthew 13:44-46.

The second use of *margarites* poses a greater challenge. At Matthew 7:6 Jesus warns the disciples, "Do not give the holy thing to dogs, nor throw your pearls in front of swine; lest, trampling them underfoot, they, turning, may rend you." We may note two things concerning this difficult saying of Jesus. First, like the traditional exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46, Christians have understood Matthew 7:6 from earliest times as a warning not to offer spiritual things to those who are unworthy or unprepared to receive them. Already in the Didache, we read:

> But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptised in the Lord's Name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, "Give not that which is holy to dogs."[27]

The second thing to note about Matthew 7:6 is the extent to which, given the traditional exegesis, it sticks out in its context like a sore thumb. Some simply claim that this saying is inserted into its present context artificially, in violation of its original sense.[28] More conservative scholars describe Matthew 7:6 as a "commonsense corrective" to an over-enthusiastic understanding of the prohibition against judging just preceding the saying (Matt. 7:1-5). Typically, Lenski comments that "the command not to judge others . . . has its obvious limits."[29] Thus, by interpreting the "holy" and the "pearls" as "spiritual treasures," Matthew 7:6 must be understood as "reasonable" precaution given to the disciples. Note the phrasing of exegetes at this point: "unless care is taken . . .";[30] "but on

the other hand . . .";[31] "one simply does not waste something of value on an inappropriate and undeserving object."[32] With regard to this last comment, is not that the Gospel in a nutshell? To paraphrase Paul, "while we were inappropriate and undeserving objects, Christ died for us . . ."

But when does Jesus ever do this in the Sermon? Is it not the very "unreasonableness" and "exaggeration" of the Sermon that lend to it its unique power? The Sermon on the Mount completely lacks any sense or "feel" of "prudent caution." Thus, Jesus teaches, poverty is wealth, lack is fulness, and persecution means blessing (Matt. 5:1-12). Anger is murder, lust is adultery, divorce is always sin, and oaths must not be taken — at all (Matt. 5:21-27). Turn the other cheek, unquestioningly go the extra mile, loan without hope of repayment, and love even your enemies (Matt. 5:38:48). Shun *all* hypocrisy, forgive *all* offenses against you, serve *one* Master only, and, forgetting earthly needs, seek *only* the kingdom (Matt. 6:1-34). Do not judge, ask *any* good thing of the Father, enter the narrow gate, and build upon the only rock which will stand — Jesus and his words (Matt. 7:1-5, 7-29). Throughout the entire Sermon, the tenor is the urgent, foolish, total abandonment of oneself to God's kingdom, regardless of the consequences. Jesus allows for no exceptions, no "buts." The call of the Sermon, from beginning to end, is "Follow Me!"

Can Matthew 7:6 be a "reasonable caution"? All are aware of the weakness of arguments from silence. But is it probable, or even possible, that the strident call to radical discipleship in the Sermon would be "softened" or "made reasonable" at Matthew 7:6? I think not. Mohr has demonstrated that, against the opinion of the many, Matthew 7:6 fits perfectly into its present context.[33] This logion of Jesus is a saying that climaxes and summarizes Jesus' teaching about judging others. Judge not, Jesus has said. Do not reject your brother on the grounds of sojme offense that he has committed. Do not cast your brother from you. He is holy to you. You must not reject him. He is as precious as a pearl in the sight of the Father, and so he must be to you. Thus, *margarites* in the New Testament is used uniformly. At Revelation 21:21, in our passage, and even at Mattew 7:6, the picture of a pearl expresses the standing of the disciples in the sight of God and the proper perspective toward the Christian brother. All of these things buttress the exegesis of Matthew 13:44-46 here presented.

Having dealt with the unique elements present in the parable of

the Pearl of Great Price, it may also be helpful to wrestle briefly with an overall comparison of the two parables in Matthew 13:44-46. Do the contrasts and divergences serve any particular function? The differences may be noted below once again.

	Hidden Treasure	*Pearl of Great Price*
Subject:	*anthropo*	*anthropo emporo*
Process:	(unexpressed)	*zetounti kalous margaritas*
Find:	*thesauro kekrummeno*	*hena polutimon margariten*
Reaction:	*apo tes charas autou*	(unexpressed)
Tenses:	historical presents *hupagei, polei echei, agorazei*	aorists *pepraken, eichen, egorasen*

What seems to happen in these verses is that the second parable intensifies and focuses on the first. Thus, "man" becomes a specific "merchant," who is deliberately "seeking fine pearls." The "treasure" in the second parable is a specific "pearl of great value,"[34] and the vivid historical presents are supplanted by terse aorists. The parable of the Pearl of Great Price is more narrow, more sharpened than the Hidden Treasure. We may speculate that Jesus paired them together in order to intensify and underscore his message.[35]

Thus, the pairing together of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price functions to intensify and reinforce the basic message of each parable. The kingdom of heaven is the work of God in Jesus Christ on behalf of his treasured, faithful people. In the eyes of the God of grace, these sinful, imperfect disciples appear as treasure; nay, as pearls! In the midst of conflict and opposition, trouble and uncertainty, the disciples of Jesus may rest secure in their identity in him. They will not be forgotten or abandoned, for the one who has sought and found them is also the one who has come to give his all for them.

Endnotes

1. A typical comment follows: "Buying, translated into other language, means showing by action that we really do esteem the king of God to be the chief good." Alexander Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1884), p. 78.
2. Richard Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1948), p. 50.
3. A very few exegetes have differed from the traditional interpretation of Matthew 13:44-46. While their work was not consulted for the exegesis of this article, it may be noted in passing: David Cooper, *Messiah: the Historical Appearance* (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1961); John A. Sanford, *The Kingdom Within* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1970); and in the past Campegius Vitringa, *Verklaring van de Evangelische Parabolen* (Amsterdam: Hendrik Strik, 1715).
4. Below I will decide in favor of the longer reading, *panta hosa,* at verse 44.
5. Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 200-201.
6. Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), p. 38.
7. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1935), p. 133.
8. Ibid., p. 255.
9. Madelaine Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1977), p. 27.
10. Norman Huffman, "Atypical Features in the Parables of Jesus," *Journal of Biblical Literature,* 97 (1978), pp. 207-220.
11. Students of the parables have long noted the diversity in meaning of the term *parabole* in the New Testament. But close examination shows that the Palestinian parable can be fairly defined as above and distinguished from simple metaphor, simile, proverb, comparisons to the world of nature, and "examplary stories." For a full treatment, see my *The Parable: Definition and Interpretation, with Special Application to the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price* [Ft. Wayne: unpublished manuscript, written in partial fulfilment of M.Div. requirements, 1979], pp. 25-53).
12. Quoted by G.V. Jones in his work, *The Art and Truth of the Parables* (London: SPCK, 1964), p. 23.
13. "What has been said leaves us in no doubt but that God is the recipient of the ransom. Jesus serves God when He dies, and God inexorably demands suffering from His Son. God smites Him. All possibility that Satan might receive the ransom is thus ruled out. Satan dos not figure at all in the passion story in Mk. and Mt. Satan desires the death of Jesus so little that he tries to divert Him from his path, Mk. 8:33, Mt. 16:23." So F. Buchsel, "*luo,*"

in Gerhard Kittel, ed., and Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), IV, p. 344.

14. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 34.
15. Buchsel, op. cit., p. 343.
16. This, of course, fully accords with the classic way of describing what Jesus experiences "for us," namely, the wrath of God (Matt. 26:39,42).
17. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* trans. and adapted by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 271.
18. R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 138.
19. Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 69-70.
20. Ibid., p. 380.
21. Ibid., p. 688.
22. Preisker, "*periousios,*" in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), VI, p. 57.
23. Feldman, *Parables and Similes of the Rabbis* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 22. "To the key of a precious jewel-box in his possession the king fastened a chain so that it might not easily be mislaid or lost. Even so did God attach His name 'El' *'el* to 'Israel' *yisra'el* to guard against their being lost in the world." Also Jones, op. cit., p. 65, notes Israel's possession by God with his parable: "What is the matter like? A man wo inherited a field in a distant province; and he sold it for a small sum. And the purchaser went away and dug and found in it treasures of silver and gold and precious stones and pearls. Then the seller began to get very angry."
24. Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 198-199.
25. Some might want to emphasize the fact that the man purchased the entire field in the parable to infer the action of Jesus as the sacrifice for all mankind. This is obviously the Biblical message. But it does not seem to be a part of the parable's meaning here. The parable, and indeed the entire context, is focused on the disciples, and not the work of Jesus as universally intended for all.
26. Hauck, "*margarites,*" in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., and Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 174.
27. Didache 9:5, quoted in T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 174.
28. Ibid., p. 174.

29. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), p. 291.
30. Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 122.
31. Tasker, op. cit., p. 80.
32. Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), p. 376.
33. For Mohr's full treatment of Matt. 7:6, see Gerry Mohr, *The Meaning of Matthew 7:6 in the Light of Its Context* (Springfield: unpublished manuscript, written in partial fulfilment of M. Div. requirements, 1976).
34. Jeremias, op. cit., p. 200, speculating concerning the translation of *hena polutimon margariten* from Aramaic, writes, "hence, it is not: 'the one, precious pearl,' but, 'a specially valuable pearl.' "
35. Jesus seems to do the same thing at other places. Thus, also in Matthew 13:31-33, the message of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven is basically identical. But with an astonishing freedom, the second parable utilizes more striking imagery to convey its message. A woman stands as a symbol for God, and leaven, normally a symbol for isn, stands as a symbol for the kingdom. Also, at Luke 15:3-10, the shepherd of verse 4 becomes a woman at verse 8, while one sheep in a hundred becomes one coin in ten.

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The Scriptural Principles of Fellowship

Timothy D. Knapp

The question of how Christians can demonstrate their unity under Christ is becoming increasingly important. There is a rising tide of ecumenical activity in our circles which threatens to swamp those who carefully try to ply these troubled waters. The pressure to be a part of these endeavors often sweeps aside a reasoned understanding of how God would have us react to those activities which compromise our confession as it embodies word and deed.

True fellowship must be based on the words and teachings and life of Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself insists on that. The implication is present when He commands His disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:19-20). Christ here is not speaking a word of law, but a word of Gospel. His concern is for salvation, not damnation. "Everything I have commanded you" is the criterion of fellowship with others. It is unthinkable for a follower of Christ to purposely sacrifice "everyting I have commanded you" or even anything He has commanded us on the altar of church fellowship. Jesus is the "light of the world" (John 8:12); whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness. By following Jesus, by "obeying all I have commanded you" churches will inevitably be able to join in true fellowship. Christ Himself said to the Jews who believed Him, "If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31).

Although the Scriptures never present a systematic body of doctrine, there is always the assumption that true and false doctrine do exist and that believers should stand guard against false doctrine. Christ opposes the false doctrine of Satan in Matthew 4:4 with the Word of God. Later, Jesus warns His followers concerning false prophets who are like ravening wolves amongst the flock (Matt. 7:15-20). Jesus' intent is to keep the flock separate from false teachers, not to unite with them. Jesus warns His disciples specifically about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6, 12) which was antithetical to the teachings and purposes of Christ. When Peter introduces his version of false doctrine (Matt. 16: 21-22), Jesus totally rejects Peter's suggestion and corrects the situation: "Out of my sight, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16:23).

There is yet another principle for fellowship put forth in the gospels. Jesus demands not only that His followers know and hold to His teachings, but that they acknowledge and confess them before men. Christ expects those who believe in Him and His teachings to bear witness to the same. Matthew records these words of Christ, "Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. . ." (Matt. 10:32). Jesus makes similar statements in Mark 8:38 and Luke 12:8-10. If we are to be in fellowship with others, that fellowship, according to Jesus' will, must be based on agreement on all He has commanded. Christ has commanded not only acceptance of Him and His teachings but also a confession of those teachings before men. This confession is not simply a verbal proclamation but, as becomes evident in the epistles, involves a confession through lifestyle also.

The apostles, Christ's appointed spokesmen, went on to say much more regarding fellowship with others. The Galatian judaizers, the Corinthian libertines, the Ephesian threat (Acts 20: 29-30), and many other challenges to the teachings of Christ in the pastoral and general epistles prompted "fellowship" directives from the apostles. They never hesitated to identify false teachers for the sake of the flock. They never skirted the responsibility of denying apostolic fellowship to those groups whose teachings were perverting the faith. Equally, they often wrote warmly of those teachers and prophets who were emissaries of the Gospel, calling upon the congregations to welcome them. In this way they continued to live up to "all I have commanded you."

The early Christians recognized the authority of the apostles as Christ's messengers (Acts 2:42). The apostles themselves claimed to be teaching "all I have commanded you." The Apostle John writes, "we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Fellowship is based on what the apostles have seen and heard. Paul boldly proclaimed "all I have commanded you," as is stated in Acts 20:27, "For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole counsel of God." Paul calls upon the church at Rome, by virtue of the grace of God given to him, to remember certain points (Rom. 15:15-16). As one rereads the book of Romans, Paul's "certain points" are

not simply a short shopping list, a Gospel stripped to the lowest common denominator, but a sweeping view that begins with God's wrath for fallen man and continues through righteousness by faith, life through Christ, future glory, and present sanctification. Paul later warns the Christians at Rome: "Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them" (Rom. 16:17). Paul urges the Christians to separate from those who cause dissensions or divisions concerning any of the teaching they have learned. Since Paul teaches the "whole counsel of God," this command makes sense. Any teaching that departs from the whole counsel of God is an invention of man and will serve only to confuse or contradict the "one true teaching." R.C.H. Lenski writes: "Paul's injunction is not to keep away only from total rejectors of the Gospel. What Christians ever needed such a warning? His injunction to keep away from believers who are errorists and teach falsely."[1] Paul's injunction to avoid such men is meant to be rigorous, because "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9), as Paul had already seen in Galatia and Corinth. The basis for church fellowship must be the whole counsel of God.

Paul's advice to Lutheran pastors would be the same as it was to Titus and Timothy. Paul tells Titus to hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught. The result will be that Titus can encourage his flock with sound teaching and refute those who oppose the trustworthy message, in season and out of season, in opposition to the teacher who rejects sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-4). Titus is called upon to defend the faith against false teachers. He is to warn divisive people twice, then separate from them if they remain in their error (Titus 3:9-11).

What kind of errors constituted an offense worthy of separation in the early church? The following list of some of the offenses condemned will give us an idea:

1. Insisting on circumcision (Gal. 2:1-5).
2. Engaging in sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-7).
3. Engaging in other forms of immorality (1 Cor. 5:11-13).
4. Denying the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15).
5. Proposing that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred (2 Tim. 2:18).
6. Denying the Redeemer (2 Pet. 2:1, Jude 4).
7. Denying Christ's second coming (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

8. Denying God's Word (2 Pet. 3:3-6).
9. Disregarding the words and writings of the apostles (2 Thess. 3:14-15).
10. Denying Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22-23).
11. Changing the grace of God into a license for immorality; denying the third use of the law (Jude 4).

From this list it is evident that errors beyond denial of the Gospel in the narrowest sense may be reason to avoid fellowship with an individual or denomination. It is also evident that errors in practice as well as in teaching constitute an offense to the Christian community. As Lutherans try to understand the scriptural principles for joining in altar and pulpit fellowship with others, the following points are clear:

1. Jesus demands obedience to His word (i.e., the entire Scripture).
2. Outward unity among Christians must consist of both teaching and practice.
3. False teachings and false teachers do exist and are to be avoided by Christians.
4. False teachers may not necessarily be rank pagans.

Scripture employs several key words which comprehend the totality of the faith. These words in their contexts provide us insight as we try to determine what is necessary to altar and pulpit fellowship with others. We will limit ourselves to those contexts that have a direct relationship to the scriptural criteria of fellowship. Much current discussion has centered around the word "gospel" or *euaggelion.* The Gospel in the narrowest sense is the promise of forgiveness of sins and justification through Christ. Yet the Gospel in this sense is not the sole basis of altar and pulpit fellowship with others. The Word of God also employs the term *euaggelion* in a wider sense. Jesus sees Himself and His words as the content of the Gospel. Although the term *euaggelion* is used sparingly in the gospels, it appears that John used the term *logos* in its place. In John 8: 31-32 Jesus promises the believing Jews that, if they hold to His words, they will know the truth and the truth will set them free. Later, in His high priestly prayer, Jesus calls upon His Father to sanctify the disciples in the word of truth that Jesus has entrusted to them.

