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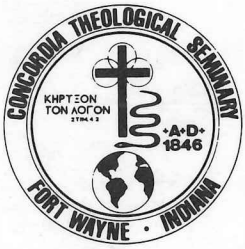

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Announcement

THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
ON THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

sponsored by the
International Center of Lutheran Confessional Studies
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana
January 20-22, 1988

Wednesday, January 20

1:30 p.m.	Introduction
2:00 p.m.	Michael Rogness: Was Melanchthon a Philippist on the Doctrine of Conversion?
3:15 p.m.	Lowell Green: When Did Melanchthon Become a Philippist on the Lord's Supper?
7:00 p.m.	Schola Cantorum (Daniel Reuning, Director): Choral Vespers

Thursday, January 21

8:30 a.m.	David Scaer: Good Works and Sanctification in the Lutheran Confessions
10:45 a.m.	Dean Wenthe: The Universal Priesthood of All Believers and the Mission of the Church
1:30 p.m.	Organ Recital
2:00 p.m.	Seminary Kantorei (Richard Resch, Director): Choral Vespers
3:00 p.m.	Normal Nagel: The Concept of "Gifts" in the Lutheran Confessions

Friday, January 22

8:30 a.m.	Carter Lindberg: Pietism and Church Growth as Seen from a Confessional Lutheran Viewpoint
10:45 a.m.	Panel Discussion

The Speakers

Lowell Green, D.Th.	Pastor, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Buffalo, New York. Author, *How Melanchthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel.*
Carter Lindberg, Ph.D.	Professor, School of Theology, Boston University. Author, *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Renewal and Lutheran Tradition.*
Norman Nagel, Ph.D.	Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.
Michael Rogness, D.Th.	Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry, Luther-Northwestern Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. Author, *Philip Melanchthon: Reformer Without Honor.*
David Scaer, Th.D.	Academic Dean and Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Editor, *Concordia Theological Quarterly.*
Dean Wenthe, M.A.	Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

Write to this address to receive registration information: Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825.

Martin Luther: Preacher of the Cross

John T. Pless

One year after Luther's death, Lucas Cranach the Elder painted a panel featuring a portrait of Martin Luther in the pulpit. The panel formed part of the well-known altar-piece at the City Church (St. Mary's) of Wittenberg. With the Bible open before him, it is the mature Luther who proclaims Christ to the congregation gathered before him. Cranach's picture of Luther has the Reformer with one hand resting on the sacred text and the other hand pointing to a larger-than-life crucifix. The work of art summarizes Luther's ministry as a whole. Like St. Paul before him, Martin Luther was determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified.

Luther was not the first preacher of the cross since the end of the New Testament era. Hermann Sasse rightly comments that "the theology of the cross belongs to the West."[1] One only has to recall Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*? (Why Did God Become Man?) or the great hymn of praise, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." The Gospel of the cross was not entirely absent from the church of the Middle Ages. Sasse says:

> "How may I come to have a gracious God?" This question moved the theology of the Latin church for a thousand years before it became the question of the Reformation. For centuries this question brought into the monastaries the most pious people of the Middle Ages, until it became the life-and-death question of the last great monk of the Middle Ages. During those thousand years Christians learned *that* both belong together: the sin of the world and the Passion of Christ, my sin and Christ's death on the cross. It was not yet possible, however, to answer the question as to *how* they belong together. The probing of this question produced the medieval theology of the cross.[2]

But the medieval theology of the cross is not yet the evangelical theology of the cross which would finally take hold of Brother Martin and be articulated by him from both the parish pulpit and the lecture podium. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine and weigh the various scholarly arguments proposed with regard to Luther's path to his so-called "evangelical breakthrough"; we shall focus on the theology of the cross as it shaped Luther's preaching.

To understand the state of preaching in Germany at the eve of the Reformation, it is necessary to keep at least three factors in mind. The first is the Crusades, which interjected a new element into the practice of preaching. Itinerant preachers gathered an audience of common folk in outdoor

settings, urging them to join the battle against the infidel. These preachers proclaimed that general indulgences would be dispensed to those who would take up arms against the enemies of the Lord Christ and His church. The great preaching orders of the Middle Ages—the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians—were organized to provide the church with preachers who would be skilled in rousing the faithful to action against the Turk.

A second force to shape the late medieval sermon was scholasticism with its Aristotelian logic. Under the influence of scholasticism, the old sermonic form of the homily, which was a fairly simple and usually artless commentary on the text, gave way to a new sermonic form which insisted that the preacher must search the text for a *theme.* Schneider writes:

> The sermon was often compared to a tree, such a tree being actually drawn in one of the homiletical manuscripts; the theme, naturally, was the trunk. The whole sermon must grow organically from the theme taken from the Holy Scripture, the theme for seasonal sermons at mass being taken usually from the Epistle or the Gospel.[3]

By the time of Luther, the theme of the sermon was often derived from the life of a saint, from a particular doctrinal teaching, liturgical practice, moral precept, or pious custom of the church.

The third element to influence the pre-Reformation sermon was mysticism. If the scholastic sermon was often characterized by abstract theological formulations and its learned style, then the sermons from the lips of the preachers of mysticism (Meister Eckhart and John Tauler, for example) may be characterized by their emphasis on the emotional. The sufferings of Jesus are proclaimed in such a way as to move the hearts of the pious to melt with pity and finally be molded into an ecstatic union with the Suffering Saviour. These sermons were marked by repetition and lack of structure or form. It was also through the sermons of mysticism that criticisms of the church (practices, not doctrine) found a place in the pulpit. John Geiler, who manned the pulpit in the Cathedral in Strasbourg for over thirty years in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was well known for his satirical sermons which poked fun at questionable ecclesiastical practices.

To what kind of preaching was Luther exposed as a young man? John P. Dolan, a Roman Catholic writer, comments on the content of preaching at the threshold of the Reformation:

> Preachers were preoccupied with the theme of sin and the grim face of death waiting for the moment of merited punishment. There was an emphasis on the horrors of hell and the sufferings of the damned. Their sermons were filled with descriptions of burning trees on which hung the souls of those who did not attend church services, vultures gnawing at men's vitals, venomous serpents stinging the unholy, boiling lakes, frozen fens, heated ovens and vile dungeons. Scripture, when quoted, was completely torn from its living, historical context. Its personalities and their sayings were distorted and mutilated into passive conveniences for moral dilation. Everywhere the emphasis was on the negative side of man's salvation, his sins and punishment.[4]

But it would be a mistake to conclude that the pre-Reformation preachers were altogether ignorant of the biblical texts. A manual of homiletics written by Jerome Dungersheim in 1514 commends the study of Sacred Scripture to those who would preach:

> If they desire to be shepherds of the flock of Christ the Word of God provides them with the only pasture and nourishment of the flock; if they would be physicians of souls, the Word of God offers the only remedy . . . If they would be spiritual leaders of the congregation, God's Word is the sword they must be able to wield. . . . How can they accomplish this task without a thorough knowledge of the same Word and unless they have studiously acquired and practiced the art of using it wisely.[5]

The problem was not the lack of the Bible but the use, or rather misuse, of the Bible. Or as Pelikan says, "The Church did not need Luther to tell it that the Bible was true. But it did need a Luther to tell it what the truth of the Bible is." The allegorical method of biblical interpretation with its "four-fold sense" of the scriptural text (literal, allegorical, moral, anagogical), dating back to the time of the School of Alexandria in the ancient church, reigned supreme. Medieval sermons were, for the most part, exercises in the application of this method. It was against this backdrop that we see the emergence of Luther the preacher.

Well-grounded in the classical usages of rhetoric and grammar, versed in Aristotelian modes of thinking, Luther entered the

Augustinian cloister. It was here that Luther was trained as a preacher by teachers who applied the traditional homiletical models based on scholastic techniques grounded in Aristotelian logic. Luther was ordained into the priesthood in 1507. Becoming a priest did not necessarily mean that the man would be a preacher. In the cloister Luther reluctantly accepted the task of preaching. In 1532, when Luther was encouraging his friend Lauterbach to accept the call to be a preacher at Wittenberg's Castle Church, Luther recalled his own appointment to preach:

> Ah, my friend, I had the same experience. I feared the pulpit perhaps as greatly as you do; yet I had to do it; I was forced to preach. At first I had to preach to the brethren in the refectory. Ah, how I feared the pulpit! Under this pear tree I advanced fifteen arguments to Dr. Staupitz; with them I declined my call. But they did me no good. When I finally said, "Dr. Staupitz, you are taking my life; I won't be able to endure it three months," he replied, "In God's Name! Our Lord God has many things to do; He is in need of wise people in heaven, too."[6]

Luther did preach and not only did he survive the ordeal, he eventually was to thrive in the pulpit. The Swedish historian of homiletics Yngve Brilioth identifies three distinct periods in the development of young Luther's preaching: (1) the monastic period (1512-1515); (2) the mystical period (1515-1517); and (3) the transitional period (1518).[7]

It is a matter of debate as to the date of Luther's first sermon. While Brilioth has assigned Luther's first sermon to the year 1512, John Doberstein, the editor of Volume 51 in the American Edition of *Luther's Works,* leaves open the possibility that Luther may have preached this sermon on Matthew 7:12 in 1510. Did Luther preach any sermon prior to the sermon on Matthew 7:12? If so, we have no evidence in either the manuscripts or Luther's personal records. At any rate, the sermon on Matthew 7:12 ("In everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets") reflects the standard homiletical form of the day. The sermon is heavily freighted with the preaching of the Law. Worthy of note are these lines:

> . . . this one doctrine is to be noted: It is not sufficient for salvation that a man merely refrain from doing harm and evil to his neighbor with these three goods [external goods —

> money, clothing, land; personal or physical goods — health, aptitude of body and mind; internal goods — virtues, knowledge]. It is required rather that he be useful to him and benefit him with these three goods. This doctrine is proved by threefold authority: by reason, by authority, and by analogy.[8]