Paul talks frequently of the *euaggelion* entrusted to him. In Paul we see the vast scope of doctrine subsumed in the Gospel. Although Paul does not include an ordered outline of his Gospel, he does apply that word specifically to the following teachings:

1. The Trinity.
2. The two natures of Christ.
3. The resurrection of the dead.
4. Justification by faith for Jesus' sake.
5. Election to salvation.
6. The Davidic ancestry of Jesus.
7. The fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

These points all appear in Romans 1: 1-6. Elsewhere Paul's gospel includes a recounting of the events of the crucifixion and the resurrection (1 Cor. 15) and the return of Christ for the final judgment (Romans 2:16). In the broad sense it appears that Paul's Gospel also includes the proper use of the law (1 Tim. 1:11). In all cases the Gospel is in harmony with the word of God. It is through setting forth the word of God plainly, without distortion, that the gospel in all its richness and fullness is revealed (2 Cor. 4:1-6). Again, a minimalistic view of the term "gospel" as the basis for altar and pulpit fellowship is not supported by the Scriptures or *euaggelion*.

The Greek word *didache* also has import in regard to fellowship. Only rarely does *didache* appear to relate to one teaching (instances appear in Hebrews 6:2 and 13:9). Instead, the usual sense of *didache* is the whole of Christian doctrine. The word is used in this sense of Jesus' teaching (Matt. 7:28, 22:33; Mark 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; esp. John 7:16-17; 18:19) and the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42; 5:28; 17:19; Romans 6:17, 16:17). With this usage in mind Karl H. Rengstorf writes:

> When the Synoptists speak of the *didache* of Jesus. . .they do not mean a particular dogmatics or ethics, but His whole *didaskein,* His proclamation of the will of God as regards both form and content. In John, too, *didache* comprehends the whole *didaskein* of Jesus and does not merely denote a compendium of His individual statements. Similarly, Matt. 16:12: *he didache ton Pharisaion kai Saddoukaion* has in view the whole of what the Pharisees or Sadducees *didaskousin* or Acts 2:42 the whole of what the Apostles *edidaskon.* Paul follows the same usage when he employs *didache* both for the totality of his *didaskein* and for the *didaskein* that might be necessary in individual cases (1 Cor. 14:6, 26).[2]

Connected with this view of *didache* is the concept of *didaskalia* and Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16. Paul writes that all Scripture is

useful for instruction. One would surmise that all of Scripture contains the *didache,* the teachings to which Christians are to cling. It is through the Scriptures that men are thoroughly equipped.

The word *heterodidaskaleo* gives us a further glimpse of the sense and importance of *didache* of Scripture. Rengstorf writes:

> The word presupposes a *heterodidaskalos* which is not mentioned in the N.T. though the persons concerned are often present. The nearest approach to the term is Paul's description of the "gospel" of the Galatian Judaizers as *heteron euaggelion ho ouk estin allo:* the name is wrongly claimed for their preaching because there is only one *euaggelion* and this is proclaimed by Paul, any other being no gospel. It is in this light that we are to understand *hetero* in *heterodidaskalein.* It carries with it the proclamation of a *hetera didaskalia* which is a perversion and is thus to be rejected.[3]

The occurrence of *pseudodidaskalos* in 2 Peter 2:1 also carries the strong condemnation of any teaching that differs from the *didache* of Christ and the apostles as a false teaching introduced by false teachers, both of which should be rejected.

Finally, *pistis* and *homologia* are closely related to each other and to the proper understanding of a basis for the external unity of the church. *Pistis* is used in various senses in the Scriptures. For purposes of this discussion *pistis* as "the content of faith" will be the matter to be explored. Galatians 1:23 uses *pistis* as the faith in a broad sense. Paul now proclaims the *pistis* he once tried to destroy. This *pistis* is identical to Paul's *euaggelion* (discussed previously) and his *didache,* as he writes to Timothy: "If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, brought up in the truths of the faith and the good teaching you have followed" (1 Tim. 4:6). To fall victim to error is to abandon the faith (1 Tim. 4:1), to reject the faith (1 Tim. 1:19), or to wander from the faith (1 Tim. 6:21). *Homologia* and *pistis* become closely related to each other in commands to express the church's faith in confession. Our active confession of the faith is implied in Jesus' words concerning the witness of Christians in Luke 12:8-10, Matthew 10:32-33, and Mark 8:38. This is a confession of the faith, of the teaching, of "all I have commanded you," of the Gospel. Faith and confession are intimately tied together in Romans 10:9-10 and 2 Corinthians 4:13-15. That which is held to be true is to be confessed

before men. Again, in Hebrews 4:14, the church is told to hold firmly to the faith it professes. This confession may not be silenced but must contain the faith, the body of doctrine, for on it the true unity of the church rests. We are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-21).

It is certain that Christ and the apostles placed the highest priority on the conservation and promulgation of the faith. Those congregations and individuals who held to the one true faith banded together in a visible, unified manner, always under the authority of the apostolic teachings. Those who misunderstood the faith or aspects thereof (Acts 18:24-26) were corrected and, upon exchanging error for truth, restored to the community (Acts 18:27). Those who persisted in false teachings (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:16-18) were noted and avoided (Rom. 16:17-18). Lutherans today have the same privilege and obligation to conserve and promulgate the apostolic faith as did our predecessors. Where we joyfully and in unity of faith can join in common worship with others, we do it with vigor and enthusiasm. Where the faith calls us to reject common worship and substitute correction or rebuke, we do it with love, sobriety, and solemnity. In any event, as we are faced with the temptation to ignore or compromise the faith, we must remain first and foremost people who hold to "everything I have commanded you."

Endnotes

1. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 918.
2. Karl H. Rengstorf, *"Didache,"* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 164.
3. Karl H. Rengstorf, *"Heterodidaskaleo,"* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* II, p. 163.

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Book Reviews

THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE THEOLOGY OF MARTIN CHEMNITZ. By Bjarne W. Teigen. Brewster, Massachusetts: Trinity Lutheran Press. 1986. 226 pages. Paperback, $16.95.

Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) was unqestionably the ablest and most prolific theologian of the Lutheran church in the generation after Luther, although serving, not as a professor of theology, but as a very knowledgeable pastor and supervisor of the Brunswick territorial church. One of his earliest literary productions was a *Gutachten*, or theological opinion, in the Hardenberg case. Chemitz showed convincingly how Albert Hardenberg of Bremen had deviated from the Augsburg Confession's Tenth Article on the Lord's Supper toward a Reformed view. Eventually Chemnitz expanded this opinion into a book, *De Coena Domini*, now available in English translation as *The Lord's Supper* (translated by J.A.O. Preus, Concordia Publishing House,1979). Chemnitz's critical evaluation of Trent's teaching and decrees, his monumental *Examination of the Council of Trent* (translated by Fred Kramer, Concordia Publishing House), contains a lengthy section of more than 300 pages in Part II on the Sacrament of the Altar. Chemnitz's *Enchiridion*, translated into English by Luther Poellot *(Ministry, Word, and Sacrament*, Concordia Publishing House, 1981), also includes pertinent material on the Sacrament.

Bjarne Teigen's work is a scholarly attempt at delineating Chemnitz's thought on the Supper chiefly from the above sources, but including also references to the *Formula of Concord*, of which Chemnitz was a primary author, and to his dogmatics, *Loci Theologici*, published after his death. Teigen has due respect for the brilliant apology of the real presence which the "Second Martin" fashioned. In an absolutely invincible manner Chemnitz establishes the truth that in the Supper Christ gives us His true, real, substantial body and blood, in a manner transcending human capacity to explain, Christ's seal of forgiveness, His sacred pledge, His last will and testament which no man can or dare rescind or alter, as little as the will of a testator may be changed willy-nilly by his heirs. Teigen also shows how Chemnitz in Luther-like manner attests the close link that a proper understanding of the personal union of natures in Christ has with the article on the Lord's Supper, a point so indelibly etched by the *Formula of Concord* in Articles VII and VIII. A person's teaching on the Lord's Supper will ultimately be no sounder or truer to Scripture than his eaching on the person of Christ, and vice versa.