Luther concludes the sermon with a proclamation of God's threat of retribution:

> Therefore one can say nothing better than this: Hold up the mirror of these words to your conscience and see whether any such motive would prompt you not to wish any good to be done to you by others if they cherished any such motive toward you. Then you are saved. Otherwise I advise you to beware. For the Lord will keep this rule: "The measure you give will be the measure you get" [Matt. 7:2]. For he well perceives the heart and the motives we cherish. Therefore, if we wish to be requited by God as we do to our neighbor, then it is well with us. But if in our ill will we say: I will let him go, disengage myself from him, then I ask whether you also wish that God should say to you: I will let you go, I will disengage myself from you and neither give nor take anything from you? Who would wish that? But this is precisely what he will do to us, if this is what we do to our neighbor without sufficient cause.[9]

Brilioth describes the second stage in the development of the young Luther's preaching as the mystical period. In Luther's sermons of this period the influences of Tauler and the *Theologia Germanica* are evident. In sermons from this period Luther begins to direct critical remarks at the practices of the papal church. In a sermon preached on St. Matthew's Day, 1517, Luther takes aim at the clergy who peddle indulgences:

> For, not through indulgences, but through gentleness and lowliness, so says he [Jesus], is rest for your souls found. But gentleness is present only in punishment and suffering, from which these indulgences absolve us. They teach us to dread the cross and suffering, and the result is that we never become gentle and lowly, and that means that we never receive indulgence nor come to Christ. Oh, the dangers of our time! Oh, you snoring priests! Oh, darkness deeper than Egyptian! How secure we are in the midst of the worst of all our evils![10]

The year 1518 was a year of transition for Luther's preaching, according to Brilioth. His Ninety-Five Theses were having an

explosive effect on the life of the church. It is no surprise, therefore, that Luther's sermons from this year were marked with an intensified critique of the Roman Church as well as with deepened catechetical content. In his recent study of Luther's Christology, Mark Leinhard notes:

> The sermons of the years 1518-1519 are from the hand of Luther himself and were published by him; they are instruments deliberately chosen for the purpose of making known his views on the subject of the Gospel to a vast audience, views which he set in motion by the affairs of the indulgences. One can admire their tough and direct style. While commentaries include many essays and digressions, references to the Fathers of the Church, and the fundamental discussions with theologians, the sermons in question treat their subject step by step without digression, going straight to the essential point. However these are not sermons in the classic sense of the word. There is no biblical passage commented on for the faithful, but a devotional theme: meditation on the Passion of Christ, a general human concern, how to prepare for death, or this or that aspect of life in the church. Thus in these sermons the celebration of the Eucharist, marriage, Baptism, and penitence are all dealt with.[11]

After 1519 the majority of Luther's sermons are either textual or catechetical, demonstrating a knowledge of the text coupled with a desire to bring comfort to sinners through the proclamation of Christ crucified.

It was not unusual for Luther to preach three or four times each week, as the weekly schedule at Wittenberg provided for at least three sermons each Sunday in addition to the daily sermons preached each weekday. As assistant to Johann Bugenhagen, Luther carried much of the responsibility for preaching in the parish church at Wittenberg. "Often I preach four sermons on one day,"[12] he once told Bucer. Luther claimed "to have equaled the preaching activity of both Augustine and Ambrose." He said, "I am not only Luther, but Pomeranus, Moses, Jethro and what not — all things in all."[13] With so many opportunities for preaching, it is not startling to discover approximately 2,300 of Luther's sermons preserved in the Weimar Edition of Luther's works.

The significance of preaching in Luther's ministry can be readily seen in his explanation of the Third Commandment in the Small

Catechism:

> We should fear and love God, and so we should not despise his Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy and gladly hear and learn it.[14]

In the Large Catechism Luther is even more explicit:

> Therefore you must continually keep God's Word in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears. For where the heart stands idle and the Word is not heard, the devil breaks in and does his damage before we realize it. On the other hand, when we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, new pleasure, and a new spirit of devotion, and it constantly cleanses the heart and its meditations. For these words are not idle or dead, but effective and living. Even if no other interest or need drove us to the Word, yet everyone should be spurred on by the realization that in this way the devil is cast out and put to flight, this commandment is fulfilled, and God is more pleased by this than by any work of hypocrisy, however brilliant.[15]

Unlike adherents to the *Mysterientheologie* of the contemporary liturgical movement, Luther knew that "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Romans 10:17). For this reason, Luther insisted that the sermon be given a place of prominence in the service. God reveals Himself in and through His Word. In the treatise of 1523, "Concerning the Order of Public Worship," Luther writes:

> The service now in common use everywhere goes back to genuine Christian beginnings, as does the office of preaching. But as the latter has been perverted by the spiritual tyrants, so the former has been corrupted by the hypocrites. As we do not on that account abolish the office of preaching, but aim to restore it again to its right and proper place, so it is not our intention to do away with the service but to restore it again to its rightful use.
>
> Three serious abuses have crept into the service. First, God's Word has been silenced, and only reading and singing remain in the churches. This is the worst abuse. Second, when God's Word had been silenced, such a host of unchristian fables and lies in legends, hymns, and sermons were introduced that it

> is horrible to see. Third, such divine service was performed as a work whereby God's grace and salvation might be won. As a result, faith disappeared and everyone is pressed to enter the priesthood, convents, and monasteries, and to build churches and endow them.
>
> Now in order to correct these abuses, know first of all that a Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's Word and prayer, no matter how briefly, as Psalm 102 says, "When the kings and the people assemble to serve the Lord, they shall declare the name and the praise of God." And Paul in I Corinthians 14[:26-31] says that when they come together, there should be prophesying, teaching, and admonition. Therefore, when God's Word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together.[16]

Preaching was part of the mass in the Middle Ages, although it was an optional feature of the service. The sermon "lacked an organic relationship to the Mass."[17] Luther's liturgical revision, far from being a piece of bungled liturgical surgery, was a necessary outcome of his theology of justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake. The liturgy serves the preached and sacramental Word which bestows the benefits achieved by Christ. Word and sacrament, sermon and liturgy are not in competition with each other; rather Luther sees them in co-ordination with one another. In his treatise of 1525, "Against the Heavenly Prophets," Luther writes:

> If now I seek the forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the cross, for I will not find it given there. Nor must I hold to the suffering of Christ, as Dr. Karlstadt trifles, in knowledge or remembrance, for I will not find it there either. But I will find in the sacrament or gospel the word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me the forgiveness which was won on the cross. Therefore, Luther has rightly taught that whoever has a bad conscience from his sins should go to the sacrament to obtain comfort, not because of the bread and the wine, not because of the body and blood of Christ, but because of the word which in the sacraments offers, presents, and gives the body and blood of Christ given and shed for me. Is that not clear enough?[18]

How, then, did Luther preach? As we have already observed, Luther's preaching did change under the "impact of the Gospel."

By 1522-1524 we see Luther completely at the home in the Bible. Heinrich Bornkamm writes:

> All those things of prominence in medieval preaching — the game of allegorical exposition, the miraculous legends of the saints, the extolling of aids to devotion such as the rosary or other prayer forms, as well as the moralizing — were dropped. He preached precisely and penetratingly on the text, not on a dogmatic theme suggested by the text. To be sure, he did not simply expound or illustrate the text but led his hearers on to the enduring truths, valid then as well as earlier, in and behind each word of Scripture. Only rarely did he touch on current events that had nothing directly to do with the text, such as the imperial mandate of 1523 or the conflict with the chapter members of the Castle Church.[19]

In the early 1520's Luther was not completely free from the use of the allegorical method as a way of deriving Gospel-content from Old Testament texts. His struggles with Müntzer and Karlstadt impressed Luther with the grave dangers inherent in the "spiritualization" of the scriptural texts. Eventually Luther becomes less and less reliant on allegory and finally abandons it altogether.

Luther never wrote a homiletics textbook, although he did threaten to do so on occasion. He did, however, make practical suggestions regarding the practice of preaching to both his students and colleagues. Luther emphasized the necessity of preaching with clarity and simplicity. A few samples from his Table Talk will suffice:

> In my preaching I take pains to treat a verse [of the Scriptures], to stick to it, and so to instruct the people that they can say, "That's what the sermon was about."

> When Christ preached, he proceeded quickly to a parable and spoke about sheep, shepherds, wolves, vineyards, fig trees, seeds, fields, plowing. The poor lay people were able to comprehend these things.[20]

Once a pastor, Bernard von Dolen, who was a minister in Herzberg, complained to Luther that members of his congregation were unwilling to read or study the Catechism. Luther responded to von Dolen urging him to preach the Gospel in such a way that it would be comprehended by his hearers:

> Cursed be every preacher who aims at lofty topics in the church, looking for his glory and selfishly desiring to please one

> individual or another. When I preach here [in Wittenberg], I adapt myself to the circumstances of the common people. I don't look at the doctors and masters, of whom scarcely forty are present, but I look at the hundred or the thousand young people and children. It's to them that I devote myself, for they, too, need to understand. If the others don't want to listen they can leave. Therefore, my dear Bernard, take pains to be simple and direct; don't consider those who claim to be learned but be a preacher to the unschooled youth and sucklings.[21]

Luther was a university professor, a doctor of the church, yet he saw his primary calling and vocation as a preacher of the Word. It is obvious from his writings that Luther was not opposed to careful theological study and precise doctrinal formulations. In the pulpit, however, Luther insists that the preacher speak directly and plainly to the people. In 1540 Luther wrote:

> Philip doesn't need to be instructed, and I don't teach or lecture for his sake, but we preach publicly for the sake of the plain people. Christ could have taught in a profound way but he wished to deliver his message with the utmost simplicity in order that the common people might hear and understand. Good God, there are sixteen-year-old girls, women, old men, and farmers in church and they don't understand lofty matters! If one can present fitting and familiar comparisons, as Link can do in masterful fashion, the people will understand and remember. Accordingly he's the best preacher who can teach in a plain, childlike, popular and simple way. I prefer to preach in an easy and comprehensible fashion, but when it comes to academic disputations watch me in the university; there I'll make it sharp enough for anybody and will reply, no matter how complicated he wants to be. Some day I'll have to write a book against artful preachers.[22]

In 1528 Luther provided a set of instructions for "visitors" to use in training the parish clergy in the evangelical congregations of Saxony. Luther urges that they preach on the basics of Christian doctrine: the decalog, the Our Father, baptism, and the Holy Supper. This preaching is to be expository.

> In such preaching we should spell out, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the articles of the Creed for the sake of the children and other simple unschooled folk.

> The preachers are to refrain from all libelous utterance and, without becoming personal, condemn the vices of which they are personally aware, and not preach about those of which they are not personally aware, e.g., those of the pope, bishops, or the like, except where it is necessary to warn the people by example.[23]

Luther advised preachers to remember that in reality preaching is God's work. The preacher is only an instrument in the hands of God. This fact keeps the preacher in his place as a humble servant of God.

> In all simplicity seek only God's glory and not the applause of men. And pray that God will put wisdom into your mouth and give your hearers a ready ear; then leave it to God. For you must believe me, preaching is not the work of men.[24]

Preaching is the work of the Lord Christ, who is still active in and through His Word. Thus the mouth of every true preacher is the mouth of God Himself. The Lord God, who called the universe into existence by the power of His Word, puts that life-creating, faith-bestowing Word on the tongues of His servants. That fact gives comfort to both preachers and hearers. Preachers are given the joyful consolation that God's Word really does work. Reflecting on his return to the Wittenberg Pulpit in 1522 to counter the mischief wrought by Karlstadt and company, Luther would later state:

> I simply taught, preached, wrote God's word; other than that I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy, that never a prince or emperor inflicted such damage upon it. I did nothing; the Word did it all.[25]

The laity are given the confidence that, as their pastor speaks God's Word, they are auditors of the voice not merely of a man but of God Himself. In a sermon on John 4 Luther says:

> When burgher or peasant hears a pastor, he must say: "I do indeed hear and recognize the voice of the pastor. But the words which he utters are not his. No, he would be incapable of them. It is the sublime majesty of God that is speaking through him." Likewise, when a lowly pastor comforts me, then I must be discerning enough to say: "It is not you who is speaking to me. The voice is yours indeed, but it is really God who is speaking through you."[26]

Luther knew that Christians live not by their eyes, but by their ears.

> For if you ask a Christian what the work is by which he becomes worthy of the name "Christian," he will give absolutely no other answer than that it is by hearing the Word of God, that is, faith. Therefore the ears alone are the organs of a Christian man, for he is justified and declared to be a Christian, not because of the works of any member, but because of faith.[27]

God serves the Christian congregation by means of His Word. Holy Scripture is not only to be read, but preached. Originally, the Gospel was not a book but a sermon, and the church was not a "quill house" but a "mouth house," says Luther.[28] The heart and core of that Gospel is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The unfolding of the theology of the cross in Luther's thought parallels his growth and maturation as an evangelical preacher. As we have already noted, Luther's early sermons bore the imprint of medieval theological patterns. In a very instructive essay, "*Sacramentum et Exemplum* in Luther's Understanding of Christ," Norman Nagel traces Luther's use of Christ as "sacrament" (gift) and Christ as example as a way of gauging Luther's evangelical development. In his marginal notes written in 1509 on Augustine's *De Trinitate* Luther says:

> The crucifixion of Christ is a sacrament, because it signifies the cross of penitence *(poenitentiae),* in which the soul dies to sin; it is an example, because it incites us truly to offer our body to death or to the cross.[29]

Here Luther's attention is focused on what goes on within man, namely, that penitence by which man is to die to sin, rather than on the atonement accomplished solely by Christ on Calvary; Christ is a sacrament or gift only insofar as He makes man's death to sin a possibility. Or, as Nagel says, Christ becomes the "paradigm," so that "what Christ went through the Christian is to be put through too. 'Christ crucified' means not so much His unique cross as the cross seen in Him and the saints, the cross we are to bear and to which we are to be conformed."[30] This view of Christ represents no substantial advance over the medieval *imitatio Christi.* In his lectures on the Psalms in 1513 Luther comments on Psalm 84:3 ("at Thy altars, O Lord of hosts"):

> The altar is the mystical Cross of Christ, on which all ought to be offered. Because "he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me"; for just as he was offered on the Cross, so also ought we in like manner be offered on the cross.[31]

Luther's theology of the crosses had not yet given way to the theology of the cross. Salvation is still seen as a result of suffering in conformity with Christ.

We see a profound change in Luther's Christmas Postil of 1522 (which comes from Luther's own hand, written to help poorly trained pastors preach the Gospel):

> You must not make Moses out of Christ as if He did no more than teach and give an example as the other saints do, as if the Gospel were a book of instructions and law. There you must grasp Christ, His Word, work, and suffering in two ways. On the one hand is an example that is put before you that you are to follow and do likewise, as St. Peter says (I Peter 4:1), "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." But this is the least of the Gospel if indeed it may still be called Gospel, for then Christ is of no more use than another saint. His life remains with Him and still does not help you. In short, by this way no Christians are made, only hypocrites . . . The chief part and ground of the Gospel is that, first of all, before you grasp Christ as an example, you receive and recognize Him as a gift and present, given to you by God to be your own, so that when you look to Him or hear that He does or suffers something, you are not to doubt that the same Christ is yours with all that He suffers or does. You may place your confidence on this as much as if you had done it, yes, as if you were the same Christ . . .
>
> When you thus have Christ as the ground and highest good of your salvation, then follows the other part that you grasp Him as an example and give yourself to your neighbor as He gave Himself for you. See then how faith and love are in full swing, God's commandment fulfilled, and the man glad and unafraid to do or suffer anything. Therefore mark well that Christ finishes your faith and makes you a Christian, whereas Christ as an example exercises your works. They do not make you a Christian, but they come from you as one already made a Christian. The difference between gift and example is as

> great as that between faith and works. Faith has nothing of its own but only Christ, His work, and His life. The works have something of your own about them, but they are not to belong to you but to your neighbor.[32]

Here "Christ as example" is no longer seen as the pattern one must imitate to gain salvation. Rather, Christ is pure gift; all that He has achieved by His vicarious suffering and death belong to the Christian through faith alone. "Christ as example" is now assigned to its proper place as the pattern for the Christian in loving service to the neighbor. Luther is even more explicit in his sermon on the Gospel for the Third Sunday in Advent of 1524:

> *Donum* [gift] is the chief thing. Don't believe it if anyone preaches otherwise. The devil can bear Christ being propounded as an example. He did this; therefore you must do it too. John and Peter did similarly. If you do not preach otherwise, of what use is Christ to me? The devil has the victory if we take Christ's doctrine for Law and His life for example. Only Christ is a gift; other saints can be examples. He is above all others in that He is a gift . . . The Gospel is not the preaching of Christ as example, but proclaiming Him as a gift. Whether a man stands or falls he is a Christian only if he has Christ. Looking for evidence elsewhere only brings uncertainty. Cling only to the word.[33]

For Luther the preaching that is shaped by the theology of the cross is proclamation that holds up Christ alone as Savior of the world. Any other theology is a theology of glory.

Luther gives his most precise summary of the theology of the cross in Theses 18 through 26 of the Heidelberg Theses of 1518:

> 18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.
>
> 19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20].
>
> 20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.
>
> 21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.

23. The law brings the wrath of God, kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ [Rom. 4:15].

24. Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.

25. He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.

26. The law says, "do this," and it is never done. Grace says, "believe in this," and everything is already done.[34]

Here Luther makes it clear that it is only through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that we come to behold the glory of the God who saves sinners. All attempts to know God by way of philosophical speculation are doomed to failure. God makes His wisdom manifest in the foolishness of the cross. As Paul Althaus puts it, "the true knowledge of God is not found through Romans 1 but through I Corinthians 1."[35] This theology of the cross was not a passing fad, limited only to the young Luther, as Ritschl contended over a century ago; but, as Walther von Loewenich and others in contemporary Luther studies have demonstrated, "the theology of the cross is a principle of Luther's entire theology and it may not be confined to a special period in his theological development."[36]

The theology of the cross is a theology of the Word. In his Genesis commentary of 1535 Luther says:

> It is therefore insane to argue about God and the divine nature without the Word or any covering, as all the heretics are accustomed to do. They do their thinking about God with the same sureness with which they argue about a pig or a cow. Therefore they also receive a reward worthy of their rashness in that they arrive at so dangerous a view. Whoever desires to be saved and to be safe when he deals with such great matters, let him simply hold to the form, the signs, and the covering of the Godhead, such as His Word and His works. For in His Word and in His works He shows Himself to us.

> Those who are in touch with these are made sound, as was the woman with the issue of blood when she touched Christ's garment (Matt. 9:20-22).
>
> But those who want to reach God apart from these coverings exert themselves to ascend to heaven without ladders (that is, without the Word). Overwhelmed by His majesty, which they seek to comprehend without a covering, they fall to their destruction. This is what happened to Arius. He thought that there was some intermediate being between the Creator and the creature and that all things were created by that intermediate being. It was inevitable that he should hit upon this after he had denied, contrary to Scripture, the plurality of the Persons of the Godhead. Since he argues his position apart from and without the Word of God and relies on his thinking alone, he cannot avoid falling into error.[37]

Reliance on good works is a rejection of the theology of the cross in favor of a theology of glory. In the same section of the Genesis commentary Luther argues:

> . . . because a monk does not adhere to the Word, he thinks that there is a God sitting in heaven who intends to save anyone wearing a cowl and following a definite rule of life. He is also ascending to heaven without God's disclosure of Himself or without His face leading the way. So also the Jews had their idols and their groves. They fell and the destruction of these is the same; they all run into the same difficulty because, forsaking the Word, they each follow their own thoughts.[38]

The proper preaching of the theology of the cross necessitates that both Law and Gospel be correctly distinguished and applied. One has only to recall Luther's exposition of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism to see how incisively Luther uses the Law to uncover sin. The Law seeks out and destroys false gods, thus driving the sinner away from trust in his own works or piety to Christ, the substitute who has perfectly fulfilled the demands of the Law in the sinner's stead. The Gospel gives and bestows the glad tidings that on account of Christ's death there is indeed forgiveness for the ungodly. The Gospel is not an invitation to imitate Christ, which would make Christ into a new Lawgiver, another Moses. Rather, the Gospel is the announcement that God is gracious for Jesus' sake.