In view of Teigen's otherwise conscientious work it is, therefore, somewhat of a puzzle and a disappointment to find him driving one point home again and again with almost insular zeal, namely that "Chemnitz is not afraid to recognize that the consecration effects the Real Presence and that, because of this, a miraculous change has taken place." (p. 53) This intense focus repeats itself as the main theme of Teigen's argument, so much so that it unbalances and makes unrealiable what is otherwise a scholarly piece of work. He is intent on proving that Baier-Walther, Schmid, Hoenecke, Pieper, and the seventeenth-century dogmaticians whom they followed,

Hunnius, Quenstedt, Gerhard, Hollaz, etc., were wrong in not saying that, when the minister repeats the *verba,* then the real presence is effected (184). Teigen in essence charges these theologians with deficiency. Yet they all trace the empowering efficacy of the Sacrament to the instituting word of Christ at the first Supper and link together the consecration, distribution, and reception to the God-intended and God-commanded use or action of the Supper, faithful thus to the *Formula of Concord,* which states that "the true and almighty words of Jesus Christ which He spake at the first institution were efficacious not only at the first Supper, but they endure, are valid, operate, and are still efficacious ... by virtue of the first institution'" (FC VII: 75). Accordingly, from Luther forward theologians in the Lutheran church have pointed to Christ's empowering command and promise at the first Supper, emphasizing that everything Christ commanded is to be done when this Sacrament is kept in His memory: reverent repetition of the words of consecration, setting apart the simple bread and wine for this special purpose, and also distribution of the elements for the communicants' reception. Lutheran theologians have regularly refrained from trying to designate the "moment" of the real presence. They resist tying it merely to the act of the minister who repeats the words of institution, harking back rather to Christ's own ordaining of this holy Supper. Therefore, not only the repetition of the words is of the essence but also the distribution and reception of the elements are constituting parts of the Savior's gracious gift (cf. FC VII: 83,84). It is regrettable that Teigen feels called on to ride his hobby-horse on "consecrationism" to the point where he labels those who do not follow his "high" view of the miracle of consecration as Melanchtonians, or even worse as holding to Reformed thinking with a "functional doctrine" on the Lord's Supper (p. 178). One thing leads to the next as Teigen eventually also speaks a word for veneration of the elements that have been consecrated, as also for the need to consume *all* the elements (the *reliquiae*) consecrated at a given service (pp. 120, 139). In so speaking he has distanced himself, however conscientiously he speaks in behalf of a more pious practice in the Lutheran church, from virtually all responsible and loyal teachers from Luther onwards. In fact, what becomes most disturbing is Teigen's mustering of Luther along with Chemnitz for defense of his reasoning. Having worked with both Martins for some years now, I must say that the conclusions drawn by Teigen do not accurately reflect what Luther and Chemnitz taught concerning the Supper. We can be sure of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament because "Christ has established the validity of all these activities upon *His* word," says Luther, "for Christ nowhere commanded that his body should come into being out of *my* word," not by mere repetition of the Saviour's words as in an incantation (*LW* 37, 180-190).

One would like to recommend this book to stretch the minds of thoughtful people on the important article of Christ's Supper. However, it must be stated that it is a slanted stance and a mistaken one; it does the very thing, unfortunately, which the author himself accuses his Lutheran forebears of doing, that is, of fitting "the material under consideration into previously constructed paradigms" (p. 185).

E.F. Klug

FUNDAMENTAL GREEK GRAMMAR. By James W. Voelz. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. 330 pages. $15.95.

This New Testament Greek grammar is a timely publication. The author acknowledges in the preface that many students in our time are acquainted only with English and, in many cases, acquainted with very little English at that. This grammar is written very carefully, taking the student step by step, leaving very little to the imagination. Dr. Voelz is a capable Greek scholar, and he has taught beginning Greek for more than a decade. It is quite apparent from this book that Dr. Voelz has sifted through much material and had done much thinking about the subject matter. There is no unnecessary verbiage.

The word "fundamental" is found in the title of this book. The book is that, but it is more. Not many beginning Greek grammars carry the student far enough into the language so that he can begin reading the classics or the New Testament without the help of an intermediate grammar. But this book has enough detail and explains enough syntax so that the student can begin such work though he will need the help of an intermediate grammar. What interests this reviewer the most is the Greek-to-English exercises found at the end of every lesson, beginning with lesson 4. Very often such exercises are either too difficult or dull. Some grammars take their examples from actual Greek literature. If these examples are not simplified, they are very often too difficult for the beginning student. If the examples are composed by the author to fit precisely the points which he is making, there is the danger that these examples may be insipid. It appears to this reviewer that Dr. Voelz had worked hard and long on these exercises to maintain the interest of the student.

Even the teacher who no longer teaches beginning Greek can profit from this book. New Testament exegetes may not want to admit it but, after teaching no beginning Greek for a decade, many of the details of morphology and syntax become hazy in their minds. Let such a teacher read through this book to sharpen his knowledge and to relive the thrills which he experienced while teaching beginning Greek. For example, on page 18 Dr. Voelz states: "Reflexive activity is most common in verbs concerning personal care and grooming." Rarely are we given this information. On pages 32 and 83 the author distinguishes prepositional phrases which are adjectival and those which are adverbial. Most grammars, not even advanced ones, give us this necessary information. Chapter 32 (pages 211 to 220) is very informative. Not only are we given details concerning the ultima accent of five strong aorist verbs but also such syntactical knowledge as is found at the bottom of page 215 and at the top of page 216. In addition to what most grammars tell us we are told that the present imperative is the abnormal tense; and, that it is used for demands that signal action to commence. Very likely few teachers of Greek know these details.

Here and there there are a few misspellings and a few incorrect Greek accents. But we shall not clutter this review with such matters. By this time Dr. Voelz is surely aware of them. We wish Dr. Voelz had said more about the genitive and

dative cases of page 24. Basically the genitive case shows more than possession. A beginning grammar ought mention immediately that the Greek genitive basically denotes possession *or relationship*. Likewise, perhaps it would be best to say that the dative states to or for whom something is done, thus, immediately introducing the student to the so-called dative of advantage or disadvantage. We admit that uses other than the indirect object are delineated on page 254, but the genitive of relationship is conspicuously absent on page 253. The chapter on conditional sentences (number 39, pages 266 to 271) contains a few bugs. Dr. Voelz writes: "A contrary to fact conditional sentence imagines a *possibility* that is definitely *impossible.*" Instead of "possibility" he surely means "situation." On the next page (267) he fails to inform the student that in New Testament Greek the word *an* is sometimes dropped in contrary to fact conditions and that the imperfect and aorist tenses are not so sharply distinguished as in Classical Greek. On page 268 he uses the term "secondary tense" without informing the student as to the meaning of this term. But these criticisms are details which will surely be corrected in subsequent editions of this grammar. We truly recommend this grammar to all teachers of New Testament Greek. The book is well written and interesting. The printing job is very appealing. The price of the book is quite reasonable.

Harold H. Buls

FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION: A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS. By C.K. Barrett. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985. 120 pages.

"A Christian man is the most free lord of all and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to everyone." This statement by Luther in 1520 expresses well the paradoxical nature of freedom and obligation which forms the theme of Galatians and the focus of this examination of that epistle. The author's purpose is to explore the relationship between history, theology, and ethics in Galatians in order that Paul's view of the paradoxical nature of freedom and obligation in Christian life be clearly articulated. C.K. Barrett, a renowned New Testament scholar with numerous major literary contributions made during his tenure at the University of Durham, began this analysis of Galatians in the Sanderson Lectures presented to the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne, Australia, in 1983. Thus, the format of this book is not that of a verse-by-verse commentary. While this study does follow the natural sequence of Galatians and does involve some detailed exegesis, Barrett gives attention to the broader historical situation and the theological method Paul uses to address it.