Thus, Luther says in a fragment of a sermon preserved from 1515, "Preach one thing: the wisdom of the cross."[39] This is the actual

content of all Christian preaching. The cross permeates Luther's preaching. Sasse says it well:

> Obviously the "theology of the cross" does not mean that for a theologian the church year shrinks together into nothing but Good Friday. Rather, it means that Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost cannot be understood without Good Friday. Next to Irenaeus and Athanasius, Luther was the greatest theologian of the incarnation. He was this because in the background of the manger he saw the cross. His understanding of the Easter victory was equal to that of any theologian of the Eastern Church. He understood it because he understood the victory of the Crucified One. The same can be said of his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.[40]

Ulrich Asendorf, in an essay entitled "Luther's Sermons on Advent as a Summary of His Theology" (published in *A Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus*), shows how Luther's preaching on Advent texts urges hearers to the crucified Immanuel who has executed "the happy exchange" whereby He takes the sinner's sin as though it were His own and gives the sinner His own righteousness. Drawing on Luther's comment, "Even though Christ is named, preached, and pictured in sundry ways, He is ever the same Christ,"[41] Ian Siggins, in *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ,* demonstrates that no matter on which biblical picture of Christ he preached, whether it be the Good Shepherd, Sun of Righteousness, Lamb of God, Bridegroom, or any of the others, Luther always proclaimed Christ crucified for sinners.

This Christ alone is comfort for sinners terrified by their sin. Listen to these lines from a Christmas sermon of 1527:

> Reason and will would ascend and seek above, but if you would have joy, bend yourself down to this place. There you will find that boy given for you who is your Creator lying in a manger. I will stay with that boy as He sucks, is washed, and dies . . . There is no joy but in this boy. Take Him away and you face the Majesty which terrifies . . . I know of no God but this one in the manger.[42]

For Luther, preaching was not "edifying discourse" designed to manipulate the emotions of his hearers. Nor was the sermon a "political discourse" with its aim of rousing the congregation to support some political program or social cause. The glory of Luther's preaching was its cruciform shape and content. It was indeed the

viva vox evangelii, the living voice of the Gospel of the cross. "One thing you must preach: the wisdom of the cross"[43] was his motto and watchword, for Luther knew that faith "comes only through God's Word or gospel, which preaches Christ, saying that he is God's Son and a man, and has died and risen again for our sakes . . ."[44]

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Theological Observer

A LUTHERAN RESPONSE TO EVANGELICALISM: ORDINATION OF WOMEN

A number of years ago a survey found that *Christianity Today* was one of the more widely read periodicals among LCMS pastors. An October 1986 issue contained as an insert a supplement entitled "The Changing Role of Women," which for all practical purposes finds the ordination of women as pastors acceptable. Since the 1960's, when *Christianity Today* was founded, an unwritten alliance existed between the LCMS and the editors and writers of the evangelical journal, since the journal was taking similar stands toward contemporary theologies which were making inroads into the LCMS. Evangelicals and Lutherans shared many of the same concerns, although LCMS pastors may have been more dependent on Evanglicalism, especially as it was expressed in the pages of *Christianity Today*, than the reverse. Still, some LCMS clergy became associated with the Evangelicals as writers for the evangelical journal and through participation in other groups. Since the ordination of women pastors became the one decisively recognizable question leading to the break of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, *Christianity Today's* endorsement or, at least, allowance of the ordination of women is not without problems for confessional Lutherans who may have felt a degree of kinship with the Evangelicals, especially for their strong commitment to biblical inspiration and inerrancy.

Outside of the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is perhaps the only major American Christian denomination which has consistently opposed the ordination of women as pastors. From reading the special supplement in *Christianity Today* one can only conclude that the LCMS will have to continue its opposition without the aid of the Evangelicals. In spite of Bruce Waltke's valiant attempt to offer an opposing view in the supplement, the impression given is that *Christianity Today* endorses the ordination of women as pastors. In "Proceed with Care" Kenneth Kantzer drags his feet a little, but not enough to say a clear no to the practice as unbiblical.

Though several voices express themselves in the special *Christianity Today* supplement, one general attitude characterizes all the approaches to the question. The pastoral office is viewed purely from a functional perspective, and thus an easy equation between "ministry" and "leadership" is made. Bringing up the example of Margaret Thatcher is hardly appropriate or germane. To argue from the role of a prominent woman statesman in a matter of church practice is hardly an endorsement of *sola scriptura*. The question is not whether the Scriptures allow women to carry out responsible functions and occupy particular offices in the church, but whether they in the stead of Christ may occupy the office of pastor and carry out all of its functions, especially the public proclamation of the Gospel, the consecration and distribution of the Sacrament, and the care of the congregation. To this distinction between prominent and responsible roles in church for both men and women and the uniqueness of the pastoral office there is no allusion by any of the *Christianity Today* contributors. Mary became the mother of the Lord, but this role has nothing to do with whether she would qualify as a pastor. It is beyond debate that women served as vehicles of God's revelation. The highest honor ever given to a human being was given to the Virgin Mary in her being chosen as the

mother of God. Women are described as more faithful than the fickle disciples; but it was not to them the apostleship and the office of pastor were given. Jesus stands in the place of the Father, and pastors stand in the place of Jesus. Where this understanding is lacking, then it is not surprising that opposition to women pastors becomes a historical relic of the past, which can be changed according to either "the Spirit's guiding" or contemporary circumstances.

The late Peter Brunner, professor in the University of Heidelberg, predicted that ordaining women as pastors would inevitably lead to a feminist or non-sexist understanding of God. He did not live to see his prophecy come true in the non-sexist language of the lectionary sponsored by the NCC, in which all the masculine references to God are neutered or "democratized." Though the *Christianity Today* contributors are firm in their insistence on the unchangableness of the masculine references to God because of a shared commitment to biblical infallibility, they have, in effect, contravened that principle in excusing themselves from the Pauline prohibition of women pastors. "Evangelicalism," at least in its contemporary understanding, was an attempt to form an alliance across denominations to withstand an advancing front of a "liberalism" which questioned the historical quality of the Bible and its authority for the church. The "evangelical" alliance had to overlook the traditional sixteenth-century differences on baptism and the Lord's Supper and concentrate on what united its members (as I remember Dr. Carl Henry telling me in Springfield, Illinois, sometime in the late 1960's). The ability of Evangelicals, especially of their scholars, to tolerate women pastors may indicate that an alliance built on common attitudes to Christian theology was never really as solid as the impression it gave. Scriptural infallibility is meaningless where the Holy Spirit is seen as speaking outside the Scriptures. Anything then becomes possible. As the *Christianity Today* supplement has shown, the Church of Rome (at least in its official pronouncements) may, in fact, be more biblical in its theology than the Evangelicals, at least on this point.

Tradition, though never the finally determinative factor in church belief, should not be dismissed as having nothing or little to offer. Until just recently mainline Protestant denominations had no ordination of women as pastors. It sprung up in the holiness and pentecostal bodies where everyone in the worshipping congregation is seen as a potential vehicle of the Holy Spirit. This situation was not unlike the Corinthian church, where an unbridled charismatic movement accompanied the rise of women preachers. Tradition by itself is never determinative of doctrine, but it does provide those churches who value it an opportunity to reevaluate any innovations. Protestants do have a tradition opposed to women pastors, but this tradition was not sufficiently strong to provide any support in this issue. Apart from what is for some the debatable value of post-apostolic tradition, the tradition of the early church, as it was set down in the Pauline corpus, simply does not know of woman pastors. Outside of Corinth their first appearance was in the heretical gnostic movements.

The real crux of the problem with Evangelicalism is that the office of the ministry is viewed not as an office held by Christ and the apostles, but rather as an

extension of the life of Christians. The ministry and sanctification are confused. Wherever we see the Holy Spirit doing all sorts of marvelous works, there He must be speaking authoritatively to us, whether it is through a man or a woman — so it is reasoned. An office of the ministry built on the life of the believer has no certain foundation. Only the command of Christ establishes this ministry among us. Those who can exempt themselves from St. Paul's prohibiton have to ask themselves to what extent they are entitled to be called apostolic.

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Dr. Scaer serves as a *Christianity Today* Resource Scholar. This contribution to the *CTQ* is a revised form of a response requested by the *Christianity Today* Institute. Dr. Robert Preus, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, is a Fellow of the Institute.

Homiletical Studies

Series B Old Testament Lessons

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Isaiah 63:16b-17; 64:1-8

November 29, 1987

Isaiah has recalled Israel's deliverance from Egypt. God's intervention at that point in time brought the Israelites safely through Sinai into Canaan. But their later rebellion necessitated God's opposition to them. Against this background Isaiah petitions the Lord. Israel's sinfulness has been the breeding ground for more sin. Isaiah begs God to deliver His forsaken people from their sin and to restore them. He prays for divine intervention, that God may reveal Himself in power as in the days of old. The prophet, on behalf of Israel, confesses her sin. Apart from the Lord's fathering hand, there can only be a pattern of mounting anxieties.

Introduction: A new church year affords opportunity for new resolves and new beginnings. The first Sunday in Advent sets the stage for a return to the festival seasons of worship. The cycle is repeated. The person and work of Christ are the focus. The incarnational celebration is at hand. The zest of Emmanuel's name and the refreshing breezes of our redemption are drawing near! But penitential purple drapes the altar and the pulpit. All is not well. Our sinful nature trails along with us. The uncleanness of our flesh did not get left behind in the old church year. The spoiling reality of our corrupted nature swirls around us as new resolves begin to resemble old rubbish. Where there is sin there will be anxieties. Advent is no exception.

A PROPHETIC PRAYER IN THE ANXIETIES OF ADVENT

I. The cause for our anxieties.
   A. The long-time sin condition (vv. 5-6)
      1. Breeds within us spiritual uncleanness which becomes evident in a world of double standards (specific hidden anxieties could be considered).
      2. Makes of us a polluted garment as we pretend to be what we are not (the anxieties of an exposed self-righteousness or living a life of deception could be considered).
      3. Results of our leaf-like decay as our iniquity blows upon us the winds of death (the many anxieties that append themselves to a frail, human existence could surface here).
   B. "There is no one who calls upon Thy name" (v. 7)
      1. Anxiety is inevitable if we cut ourselves off from that name which is above every name.
      2. Anxiety is inevitable if we are not using with regularity the means of grace.

3. Anxiety is inevitable if we are not modeling Isaiah with a devotional prayer life that cries for restoration.

II. The prophetic prayer has been answered.
   A. God does "return for the sake of His servants" (v.17).
      1. Our redeeming Father has come down from heaven in the person of Jesus Christ (63:16; 64:3).
      2. He has worked His full salvation "for those [the anxious ones] who wait for Him" (v.4).
      3. His justified anger has become justifying grace (v.5).
   B. He continues to be "our potter" (v.8).
      1. He remolds those deformed by their anxieties.
      2. The clay which He fashions will display the Father's goodness through deeds that He declares to be righteous.
      3. The work of the Father's hand endures forever.

Conclusion: Learn to pray Isaiah's prophetic prayer in the midst of your Advent anxieties. Anxious moments will linger on, but not forever. The gentle, restoring hand of the potter will continue to fashion you as His servant who needs not be anxious and who prays without ceasing. The advent of God's Son has accomplished your restoration!

Randall W. Shields
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SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Isaiah 40: 1-8

December 6, 1987

Isaiah was writing to people whom the Lord would soon punish because of their sin. Babylonian captivity would uproot them from their homeland. When that predicted punishment fell upon Judah, it would mark the departure of God's glory from among them. And yet the severity of God's rebuke did not mean that He would forget His people. He had promised them a Savior and God never breaks a promise. Far in advance of their captivity Isaiah alerts God's people "to prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for your God."

This text may well be considered an "Old Testament classic." The young preacher has heard others expound upon it while many a pulpit-veteran has numbered this pericope among his favorites. Rich indeed are the prophet's words to the people of Judah and to the church of today.

Some eight hundred years before the heralding angels astonished the shepherds of Bethlehem with the birth announcement of Jesus, Isaiah heralded the Gospel of the coming Messiah. And now some two thousand years after His birth the message has not changed—the Lord is still coming. The sounds of this ancient Advent message cannot fade away in a dusty corner of the distant past. The sounds of Advent are to be heard still today.

Introduction: We live in a world of sounds. Recording artists Simon and Garfunkle put together a hit song in the 1960's called "Sounds of Silence." Julie Andrews is still remembered for her leading role in "The Sound of Music." And big names in the field of electronics compete to sell us the best sound system.

There are the quiet sounds of the countryside that contrast with the accelerated sounds of fast-paced living in the city. There are the happy sounds of children at play and the disturbing sounds of their parents in conflict. There are sounds that we want to hear again and again, and there are sounds that need to be heard but are often silenced.

This morning, for your listening enjoyment, you are invited to consider the sounds of Advent. Perhaps these sounds will be familiar music to your ear, and if so, then let the sound become even more pronounced in your life. If these sounds are unfamiliar for you, let the Advent sound system of the prophet Isaiah echo around you in a new kind of listening and living experience. Give ear to the message recorded in Isaiah 40:1-8. These are

THE SOUNDS OF ADVENT

I. The sound of comfort (vv. 1-2).
   A. God speaks tenderly to Jerusalem (you and me).
      1. Warfare is ended.
      2. Iniquity is pardoned.
   B. The "comfort" of the Gospel is applied.
II. The sound of anticipation (vv. 3-5; see also Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3, Lk 3:4-6, Jn 1:23).
   A. "A voice cries . . .Prepare the way."
      1. "Our God," the Messiah, Jesus comes (and there should be an air of excitement).
      2. The sound of spiritual road-building bespeaks a life of repentence.
   B. Glory is revealed for all to see.
      1. How do we see Him?
      2. Does this sound stir up a present-day anticipation that we live out?
III. The sound of the Eternal Word (vv. 6-8; see also 1 Pe 1:24-25).
   A. The sounds of the world around us fade away.
      1. Decay dominates in the physical world.
      2. "Surely the people is grass."
   B. "The Word of our God will stand."
      1. The spoken Word has been revealed in Christ—the Advent sound made flesh for us.
      2. This eternal sound will silence all others.

Conclusion: There are so many sounds that intrude upon us and beckon to us. There are so many sounds that disturb us and delight us. But in the midst of them all tune in carefully to the sounds of Advent. The voice of our God has spoken tender words of comfort, words of anticipation, and words of everlasting life. Absorb the sounds of Advent and live them out!

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THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Isaiah 61:1-3, 10-11

December 13, 1987

Isaiah's prophetic perspective sweeps forth from the present failures of Israel to the fulfilment of a gracious God's present promises. Isaiah 61, strategically placed in the third triad (chapters 58-66) of Isaiah's "Book of Comfort" (chapters 40-66), builds on the confident hope for deliverance from sin (chapters 40-48) and the Servant's atonement for sin (chapters 49-57). Here the benefits of the Servant's vicarious satisfaction are not only anticipated, but also truly present for those who believe the promise.

The trajectory of this promise moves from the servant passages to Isaiah 61. F.F. Bruce *(This is That,* Exeter, 1969, p. 90) suggests that Isaiah 61 "may have been interpreted in terms of the Servant of Yahweh." This quotation from Isaiah 61 is used at Qumran with reference to the Teacher of Righteousness (1QH 18:14). The true target, however, toward which these words were launched was the eschatological prophet who was also the Servant (Luke 4:16-21) and the Son of David (Is 11:1-9). The fact that Jesus inaugurates his mission in the synagogue at Nazareth by first locating this passage in the prophetic scroll (Lk 4:17) and then declaring to a rapt assembly, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing," underscores what rich Christological contours mark this text.

Introduction: Most of us have never been in jail. Imagine the incarceration of a whole nation, even the whole human race. Israel's captivity was a part of humanity's captivity. Her pain is one with our suffering.

THE PRESENCE OF THE FUTURE

I. The good news is meant for a bad situation (61:1).
   A. Our rebellion, like Israel's, closed all options.
      1. We were bound by our sin and hence brokenhearted (61:1).
      2. We were captive to a fallen order (61:1).
      3. We were in the darkness of captivity (61:2).
   B. Our rebellion, like Israel's, brings the same old smart.
      1. We grieve without God's gracious presence (61:3).
      2. We mourn, even despair, without His righteousness (61:3).

II. The good news effects a great reversal.
   A. God frees us from captivity for freedom, from darkness for light (61:1).
      1. The Lord's salvation replaces our confinement (61:10).
      2. The Lord's righteousness breaks our wickedness (61:11).
      3. The Lord's proclamation brings about its context (61:2).
   B. God's liberation of Israel, and humanity, brings gladness (61:10).
      1. We rejoice instead of grieve (61:3).

2. We delight instead of despair (61:10).

III. The good news is Jesus Christ, the prophet, priest, king, servant, son of David for us.
   A. Jesus Christ is present for us in baptism.
   B. Jesus Christ is present for us in the Eucharist.
   C. Jesus Christ is present for us in the Gospel.

Dean Wenthe

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

December 20, 1987

The pivotal place of David in the messianic hope of Israel is the focus of this text. His role as the father of the Messiah not only leads the prophets to portray the latter in terms of the former (Jr 23:5; 30:9; 37:24), but also leads Matthew to begin his gospel with "a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1). As Walter Roehrs has succinctly stated: "David was not only the inspired mouthpiece of divine words; he himself was a prophetic figure. As God carried out His eternal plan of salvation, He made him a type of the one who was to come and his kingdom a shadow of what is to come" (*Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (1979), p. 339). A thorough description of the various facets of that kingdom which was a shadow is John Bright's *Covenant and Promise* (1976), particularly pages 49-77.

In the Advent cycle, of course, the accent will fall on the promissory aspects of the text (v.9, "I will make your name great..."; v.10, "I will provide a place..."; v. 11, "I will also give you rest..."; v. 16, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever..."). With David a new departure towards God's future and final deliverance has occurred. The seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, will now also be, without doubt, the seed of David.

Introduction: My father once told me: "Son, if you want to know what your girlfriend will be like in years to come, look at her mother." A parallel to this advice is the common expression "like father, like son." *Sometimes* there is truth in folk wisdom; but God leaves no doubt in David's mind that the future Messiah will be *like him*; that fact is established by the sure word of the prophet Nathan.

DAVID: THE GREAT DIVIDE

I. The history of Israel was a spiral downward.
   A. After the Exodus the people rebelled.
      1. The golden calf episode is an epitome of Israel's character (Ex).

2. The new generation was warned by Moses (Dt).

B. After the conquest the people commit apostasy.

1. The repeated pattern of forsaking Yahweh for Canaanite deities is clear (Jdg).
2. The rejection of Yahweh as king for a secular paradigm is transparent (1 Sm).

C. Our lives, in Adam, too often mirror the activities of Israel.

II. Second Samuel 7 is a great turning point in Israel's history.

A. God will build David a "house" (2 Sm 7:9).

B. God will provide a place for his people (2 Sm 7:10).

C. God will establish David's house forever (2 Sm 7:16).

III. The promise is certain.

A. Those who are "in David", i.e., who trust this promise, are also "in Christ," for it is Christ's kingdom that David's foreshadowed.