Barrett's treatment is carefully organized and unashamedly Christocentric. With an engaging style he brings alive the controversial struggle Paul faced, demonstrating the interpenetration of history and theology by often offering the reader probable arguments of the Judaizers that Paul seeks to refute. Secondly, Barrett expounds Paul's theology of freedom, stating that the law "was added to turn man's revolt against God into specific acts of transgression ... to make sin everywhere observable"

and that righteousness is fundamentally forensic, beginning as "God's gift of a proper relationship with himself" (pp. 33-34; 42). The author centers his discussion of freedom on Paul's passionate obsession with *solus Christus;* everything depends upon God's grace visible in the "placarding" of Christ crucified. Lastly, the ethics of obligation in Galatians are stressed: "Freedom is freedom to die with Christ by faith and is inseparable from the obligation to live the life of love that Christ lives within the believer" (p. 89). In highlighting the egocentricity of the Judaizers, Barrett effectively demonstrates the enduring significance and application of this letter.

As much as Barrett lets Paul speak, he does not "get into his skin" as Luther did. The result is that law and Gospel, as well as justification and sanctification, are at times merged instead of clearly distinguished (e.g., justification is viewed as a "process," p. 65; Christian ethics rests upon "an absolute obligation," p. 71). Other concerns that this study raises center around Barrett's treatment of Luke's method of composition in Acts. In his opinion Luke fails to deal with division in the early church (cf. the epilogue: "Apostles in Council and Conflict"). This is not the type of quick-reference book meant for a homiletical study; it is a penetrating, thought-provoking examination of Galatians as a whole that is designed to stimulate the student who is already versed in its content.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS AND CHURCH DOCTRINE. By Raymond E. Brown. Mahway, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985. 176 pages. Cloth, $8.95; paper, $5.95.

This brief work by a famous Roman Catholic scholar of the New Testament is an important study of a most important topic, even more important for Lutherans than for Roman Catholics, at least in the implications for the two communions. The work is really meant for the family and is at bottom a defense of historical exegesis of the Bible against those Catholics who are, to put it mildly, unhappy with exegetical results. Brown is very honest in his study and conceals nothing of the plain facts. He has a section in which he discusses "Doctrines about which the Scriptures are Virtually Silent" and the doctrines mentioned are the continued virginity of Mary, the immaculate conception, and the assumption. Furthermore, he holds "it would be unwise to interpret the institution of baptism by Christ to mean that in his lifetime Jesus specifically commanded the practice," and he seems to side with those critics who regard the eucharistic directive ("Do this in remembrance of Me!") "as a later liturgical specification similar to the baptismal directive" (pp. 45,46). On the next page he admits that "we have virtually no information in NT times about who this person (i.e., the one who presided at the eucharist) was or how the person was designated to do this."

It is clear, or if not it should be, that these facts cause no real problem for Roman Catholics; "if by logic, or sheer historical reasoning, or traceable eyewitness tradition, the inevitable necessity of many dogmas *cannot* be shown from the NT data, we

we must then recognize that the guarantee about what must be believed and proclaimed rests with the Spirit working in the Church and speaking through its teachers" (pp. 50-51). The situation for Lutherans is far different for we have Holy Writ as our authority and not Holy Church. Thus doubts as to the historicity of Scripture and its truth throughout have immediate and severe repercussions for the doctrine we confess.

One does, however, wonder whether Roman Catholics can really be satisfied with some of the positions taken by Brown. I know that, if I were a Roman Catholic, I should think a person guilty of something like prevarication or sophistry who could argue as follows (p. 48):

> ... the institution of priesthood by Christ would have to be understood as a complicated historical process that began at the Last Supper ... In my judgment, such a view in no way weakens the validity of the dogma of Trent (DBS 1752) that "Christ" established the apostles as priests with the words "Do this in commemoration of me." It simply demands nuance.

Similarly, in an historically written narrative, can one simply invoke the decision of the Roman Catholic Church "that inspiration cannot be equated with historicity" (p. 36)? What sort of inspiration of historically, conceived texts is it which gives up the historicity of the texts?

I have another criticism. There is no denying that it is a right procedure to seek the historical situation and original meaning of the texts. But I wonder whether Brown is critical enough, not of the texts, but of the method of historical criticism that has become the common thing. I believe that much of the argumentation used to establish big situations in form criticism and redaction criticism, as well as individual judgments concerning this or that text and its provenance and so on, is of such a kind that, if applied to a criminal case, it would simply be thrown out of court as wasting the court's time. I look for more of the attitude of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, to whom this work is dedicated on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday. Fitzmyer is quoted in an essay of Alber C. Outler (appearing in *Jesus and Man's Hope, III*, p. 53) as saying concerning the Synoptic Problem that "the problem is practically insoluble." But Brown is always stimulating and everything he writes deserves attention.

Henry P. Hamann

JESUS, SON OF MAN: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels. By Barnabas Lindars. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983. 244 pages.

This book claims to be "an attempt to break the deadlock in the debate concerning the Son of Man in the New Testament" (p. vii). The point of contention is the titular versus non-titular use of the "Son of Man" expression in the gospels. This

debate was especially fueled in 1965 by Geza Vermes who asserted that the Aramaic *barnash or bar nasha* was not a title in Judaism, nor was it used as such by Jesus; rather, it was used as a non-messianic human self-designation to express his identification with the sons of men (i.e., first-person circumlocution in place of "I" or an idiom meaning "a man"). Furthermore, any titular "Son of Man" usage in the gospels was identified as a post-Easter creation. Such a position has been supported more recently by M. Casey in his *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London, 1979). *Jesus, Son of Man* follows in the track of Vermes and Casey by expanding their research into a detailed study of the sayings traditions in the gospels.

Barnabas Lindars is an internationally respected author and the Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at Manchester University. His purpose in this examination is threefold. His primary goal is to demonstrate that the "Son of Man" expression is not a title in "authentic" Jesus sayings. Secondly, Lindars seeks to use this findings regarding "authentic" Jesus sayings to give the reader a sketch of the understanding Jesus had of His own mission. Thirdly, the author also seeks to use his findings to better articulate the special Christological understandings that each evangelist "collected or edited" into his gospel.

Two major problems are present in this study. The first involves the pre-suppositions upon which Lindars builds: that the Aramaic *barnash or bar nasha* cannot be a title and that "Son of Man" was not a title in Judaism at the time of Jesus. While the basic linguistic meaning of *bar nasha* is clearly "man" or "human being," we must not conclude that "man" is all it can mean. How a phrase functions in a particular context affects what it means. It is evident from the usage of Daniel 7 in 1 Enoch 37-71 that such a linguistic form served an "identity" function for an individual eschatological figure. This necessitates that we maintain the possibility that, in certain contexts, the Aramaic construct could carry these loaded Danielic and Enochic associations and therefore have a titular "identity" function. It appears that the Septuagint form of Daniel 7:13 has validity as a rendering with this force. Furthermore, since the 1977-78 SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminars on the Books of Enoch a scholarly consensus has been reached that I Enoch 37-71, with its numerous "Son of Man" references, is certainly Jewish and pre-A.D. 70. Thus, Lindars' main pre-suppositions can be considered inaccurate.

The second major problem with this study is the critical methodology Lindars employs in his examination of the gospels. He subjectively concludes that all other "Son of Man" sayings apart from the nine in which he is able to detect the underlying *bar nasha* idiom ("a man" instead of "Son of Man") must "be regarded as inauthentic" (p. 85). He posits the rest to the creative minds of the evangelists and Q. Lindars is another scholar who separates the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith and then attempts to document the transition. This book is a detailed technical presentation written for specialists in Jesus or gospel research. Outside of perusal by such specialists, this study, in the opinion of this reviewer is not worth much attention.

Charles A. Gieschen
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THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH. By Everett F. Harrison. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985. 251 pages.

While some biblical scholars hesitate to label little, if any, of the New Testament record as "history," Everett Harrison is comfortable grouping all of the New Testament writings into two general divisions: "Gospel History" and "Apostolic History." This work attempts to be a comprehensive survey of the latter; it overviews the life and work of the early Christian church as depicted in Acts and the Epistles. Everett F. Harrison is Emeritus Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary and author of *Introduction to the New Testament.* Rather than follow a typical chronological sequence in this study, Harrison structures his examination topically. His primary topical focus is the "external history" and "internal development" of the apostolic church, but also included are chapters on the background of the apostolic age, the historical value of Acts, and a concluding chapter which reviews what is known about the individual churches mentioned in the New Testament. The analysis is intended for the student, yet its content is readily accessible to the interested layperson.

This book can best be described as an average conservative treatment of a very broad subject. Harrison touches on so much that very few aspects of his presentation are deep. For example, his introduction on political, cultural, and religious background is informative, but it lacks detail and further documentation is not available in the endnotes (i.e., the source of population estimates and information on major personages or cults). Harrison's Reformed theology influences his interpretation in some important areas of doctrine and practice: receiving "Christ into one's heart" leads to creedal confession (p. 118); baptism is a "a rite by which those who have put their faith in Christ are inducted into the church" (p. 122); baptism is a symbol (b. 130); "water baptism" is separate from "spirit baptism" (pp. 44, 126-127); early Christian worship had vitality since "formalism had not yet laid its restraining, deadening hand upon the service" (p. 135); the Lord's Supper was a memorial of Christ (p. 140); the early Christian's daily activities were "lifted to a higher plane because they lived 'wholly in the Lord' " (p. 149). Several positive aspects of Harrison's work should not be ignored. He presents a survey of criticism on Acts and positions himself against scholars like F.C. Baur, Martin Dibelius, Hans Conzelmann, and others by upholding the historical value of Acts. He insightfully supports his position with material from Greek historiography (Thucydides), as well as arguing from the strong influence which Hebrew historiography had on Luke and the close correspondence between the speeches of Acts and the content of apostolic letters (i.e., Peter's speeches and his letters). His explanations of the Jewish background of Pentecost and Judaism's influence on Christian worship show interpretative skill. While this book is basically sound, it lacks the quality that calls for endorsement.

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ISAIAH 1-33. Word Bible Commentary, Volume 24. By John D.W. Watts. Waco, Texas: Word, 1985. lvii and 449 pages. Cloth, $24.95.

The book of Isaiah as "dramatic vision" is the reading proposed by John D.W. Watts in this latest addition to the Word Bible Commentary series. Specifically, Watts would have us see the book as a whole, the product of editors working in Judah around 435 B.C. with materials which had been assembled over the centuries, beginning with the historical, eight-century Isaiah himself. Watts contends that these fifth-century editors organized their work in a series of ten "acts," plus an introduction and epilogue, with one act per generation from Isaiah's time to their own. The purpose of their labor (and of the finished book) was to convince their contemporaries that, beginning in the eighth century, God had been instituting a new role for His chosen people: no longer were they to dream of king and empire; they were still to be His mission to the nations (as they had been since Abraham), but without high political status or even independence.

Watts, who serves both as professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and as editor for the Old Testament volumes in the Word series, has organized his discussion of each pericope much in the style of the *Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament* series (and, indeed, he acknowledges a heavy debt to Hans Wildberger's *BKAT* entry on Isaiah). Each section begins with bibliography, followed by a fresh translation of the text (in the manner of the *Anchor Bible* series), notes on text critical matters, comments on the "Form/Structure/ Setting" of the passage as a whole, comment on individual words and phrases, and an explanation setting the given passage in the overall context (as Watts sees it) of the book. (Thus, in contrast to the *BKAT "Ziel"* section, there is no attempt as such at modern application, except in some excurses on the history of interpretation.)

Such a thoroughgoing rereading of Isaiah deserves a more serious response than is possible in a brief review. Nevertheless, some observations are possible. The Word series seeks to be of use to a wide range of "consumers": "the fledgling student, the working minister as well as to colleagues in the guild of professional scholars and teachers" (Editorial Preface). However, much as is the case with Dahood's *Anchor Bible* commentaries on the Psalms, the reading of the book proposed in this commentary hangs so heavily on a new understanding of a multitude of technical details that it is hard to see how many outside of the "guild" will be able to benefit greatly.

As to the merits of the argument itself, Watts' effort to give pre-eminence to the final form of the text is certainly worthy of note, however much it may derive from the "new literary criticism" of the Bible, rather than more traditional concerns of theology. Nevertheless, although he prescinds from discussion of earlier layers or editions of the text, one cannot avoid the impression that he has not entirely avoided the risks of hypothetical, historical reconstruction. His dating of the finished book of Isaiah places it in the midst of a period of Judah's history of which all must admit we know precious little. His speculations regarding the parties and perspectives competing in this period might be considered on their own merits, were

this a work on postexilic history, but to build on them an interpretation of a work which makes no explicit claims to be from that time is a precarious exercise, indeed. He himself admits somwhat the subjectivity of his reading of the text, as he conceded that the assignment of speaking parts in the ostensible "dramatic vision" is arguable and that, in fact, we lack concrete evidence of dramatic tradition in Israel (thanks, he claims, to the "rigid imposition of puritanlike restrictions" by Ezra [p. xxiv]).

Other concerns with the work include its inclination to tendentious reinterpretations of Israelite history, such as the suggestion that Isaiah's Ahaz was not a panicked monarch who called in the monster from the east to relieve the Syro-Ephraimite pressure, only to see the monster fairly swallow him as well (p. 93). Most serious of all, however, is the suspicion that Watts has been caught "between two stools" of a historical and a literary reading. By reading the text wholistically, yet giving such short shrift to its canonical setting at the time of the prophet Isaiah, Watts runs a great risk of a heavily idiosyncratic reading which will say little to those who cannot accept his theory. Such extraordinary exertions of energy and scholarship as are here in evidence are certainly not for naught, but their value will all too often have to be mined.

George C. Heider
Seward, Nebraska

RESPONSIBLE FAITH: CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF TWENTIETH CENTURY QUESTIONS. By Hans Schwarz. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986. 448 pages.

Hans Schwarz offers this work as an exercise in "theological reflections." As such he warns the reader not to expect a comprehensive dogmatics textbook. And, indeed, the reader will undoubtedly be disappointed if this warning is not heeded. Rather, one is encouraged to expect thoughtful reflection on assertions and challenges, both historical and contemporary, which arise as one encounters the principal dogmatic loci of the Christian faith. Schwarz seeks to present the Christian faith in an apologetic mode. Yet this book decidedly is not an "apologetics" in either the historical or "contemporary-evangelical" sense. In fact, the author exhibits a misinformed understanding of early church apologetics when he suggests that such theological writings arose because "Christians felt a need to inform the authorities, above all, the emperor, that their new faith contained nothing detrimental to the state, to clear thought, or to desirable morals" (p. 19). Rather, Schwarz' work stands as a contemporary reflection of the apologetic approach of Schleiermacher. For the author, the "cultured despisers" to which he appeals are those embued with the scientific and philosophical perspectives of the late twentieth century, and it is evident that he wishes to convince such readers that in his theological reflection there is nothing detrimental to the state, to clear thought, or to desirable morals. Schwarz also intends this work to be a contribution toward a greater degree of ecumenism between Roman, Lutheran, and Reformed faiths. Thus, traditionally knotty issues

in Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, the means of grace, and eschatology are consistently addressed with generous praise for those who seek to reframe confessional positions so as to include previously rejected antithetical positions. Yet, the author does not set forth his own contribution to the ecumenical movement with the typical methodology of minimalism, in which these are proposed (a) with terminological vagueness and (b) without corresponding antitheses. Rather, he consistently employs a *via negativa* methodology.

To employ assertion by negation or antitheses without corresponding theses is not new. Schwarz's methodology has a noble pedigree, including Plato, Plotinus, Maimonides, Spinoza, Kant, Whitehead and Tillich, not to mention the entire history of "Eastern" thought. Yet Schwarz's method does not exhibit a Tillichian philosophical preoccupation. Instead, assuming that each article of Christian faith is bigger than language is capable of handling, his approach is to negate the various linguistic formulations which history has given to the article of faith under discussion. While this methodology proves frustrating to those (this reviewer included) who would be interested in knowing, for example, what Schwarz actually does believe about sin, or God's wrath, or the real presence, or eternal damnation, nevertheless Schwarz's challenges to commonly accepted formulations of doctrine force the reader to engage in a reassessment of his own convictions.

For the confessional Lutheran, Schwarz's wholesale acceptance of the assured results of higher criticism will be disturbing, as will his willingness to concede to the bifurcation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of Christian proclamation, though he asserts that by "Christian conviction" both "form a unity of person" (p. 207). Moreover, Schwarz assumes that "theology is the explicit attempt to raise into consciousness what we are doing" (p. 38), over against a confessional Lutheran view that theology is the explicit attempt to raise into consciousness who we are in Christ. Nevertheless, once its limitations were recognized, this reviewer found the book to be an enriching encounter with some fresh exegetical insights and some provocative dogmatic challenges. Seen in this light, *Responsible Faith: Christian Theology in the Light of Twentieth-Century Questions* is a catalyst for one's own theological reflections, and thus to those whose desire is for such theological stimulation the purchase of this book is recommended.