B. Unlike Israel's record of defeats and defections from God (or ours), the promise to David was fulfilled to the letter.

C. Christ, David's Son, rewrote David's history and rewrites ours by means of his perfect obedience and vicarious satisfaction.

Dean Wenthe

CHRISTMAS DAY

Isaiah 62: 10-12

December 25, 1987

The prophet Isaiah lived seven centuries before the time of Christ. Little is known of his antecedents except that he was the son of Amoz. But more than any other person who lived in the centuries before Christ, Isaiah saw the glory of His coming and wrote of Him—more than Moses who called Him a prophet, more than Abraham who knew He would come from his seed, more than David who sang of Him, more than all the other prophets who predicted His coming. Isaiah saw the glory of the coming of Christ and he spoke of Him. His name "Isaiah" ("the Lord saves") somehow epitomizes the long tenure of this prophet's ministry among God's people in Judah before the judgement of the Lord brought them to their knees in repentance for their careless disregard of His holiness and their lack of serious attention to fulfilling the "law of love" in terms of service to their fellows.

In Isaiah 62 God's man speaks of a return of the exiles from their Babylonian bondage and then projects himself into the future reign of God's Messiah. Worldly scholars of Scripture would argue that these words came from a period at least two hundred years after Isaiah, ascribing them to a Deutero-Isaiah. But neither Christ nor the New Testament allow for such a critical creation. Isaiah 62 and particularly

our text assures us that, as the captured people of Judah finally saw the Lord's deliverance, so people everywhere would see the deliverance that comes from Zion in the person of God's Messiah.

Introduction: A devoutly religious couple who loved all their children with self-giving sacrifice had one son who was the proverbial "black sheep." He had flitted from one job to another. He had begged, borrowed, and stolen from all his friends and relatives until he had become an unwelcome guest at almost every door. Still the parents loved their wastrel son and prayed daily that their prodigal might shape up. On a Christmas morning, after this boy had not been heard from in months, he appeared at his parents' home. He was neat, clean, and well-shaven. When his father opened the door, the young man fell on his shoulders and cried like a child. He admitted his failures but assured his parents that his life had changed. At the brink of despair and suicide, a jail chaplain spoke to him firmly but lovingly of a better way in Jesus Christ. The young man's life, through help in a half-way house, took on new meaning. Not only was there rejoicing in heaven, there was joy in his parents' home. It had finally happened!

There were centuries of watching and waiting in the Old Testament before God's promises of deliverance in a coming Savior would be fulfilled, but it finally happened. We all, particularly the children, have waited for the coming of another Christmas, and it has finally happened. It bursts upon our world and our lives with wonderful good news.

IT HAS FINALLY HAPPENED

I. It has happened by God's plan.
   A. It was God's plan that His exiled people should return to their homeland. "Pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people" (v. 10).
   B. It was God's plan that all mankind, exiled by sin, should be restored to His love. "Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones (the impediments to God's plan being fulfilled). Raise the banner for the nations" (v. 10).

II. It has happened in the coming of God's Messiah.
   A. "Say to the Daughter of Zion, see your Savior comes!" (v. 11); announce to the returned exiles that there is salvation in the Savior whom God will send.
   B. Say to people everywhere that the Savior has come. Such is the message of the angels, of the prophets, of the evangelists of God. He has come to Bethlehem in the birth of Christ. He brings His own reward, the gift of God's grace and forgiveness, to all people everywhere.

III. It has happened that lives may be changed.
   A. The people of Judah were not to return to the same evils which brought their destruction. They were to be a "holy people, the redeemed of the Lord" (v. 12). People would "seek them out" because they would be the saints of God.
   B. Let us not return to the things that profane Christmas among us. Let us

live as the people of God, whose lives the coming of Christ, the Messiah, has changed that we may testify to what has happened to us in Him.

Conclusion: I remember as a child the joyful anticipation of Christmas. Then it happened; it really did. Somehow, mysteriously, there were gifts under the tree and the gleeful excitement of tearing them apart to see what we had received. This day reminds us again that it finally happened. It happened when God's Messiah came, and it happened that our lives might never be the same.

Edmond E. Aho
Chula Vista, California

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Isaiah 45:22-25

December 27, 1987

The Scriptures of the Old Testament repeat the refrain: "Thus saith the Lord." In Isaiah 46:11 we read, "What I have said, that will I bring about." God was speaking of His promise that in the Seed of the Woman would all people be blessed. A covenant is an agreement. God says, "I shall be your God and you shall be my people." God fulfilled this covenant by keeping His promise to send the Savior to the world. Isaiah repeatedly alludes to God's promise to send the Savior, the Lord and King of all. This is the theme of chapter 45 from which our text is taken. The Word admonishes us to "look to the Lord!" So were the people of Judah urged to "look to the Lord" from the bitterness of their bondage in Babylon. God would deliver them. But God's everlasting King and David's greater Son would come and establish God's covenant of grace with a far greater and all-inclusive "Israel" than that remnant which would return from the Babylonian episode.

Introduction: The Sunday after Christmas can be a "downer" for most pastors and a lot of congregations. One pastoral journal urged congregations to give their pastors the week off after Christmas and Easter so that they might recoup their strength. But is Christmas to be rapidly tucked away for another year when it is over? Should it be quickly forgotten as businesses plan for the "End of the Year Sale"? Our text encourages us to continue the celebration by honoring Him whose word cannot be shaken and who came to establish a covenant of grace with us? How fitting it is for us in this yet fresh Christmas to worship the King!

O WORSHIP THE KING!

I. Who is this King?
   A. He is the Lord God of heaven and earth (vv. 22, 24).

B. He has revealed Himself as Lord and King in His Son.

II. How are we to honor this King?
   A. By turning to Him in worship and adoration (vv. 22-23).
   B. By acknowledging Him as God alone.

III. What will this King do for His subjects?
   A. He will save them (vv. 24-25).
   B. In this King they will triumph and glory.

IV. What will this King do to those who reject Him?
   A. He will put them to shame (v. 24).
   B. They will regret eternally their rejection of His righteousness.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

January 3, 1988

In verse 10 Isaiah uses the infinitive absolute with the finite verb, which is translated with the adverb "greatly". Isaiah as spokesman for both old and new Zion expresses emphatic joy in salvation. He says his *soul* rejoices; this is an intense joy of faith not dependent on outward circumstances. Verse 3 features an aspect of our faith too rarely treated. Where our Reformed friends celebrate the Sovereign Lord who "holds the whole world in His hand," Isaiah tells us the redeeming Lord finds His greatest joy in the salvation of sinners as the most glorious of His mighty works.

Introduction: The radio stations shelved Christmas carols a week ago. Television specials have shifted to the year-in-review. But on this tenth day of Christmas the Holy Spirit is still singing, through Isaiah,

JOY TO THE WORLD

I. Christmas is God's joy (v. 3).
   A. The most joyful celebrant at Christmas is God Himself. When party time came (Ga 4:4), the Lord crowned all His mighty works with a crown of thorns that gives His elect the crown of life.
   B. The people for whom Jesus was born, lived, died, rose, ascended, and rules are the diadem with which He proclaims victory over sin, over death, over the devil — yes, even over the sorrowful events of the year-in-review.

II. Christmas is the church's joy (vv. 10-11).
   A. In Jesus we are newly dressed (v. 10).
      1. We sinners are clothed in garments of salvation.

2. We baptized ones wear robes of righteousness.
   a. This is no inherent righteousness.
   b. Ours is a righteousness imparted to us (Ro 3:21-22).
3. Now we are clothed for the wedding banquet (Mt 22).

B. In Jesus we grow in the joyous fruits of faith (v. 11).
1. Isaiah used the same picture in Isaiah 55:9-11.
2. Jesus used the same picture in Mark 4:1-20.
3. Isaiah, like Abraham (Jn 8:56), rejoiced to look ahead to the day of Jesus Christ.
4. Paul in today's epistle rejoiced in his own salvation, the salvation of the Ephesians, and the salvation of the Bride of Christ.

III. Christmas is the world's joy (vv. 1-2).
A. The glory of the church, hidden in Isaiah's day, lights the world like the dawn, like the rising sun (Mal. 4:2).
B. The Bride of the Light of the World cannot hide her light under a bushel.
C. The world must be shown that we who were once forsaken sinners have new names: the Lord's righteous, the Lord's glory.

Conclusion: Christmas joy is, first of all, God's joy. He imparts His joy to us. Now we, anticipating Epiphany, *must* proclaim His joy to the world.

Warren E. Messmann
Plain City, Ohio

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Isaiah 42:1-7

January 10, 1988

The same Old Testament and epistle readings are used for this Sunday in all three years of the lectionary. The epistle is but one of fifteen references to Isaiah 42 in the New Testament. Jesus' baptism is one of the few events in His life treated in all four Gospels. The preacher will want especially to research the concept of "justice" in verse 1 and the word *tsedheq* in verse 6. This passage clearly speaks, already in the Old Testament, of the Trinity. We can use it to help our people remember that Jesus' baptism is not just an event in His life. In view of widespread confusion regarding John's baptism, Jesus' baptism, and our baptism, it is good to study baptism in the context of Epiphany. In Isaiah we have an Epiphany theme — the promise of the Servant of the Lord, anointed by the Holy Spirit, who brings hope impartially to all.

Introduction: Sometimes we baptize babies, children, and adults almost too mechanically at this font. The Gospel (Mk 1:4-11) and Isaiah remind us that at each baptism we

CELEBRATE THE BAPTISM OF SPEAKER, SERVANT, AND SPIRIT

I. God the Father speaks in baptism (vv 1a,5-7).
   A. The Creator of heaven and earth took the initiative in declaring Jesus to be righteous (Is 53:11).
   B. God the Father took the initiative in taking the hand of Jesus during His earthly life (Mt 2:13-14; Lk 4:30; Jn 18:6; and others). Jesus in turn took the hand of Peter and of each of us of "little faith."
   C. The Father took the initiative in declaring Jesus to be His covenant with His people.
   D. The Speaker took the initiative in making Jesus the Light of the World (Jn 8:12) in order to
      1. Give sight to the blind.
      2. Free us from all forms of captivity.
      3. Lift us from dark dungeons of despair.