Robert W. Schaibley
Fort Wayne, Indiana

ABORTION: POLITICS, MORALITY, AND THE CONSTITUTION. By Stephan M. Krason. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984. 707 pages. Paper, $29.00.

The current legal status of abortion in the United States creates many problems for the Lutheran parish pastor. Not the least of these is the challenge of confronting the political implications of an admittedly moral issue. Trained to be sensitive

to the distortions of both message and ministry which are inherent in the "Social Gospel," the pastor finds himself in danger of being impaled on his own bayonet should he venture to adopt a prophetic stance over against the legalized immorality of abortion-on-demand. The relationship of the Word of God to the political institution is at stake here. What is the church's role in addressing perceived moral issues within the political arena? What moral and theological distinctions exist, if any, between the United Methodist Church's endorsement of a U.S. Presidential candidate in 1964 and the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod's endorsement of a "pro-life" stance now? In discerning the proper role of the church in social-moral issues the confessional Lutheran church stands alone. Both the Roman Church, on the one hand, and the Protestant churches, on the other, see as the goal of the church's ministry the changing of human behavior. Lutheranism does not share with these other communions a self-concept of the church as the "moral conscience of the nation." Rather, the confessional Lutheran church approaches social morality from the perspective of Luther's "Two Kingdoms," according to which we understand that God rules in the social order (the kingdom of the left hand) through natural law.

It is precisely at this point that Krason offers to the confessionally-mined pastor a valuable resource. Krason, who is both a political scientist and a lawyer, delivers an insightful critique of the two landmark Supreme Count decisions which revolutionized the social standing of abortion, *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton.* The reader is guided through the history leading up to these decisions (chapter 1), the legal logic employed in the written opinions (chapter 2), a penetrating analysis of the court's line of argumentation, especially with reference to the moral principles annunciated by the court (chapters 4 and 6), and the implications of the concept of "unenumerated rights" in constitutional law (chapter 5). Throughout these chapters Krason demonstrates that the crucial issues which the court raises are moral in nature. Thus, he confirms the reality of the moral challenge which the pastor faces. In chapters 7-9 the author evaluates these moral issues from the framework of what he calls the "Artistotelian-Stoic framework." This point of departure is taken because "each philosophy stresses the importance of political prudence and neither is founded on religious doctrine, ... [thus providing] the basis for a politically realistic resolution of the question in our religiously pluralistic political society" (pp. 438-439). What is particularly helpful about Krason's approach is that it suggests a way to deal with the social-moral crisis of abortion with terms appropriate to the "kingdom of the left hand."

The author concludes his work with two appendices which outline a strategy by which to effect the proscription of abortion in the nation. There are three basic options by which the current moral status of abortion might be changed: federal legislation, a constitutional amendment, or a reversal of opinion by the Supreme Court, presumably through the process of filling future vacancies in the court. While Senator John P. East, in his forward to this book, suggests the last option as the most hopeful one, Krason offers the first option as his recommended strategy. Regardless of the approach which one may advocate, the groundwork laid by this extensive work will prove most valuable.

Abortion: Politics, Morality, and the Constitution offers confessional Lutherans an avenue for an effective and theologically justifiable exercise of their responsibilities as citizens who, by personal Chrisitan convictions, are concerned about the current legal status of abortion. The book is well-written (especially for a work which began as a Ph.D. dissertation) and thorough. One will appreciate the extensive index and the helpful format of indexed end-notes, although the lack of a bibliography is lamentable for a work of this scope. This book is worth the price of twenty-nine dollars to those who desire to make a case for ending what Christian conscience compels us to regard as immoral and to make that case in the context of the "Kingdom of the left hand."

Robert W. Schaibley
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THE BATTLE FOR THE TRINITY. By Donald G. Bloesch. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1985. $10.95.

The current debate over the ordination of women, inclusive language to denote the Trinity, and the reconstruction of the symbols of Christian faith form the substance and thrust of this excellent book. The author (a professor of theology at the University of Dubuque) is an evangelical Reformed theologian well grounded in his subject material. He is biblically opposed to any change in the language and imagery of Scripture. He proposes that the rise of feminine theology can lead the church in one of two directions or even both—Baalism and Gnosticism. He makes a solid case for his contention. In a striking chapter entitled "Parallels with German Christians," he compares the rise of feminist theology with the rise of a "German Church" under Nazism. The similarities are startling, to say the least. The appeal to the American cultural experience, with its emphasis on freedom, autonomy, and change, parallels the Nazi-controlled philosophy and theology of the German church in the thirties. The book is accurately entitled "The Battle for the Trinity." It is necessary reading for parish pastors and professors alike.

George Kraus

DIE APOKALYPSE IN ANGERS. EIN MEISTERWERK MITTELALTERLICHER TEPPICHWERKE. By Pierre-Marie Auzas, Catherine de Maupesu, Christian de Merindol, Francis Muel, Antojne de Ruais. Translated by Roswitia Beyer. Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1985. 195 pages.

This beautiful publication presents the late medieval tapestries depicting the Apocalypse of John which are displayed at Angers in France, where they attract some two hundred thousand tourists annually. The several authors present the history

of the Apocalypse in art, the history of the Angers tapestries, the coats of arms, the preservation of the tapestries, and the individual scenes. The Angers tapestries are considered the first and the greatest depicting this subject. They are based on illustrations similar to medieval illuminations. These were of small size, credited to Jean de Bondol and Jean de Bruges. The enlarger is unknown but may be Robert Poisson, the weaver. Nicolas Bataille was the producer, providing the means. The tapestries are of heroic proportions. The total length of six long pieces is 130 meters, the height 4.5 meters. While these pieces are amazingly well preserved and restored after six hundred years, some scenes are missing, and the original length was 130 meters, the height 5.5 meters. The woven subscriptions have been lost.

Duke Louis I of Anjou commissioned these works in 1375 "to bolster his prestige." He was a great collector, credited with owning 3602 artistic items. Little distinction between sacred and secular was made in the early renaissance. In 1377 a payment of one thousand francs by Louis I is recorded. Three more long wall hangings were delivered in 1379, each purchased at the same rate. Other tapestries were made at about the same time, based on the Apocalypse. Robert Poisson is known to have made some for the Duke of Burgundy. Others were in the possession of the Duke of Berry, a brother of Anjou.

The artistic interpretation of the scenes of the Apocalypse is quite realistic and literal, following the book chapter by chapter. This is true of earlier illuminations, such as the Cloisters Apocalypse in New York. It was Duerer who about 1490, a century later, introduced dramatic dynamism. The authors give a detailed history of the handling and restoration of the Angers tapestries, but they do not enter into a discussion of the significance of the Apocalypse in the early renaissance. That age produced Petrarch, Dante, Wyclif, and Huss, all of whom declared the Pope of Rome to be the antichrist. According to Hoe von Hoenegg, in his *Commentarium in Apocalypsin,* many manuscripts were destroyed by the Reform councils before the Reformation. There was a rising storm against Rome, a great resistance when priestly celibacy was being enforced in France and other lands. It seems desirable, therefore, that a much more thorough study of the popularity of the Apocalypse of John before the Reformation should be made. The sober understanding of this matter in the Middle Ages is refreshing and heartening.

Otto F. Stahlke

BEYOND FUNDAMENTALISM. By James Barr. Philadlephia: The Westminster Press, 1984. x and 180 pages with a further 15 pages devoted to notes, indices, and hints for further reading. Paper, $9.95.