Transition: Baptism is God the Father in action, and

II. Jesus serves in baptism (vv. 2-4).
   A. Men who have claimed to serve the people usually have a fearful aspect. Ghandi, Hitler, Martin Luther King, Jr., Karl Marx, and a full range of Republicans and Democrats have each scared as many as they have served.
   B. Jesus came with no ballyhoo. To allay our well-justified fears we are told more of what the Servant Jesus does not do. For all the bruised reeds, the smoldering wicks, the poor in spirit, the brokenhearted, those in mourning, the Peters and Thomases, here is a Servant who does not destroy in order to save.
   C. Here is justice different from what the best-intentioned among us offer. Jesus never tried to effect improvements by altering social structures instead of hearts. Jesus serves by delivering justice faithfully. Here is the baptism needed by both Philemon and Simon Legree, by both Zacchaeus and Nicodemus.
   D. The Servant Jesus is not only low-key, gentle, and successful, but also persistent and persevering. Surely He had ample reason to be discouraged. Yet He never faltered. He not merely went "all the way to Timbukto," but set His face for Jerusalem (Lk 9:51).

Transition: Baptism is Jesus as Servant in action, and

III. The Holy Spirit anoints in baptism (v. 1).
   A. Isaiah calls Israel the Lord's servant (Is 4:18). Paul knew he was the Lord's servant (Ac 13:47). Many Christians are rightly called servants of the Lord. Yet the text is speaking of one special (anointed) Servant.
   B. Jesus was anointed with the Spirit in a visible way on the banks of the Jordan. And this action was more than the anointing of prophets and kings

in the Old Testament (1 Sm 10:1-10; 16:1). Here is baptism with the Holy Spirit and power (Ac 10:38).

C. Words can be stronger than swords. You are empowered by baptism into Christ to proclaim justice to nations. You can declare justice between the sinner standing before you and the Father in heaven. Such is the power of being baptized into the name of the Triune God.

Conclusion: The word "baptism" does not appear in our text. Yet Isaiah's message from 750 years before Christ is full of the promises of baptism. "Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life" (Ro 6:3-4).

Warren E. Messmann
Plain City, Ohio

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 Samuel 3:1-10

January 17, 1988

The central thought of the text is that Samuel heard the Lord and responded obediently. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers respond to God's Word in obedience. The problem is that we treat God's Word as a mere human word. The means to the goal is that God patiently speaks His powerful Word of love to us.

Introduction: Among children two words suffice to lend gravity to any admonition, add authority to any device, or infuse comfort into any consolation: "Dad (or Mom) said." Similarly, we need to be aware that *God* is behind His words to us. (This is the lesson Samuel learned.) Then we can say

SPEAK LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS *NOT* LISTENING

I. Not listening to a mere man.
   A. Until chapter 3 Samuel has served God *under* Eli. Now he served God, period.
   B. We should take care to hear *God* through His spokesmen today.
      1. If we do not, our attention can easily be dominated by the spokesmen.
         a. A pastor may be an object of hero worship or personal dislike. Either way, we can have trouble hearing the Word through him.
         b. When God comes behind "masks" (Luther), the potential for offense always exists. But woe to us if He comes any other way.

2. God still speaks to us personally, though not quite as with Samuel.
   a. Scripture is like a letter God has written to all men. But it never leaves the Author; actually, the Author comes with it.
   b. His good Word in Christ acts. It reaches out to us (1 Th 2:13).

Transition: The kingdom of God consists of power, not just talk (1 Co 4:20).

II. Not listening for mere conversation.
   A. God's Word to Samuel was so important that the Lord spoke it repeatedly.
   B. We too can be stupid about God's Word, not appreciating its blessings.
      1. Like Samuel, people today are not accustomed to hearing the Word.
      2. Even we Christians forget what God wants to give us in His Word.
   C. God's Word transcends conversation. It is transportation. It brings us
      1. Christ's finished redeeming work and all His benefits.
      2. Doctrinal certainty. Luther said: "If we lose sight of the Word, we have no aid or counsel left ... I have suffered many trials ... as soon as I took hold of some statement of Scripture as my holy anchor, I found security" (LW 27, 78-79).

Transition: A little girl on the second floor of a burning house would not listen to the voices of firemen telling her to jump through the smoke into a net. Only her father's voice would do.

III. Not listening so I can merely forget.
   A. Obedient Samuel would replace Eli, who had heard God but failed to take a *decisive* step against his sons (3:13; see 2:12-17, 22-25).
   B. We treat God's Word as a human word when we pay heed more to what the world says than to what God says. We must
      1. Confess our guilt.
         a. Our conduct is often conformed to this world.
         b. Our witness is often blunted by its derision (see Jn 1:46).
      2. Recall that God's authority is on our side in Christ (Ps 85:8).
         a. When God declares us righteous on account of Christ, we *are*.
         b. We disregard everything the world says to the contrary.
         c. Thus, we give God "the honor of truthfulness."

Conclusion: There was good reason for Luther to say ears are the "proper organ" of a Christian. "Speak Lord, Your servant is listening!"

Ken Schurb
Columbus, Ohio

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

January 24, 1988

The goal of the sermon is that the hearers take the initiative in speaking with people about Christ. The problem is that, under pressure from the world, we start wondering what good our words can do. The means to the goal is that God's Word has power to produce great results, even in the most unlikely circumstances.

Introduction: Speaking of Christ takes guts, often more than we can muster. We rationalize: "What good can my puny words do?" But the message remains God's, not ours. He does great things through it. The text is a case study in which

THE GREAT CAPITULATE TO GOD'S STRONG WORD

I. In an unlikely situation. Nineveh was a "great city," that is, it was
   A. Great in size.
      1. Jonah was outnumbered—against 120,000 he was one man in a city "three days' journey" large (probably not travelling straight through, but stopping to preach at various points).
      2. We too are "outnumbered" as we speak God's Word—if not by people, then by the devil, the world, and our flesh.
   B. Great in sin.
      1. "Jonah did the Almighty's bidding ... to preach the truth in the face of falsehood" (Father Mapple in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick.*)
         a. Nineveh was violent (see reference works on Assyrian cruelty).
         b. Nineveh was proud (see later texts, Is 10:12-14 and 2 Ki 18:28).
         c. Nineveh was ripe for destruction, like Sodom and Gomorrah.
      2. At times we Christians are dumbfounded at the evil around and among us.
   C. Great also as an object of mercy, however unlikely.
      1. In this way Nineveh was a great city *to God* (v. 3, Hebrew: cf. 4:11).
      2. God's "almight power is made known chiefly in showing mercy and pity."
         a. Mercy prompted God to send the Saviour, also to us.
         b. The message of repentance and forgiveness is rooted securely in His completed work. It is for all (Lk 24:47).

Transition: We take care to proclaim God's message and no other (false doctrine; see v. 2) on account, in part, of an evangelistic motive. Only God's Word can do His work.

II. With a great result.
   A. Repentance

1. In Nineveh God's Word caused an impressive repentance which was
   a. Immediate—Jonah was not even halfway through town (v. 4).
   b. Sincere—the Ninevites reacted as one would expect God's people to react, believing God (v. 5a; see Gn 15:6 and Mk 1:15) and bemoaning their sin (v. 5b; see Jl 1:13 and Dn 9:3).
   c. Inclusive—everyone in the city was involved (v. 5c).
   d. Indicative—God's mercy and power are significant. Note that Jonah was not surprised at the result, though he did not like it (4:2).
2. God's Word has great power when we proclaim it, too.
   a. Creative power (2 Co 4:6).
   b. Resurrection power (Eph 1:13, 19-20).
   c. Vivifying power (1 Pe 1:3, 23).

B. Deliverance.
1. God, in His power and mercy, spared Nineveh (v. 10).
2. God works in power and mercy through the Gospel today. We proclaim; He converts and delivers.

Conclusion: The late football coach Vince Lombardi trained players to beat an opponent at his strongest point. Then the player had the advantage. He had shown superiority. God sent Jonah with only the Word to a bastion of godlessness. Result—the great capitulate! Why should we hesitate to speak the Word?

Ken Schurb
Columbus, Ohio

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

January 31, 1988

A "prophet" (v 15) is one who announces something in the place of God, God's Word to men. Thus, he is an interpreter of God to men. In the same way, "like me" suggests that the prophet would act like Moses by serving as a mediator between God and the people. In verse 16 Moses reminds the Israelites of how terrified they were when God gave His law and of how they asked Moses to be their mediator with God. God was pleased to have Moses serve as His spokesman to the people (v 17). But, according to verse 18, God would in the future raise up a prophet who would convey far more of God's truth than Moses had conveyed. The Messiah is here clearly predicted, and the Jews indeed expected the Messiah to appear as the greatest of the prophets, whose words would have to be heeded. Christ applied this passage to Himself in John 5:45-46; 11:48-50. While there would be a succession of prophets from Moses until Christ, Christ is the greatest revealer of God, whose words about God are utterly true and reliable. Such is not the case with those prophets

who purport to speak to the people for God, but whom God has not commanded to speak (v 20). In the verses following the text the test by which true prophets were to be distinguished from false was the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of what they were predicting. The events predicted were those which were supposed to happen within a limited period. If a prophet's words did not come true, he was to be regarded as a blasphemer and put to death.