This further book by James Barr on Fundamentalism presupposes that the reader knows what fundamentalism is. However, some sort of accurate description would have been desirable, since the term is one that is variously used. Very generally, it can be said that for Barr fundamentalism is synonymous with inerrancy and "the idea that scripture and one's views about scripture form in themselves the absolute

touchstone of everything to be said and done in Christianity" (p. 3). The book is meant for fundamentalists, especially for those who have become disillusioned concerning it and dissatisfied with its intellectual status (p. vii). Barr has also evangelicals in mind, whose fundamentalistic leanings in great part Barr rejects (p. 179). Barr's basic position is clearly set forth in a number of passages, of which the following may serve as an example (p. 174):

> If we are right in starting from scripture and taking it as authoritative, then the fundamentalist use and understanding of it often contradicts scripture itself. If scripture, so understood, contradicts our ideas of biblical authority then our ideas of biblical authority have to be adjusted to meet that fact. This is the centre of our argument.

Various aspects of the Bible, treated in different chapters, are examined and shown to demolish the fundamentalist position. The matters treated are quite central, as the following selection of chapter headings will indicate: "The Religious Core I: Justification by Faith," "The Religious Core II: What was Jesus Like?," "Law and Morality, Experience and Nature," "Variation and Perfection in the Divine." One chapter (13) puts various alternatives to the fundamentalist understanding of inspiration. However, Barr does not argue for any particular view of biblical authority that could take the place of fundamentalism. He says explicitly: "I do not wish to suggest that there is any one particular view of biblical authority that necessarily follows from my arguments" (p. 178).

One cannot simply dismiss all of Barr's arguments out of hand, and a serious student of the Bible has to give close attention to much of what he has written here. However, some statements and arguments leave one in a state of some perplexity. Barr declares quite categorically that it is "quite absurd" for anyone to suppose that Jesus, who made such free use of "fictions as one of his main forms of teaching," should insist on the historical accuracy of his citations from the Old Testament (p. 11). Where is the absurdity? Are not both things possible? Again, Barr finds a contradiction between Matthew 5:17-18 and the new meaning given to the law by Jesus in His repeated "but I say unto you" in the same chapter. "He is not simply explaining the law, he is not setting himself under the law as a mere exegete, he is saying something that he considers to be new, to go beyond what the law itself had to say" (p. 9). I do not think fundamentalists would deny that Jesus as God's Son could in expounding the law make clear how the law properly undertood goes beyond popular interpretations of it. And yet again Barr argues: "it is clear that mere submission to pre-existing scripture was not at all a tenet of Jesus' own vision, whether for himself or for the community to be created through his work" (p. 12). This assertion seems to be contradicted by a great number of sayings ascribed to Jesus in the various gospels, not least by the one to which Barr himself refers, John 5:39. Barr quite misses the real thrust of this text, that the Jews should believe on Jesus for eternal life just because the scriptures testify of him.

Against one audacious assertion of the author I shall not argue, but merely oppose to it two statements completely contrary to Barr's own opinion. Barr says,

"The frightening picture of the critical scholar, tearing the Bible to shreds and scattering the fragments to the winds is largely a figment of the ignorant imagination." (p. 129). I cite the "ignorant imagination" of C.S. Lewis (*Miracles*):

> When you turn from the New Testament to modern scholars, remember that you go among them as a sheep among wolves ... In using the books of such people you must therefore be continually on guard. You must develop a nose like a bloodhound for those steps in the argument which depend not on historical and linguistic knowledge but on the concealed assumption that miracles are impossible, improbable, or improper. And this means that you must really re-educate yourself; must work hard and consistently to eradicate from your mind the whole type of thought (i.e., Naturalism) in which we all have been brought up.

And I cite the "ignorant imagination" of R.P.C. Hanson in the introduction to the third volume of *The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology:*

> But in spite of shocked churchmen ... the revolution moved inexorably on. It consisted in the simple but far-reaching discovery that the documents of the Bible were entirely conditioned by the circumstances of the period in which they were produced.

If this is not a "frightening picture of the critical scholar," as he presents us with a Bible completely human and of this world, to be treated precisely like all other ancient documents of the ancient world, I should like to know what is.

A final criticim—the book of James Barr is entitled *Beyond Fundamentalism.* What is the alternative to which he points, the "Beyond"? There is none really. The argument is: fundamentalism is no good, give it away, a proper study of the Bible will lead you to a better position. But that better position is not given, although, as stated above, some alternatives to fundamentalism are mentioned in chapter 13. Barr himself points to this aspect of the book: "It may be argued that I have not sought in this book to outline any adequate view of bibical authority" (p. 178). He goes on to say that he has written amply on the subject of biblical authority in other books of his. But is that good enough, good enough just for the people for whom he wrote this book? They are hardly likely to have read his other works and might find it a bit inconsiderate to be asked to buy another book to find the answer for the problem which led them to buy this book in the first place. I think the title has promised more than the book supplies.

Henry P. Hamann

Indices to Volume 50 (1986)

AUTHOR INDEX

TITLE INDEX

SBL and S.N.T.S. in 1985.
J. Voelz.
1:25-27.

The Suffering Church: A Study of Luther's *Theologia Crucis*.
R. Kelly.
1:3-17.

A Tale of Two Books.
K. Marquart.
3-4:183-186.

Toward a New Lutheran Dogmatics.
L. Green.
2:109-117.

SCRIPTURE INDEX TO THE

HOMILETICAL STUDIES

Ephesians 5:8-14. Ken Schurb. 3-4:211-212.

Philippians 1:1-5 (6-11), 19-27. Warren E. Messmann. 3-4:254-255.
Philippians 2:5-11. Paul E. Cloeter. 3-4:215-217.
Philippians 2:5-11. Warren E. Messmann. 3-4:255-256.
Philippians 3:12-21. David Schlie. 3-4:257-258.
Philippians 4:4-13. David Schlie. 3-4:258-259.

Colossians 1:1-14. Gerhard Aho. 1:41-42.
Colossians 1:13-20. Richard G. Kapfer. 1:67-69.
Colossians 1:21-28. Ronald Irsch. 1:42-43.
Colossians 2:6-15. Wm. G. Thompson. 1:43-44.
Colossians 3:1-4. Paul E. Cloeter. 3-4:217-218.
Colossians 3:1-11. Wm. G. Thompson. 1:44-46.

1 Thessalonians 2:8-13. Klemet Preus. 3-4:259-260.
1 Thessalonians 3:7-13. Klemet Preus. 3-4:261-262.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12. Randall W. Shields. 1:63-64.
2 Thessalonians 3:1-5. Thomas R. Ahlersmeyer. 1:65-66.

1 Timothy 1:12-17. Gerhard Aho. 1:53-55.
1 Timothy 2:1-8. James Bollhagen. 1:55-56.
1 Timothy 6:6-16. James Bollhagen. 1:56-57.

2 Timothy 1:3-14. Gerhard Aho. 1:57-59.
2 Timothy 2:8-13. David L. Bahn. 1:59-60.
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5. David L. Bahn. 1:60-61.
2 Timothy 4:6-9, 16-18. Randall W. Shields. 1:62-63.

Titus 3:4-7. Norbert H. Mueller. 3-4:194.

Philemon (2-9) 10-21. George Kraus. 1:52-53.

Hebrews 11:1-13, 8-16. G. Waldemar Degner. 1:46-48.
Hebrews 12:1-13. Gerhard Aho. 1:48-49.
Hebrews 12:18-24. G. Waldemar Degner. 1:49-50.
Hebrews 13:1-8. George Kraus. 1:51-52.

James 5:7-10. Rudolph A. Haak. 3-4:191-192.

1 Peter 1:3-9. Gerhard Aho. 3-4:218-219.
1 Peter 1:17-21. Gerhard Aho. 3-4:219-221.
1 Peter 2:4-10. Gerhard Aho. 3-4:222-224.
1 Peter 2:19-25. Gerhard Aho. 3-4:221-222.
1 Peter 3:15-22. Lloyd Strelow. 3-4:224-226.
1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11. Lloyd Strelow. 3-4:226-227.

2 Peter 1:16-19 (20-21). James Bollhagen. 3-4:207-208.

SUBJECT INDEX

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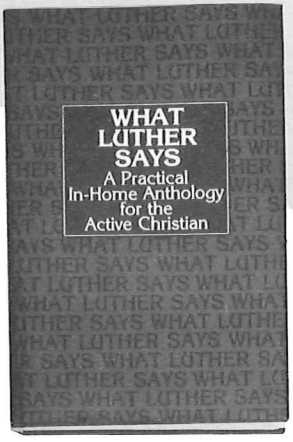

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