Introduction: In the United States there are more than four hundred religious denominations and sects, all claiming to have the truth. In this welter of religions where can we find truth that leads to God and heaven? Where can we find religion so utterly reliable that we can stake our bodies and souls on it for time and for eternity? According to our text such religion is embodied in Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST BRINGS RELIABLE RELIGION

I. Because of who He is.
   A. Christ is the prophet foretold by Moses (v. 15a).
      1. Christ so identified Himself (Jn 5:56).
      2. Peter (Ac 3:22) and Stephen (Ac 7:37) so identified Christ.
      3. The Jewish people expected a prophet greater than Moses (Jn 1:21).
   B. Christ is a prophet from among His people (v. 15b).
      1. He is a human being, tempted as we are (Heb 4:15).
      2. We can rely on Him to understand and to empathize with us in our predicaments.
   C. Christ is a prophet who is our intermediary with God, as Moses was God's intermediary with Israel ("like me").
      1. We need an intermediary because our sins condemn us and therefore we have reason to be afraid of falling into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31).
      2. By His perfect life and bloody death Christ became our mediator, through whom we have found favor with God. We can rely on Jesus as the one who has made us acceptable to God.

Transition: How can we be sure Jesus has done all this for us? Because He has told us. Jesus brings reliable religion also

II. Because of what He says.
   A. Jesus, like Moses, said only what God commanded Him to say (v. 18b).
      1. Jesus has a direct line with God (Jn 14:24;17:8,13).
      2. Thus Jesus spoke with authority (Mk 1:22).
   B. Jesus always speaks the truth.
      1. About our sin (Matt 15:19).
      2. About God's forgiveness (Matt 9:2).
      3. About His presence (Matt 28:20).
      4. About eternal life (Jn 3:16).

C. Jesus' words are to be heeded (v. 19; Matt 17:15).
   1. On this account we must take every opportunity to read and hear God's Word.
   2. If we neglect the Word or listen to prophets who do not speak God's word, we will suffer the consequences (Jn 14:48).
   3. But who would want to turn away from the words of eternal life (Jn 6:67)? We can rely on such words in life and in death.

Conclusion: In a world filled with all kinds of religions, we do not have to grope in the dark or flounder in fantasies. Jesus Christ brings reliable religion because of who He is and what He says.

Gerhard Aho

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Job 7:1-7

February 7, 1988

Job is usually described as a patient man; yet between the beginning and the end of the book he vehemently protests what has been done to him. At first he does appear patient as he resigns himself to God and scolds his wife when she urges him to curse God and die. But when his three friends arrive to console him, he breaks the initial silence with a bitter complaint in which he curses his birth and desires to die (3). Eliphaz, the first friend to speak, essentially generalizes that all people are sinners and that Job's hope rests in confessing his sins and seeking God's mercy (4-5). Job rejects the advice as being insipid, charges his friends with disloyalty, and challenges them to prove any guilt on his part (6). He then laments that life is troubled and short (7:1-7). The speeches that follow lead up to the magnificent theophany in which God asserts His omnipotence and justice. Job repents and his fortunes are reestored.

The pericope by itself is very discouraging. It appears to have been selected (instead of Zph 3:14-20 when the three-year lectionary was first introduced) as a counterpoint to the Gospel (Mk 1:29-39), which recounts Jesus' healing of the sick and demon-possessed. Job is an example of how we can consider life to be without meaning and purpose. But it is God's epiphany in Jesus that delivers us from our self-defeat and raises us from the despair that is caused by sin and its consequences.

Introduction: We have those times when we feel devastated by the sin and troubles in our own lives and about us. Relatives and friends may counsel us to be patient ("as patient as Job" perhaps) when what we want to do is cry out against all the injustices of life, real or imagined. Job felt that way. Job cried out. But with Job we also should believe that

GOD IS IN CONTROL

I. Life can appear to be out of control.
   A. Satan and sin create havoc.
      1. Job was caught up in the power of evil (Job 1:6-2:10).
      2. Sin and sickness and weakness beset us.
      3. Even when we strive to be obedient (Job 6:28-30).
   B. We can feel as Job did.
      1. Life is burdensome (vv. 1,3,5).
      2. It is without hope, like a shuttle that runs out of thread (v. 6).
      3. It has no substance and so is unhappy (v. 7).
      4. We long for relief (v. 2).
II. God is in control.
   A. God asserts His authority and power.
      1. He confronted Job with His power, wisdom, and justice (Job 38,40).
      2. Jesus overpowered evil (Mk 1:29-39).
      3. His death and resurrection win the victory (I Cor 15:20-24).
   B. The Good News is that His kingdom is at hand. In repentance and faith we experience His power in our lives (Mk 1:15).
   C. Yet we are still in a world of sin and sickness. We do not always understand why the righteous suffer. But we trust that God is in control and His will is best (Job 42:1-5).
   D. We put our hope in His unfailing love (Ps 147:11) and receive power to endure sin and the trials of life.

Conclusion: We do not know why God allowed Satan to bring sin into the world. But we do know and believe that He does control evil and He will give us the final victory in Christ.

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Fort Wayne, Indiana

LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

2 Kings 2:1-12c

February 14, 1988

The Feast of the Transfiguration celebrates the most glorious epiphany of our Lord when He was among us visibly. Yet as we observe it, we struggle with the realities of the transcendent. We are so tied to the here and now, while the transfiguration projects us forward to what will be. Our theology strongly proclaims the hope of the glory which shall be revealed in us (2 Cor 3:12-4:2), yet the events and struggles of this life seem more important.

While the Gospel describes the glory of Jesus Himself as He was transfigured before the three disciples, the glory of God is left more to the imagination in the assumption of Elijah as a fiery chariot and horses take him to heaven in a whirlwind. However, the conduct of those who witnessed the two events has similarities as they desire to participate in the glories and are not too sure how to react when each is complete. Today is a day of worship when we, too, can reflect and act on God's plan for us to share in His glory now and fully forever.

Introduction: We deal with a contradiction. We might look for better circumstances in our life and thus long for the future—as long as that future is in this life. And so we speak about the wondrous glory of God we shall experience in heaven, but we are not that eager to experience it right now. The Feast of the Transfiguration enables us to worship God and praise Him for the glory that is here for us now, the glory that sustains us on this life's journey, the glory that will be fully ours in heaven. It is

THE ETERNAL GLORY NOW

I. We seek God's glory.
   A. We live in a world where sin attempts to suppress God's glory. Elijah and his successor-to-be Elisha lived in the midst of evil times (1 Ki 17). Our times can lead us into temptation and sin.
   B. But our goal as the redeemed of God is to come into the fullness of God's glorious presence forever (Ps 16:11).
   C. We want nothing to deter us. Elisha insisted on accompanying Elijah and told the company of the prophets to be still (vv. 1-6). The disciples wanted to bask in transfiguration glory (Mk 9:5).

II. For we already see God's glory.
   A. Elijah saw the glorious power of God on Mt. Carmel (1 Ki 18:36-38) and felt His presence on Horeb (1 Ki 19:11-13).
   B. Elisha and the company of prophets witnessed a display of glory as Elijah was assumed into heaven (vv. 7-12).
   C. We now see the glory of God in Jesus, full of grace and truth, and by faith belong to God's family (Jn 1:12-14). We worship Him who displays His glory as God (Mk 9:2-8).
   D. Our lives are being transformed to participate in ever greater glory in Him (2 Cor 3:17-18).

III. Yet we await the fullness of glory.
   A. We still must make the journey through this life of sin. Elisha went from a glimpse of glory to juveniles' jeers (2 Ki 2:23-25).
   B. We are faced with disbelief from others. The company of prophets did not want to believe God's glorious power (vv. 15-18). We could lose heart because of sin and unbelief. We could join others in focusing our loyalty and interest on this life only.

C. Yet we are sustained with God's promise that we will be with Him in final glory (Jn 14:1-4).
D. The gift of the Holy Spirit is ours, as Elisha also received God's power (vv. 13-14), to keep us faithful and fearless on our journey to eternal glory (Jn 14:26-27).

Conclusion: On the Mount of Transfiguration the very Elijah of our text stood with Jesus in His glorious magnificence. The glory of Jesus that we already see and believe certifies that we, too, will be in that glorious company of the apostles and prophets to worship God eternally.

Luther G. Strasen
Ft. Wayne, Indiana

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 22:1-14

February 21, 1988

Introduction: Have you ever become deeply attached to a person whose good qualities you admired and desired to imitate? You have spoken favorably about this person to others and placed him on a pedestal to be imitated by yourself and by others. But as time went on you noticed traits and acts of that individual not in harmony with your expectations. It became apparent that your confidence had been greatly misplaced. Oh, how you were hurt! When certain persons have such an experience, they have become totally skeptical of all humanity.

When a person has totally relied upon God and when a terrible tragedy occurs in that person's life which God permitted to happen, then such an individual is in danger of rejecting God. In situations like that some people have become victims of utter infidelity. To acknowledge God as omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and then to have something happen that God could have prevented can cause a person to lose his confidence in the goodness and power of God. In the life of every believer there come times when one is disappointed in God. Superficial souls escape such disappointments. But the soul that lives in close fellowhip with God will almost inevitably experience times that test the mettle of faith. How can a person feel right about God when he believes that God contradicts Himself? During the Lenten season, as we endeaver to draw near to our Savior, let us bravely ask the question:

DOES GOD EVER CONTRADICT HIMSELF?

I. It seemed so in Abraham's experience (set forth briefly the course of Abraham's life from the time of his call in Ur of the Chaldees up to the command of

the Lord to offer up his son Isaac, Gn 11:31-22:12; Ac 7:3-7.)

A. God had given Abraham a three-fold promise:
   1. Abraham was to have a son, even though Sarah could no longer bear children because of her advanced age (Gn 12:2).
   2. Abraham's descendants were to inherit the land of Canaan (Gn 12:7;22:11).
   3. Through one of Abraham's descendants ("Seed" in KJV) all the nations of the earth were to be blessed (Gn 12:3). (The RSV translation "shall bless themselves" does not correctly reproduce the niphal in the Hebrew text as a passive; for proof consult Ga 3:16.)

B. The command of the Lord to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac appeared
   1. To go against the natural law which God placed in the heart of men.
   2. To run contrary to God's own law (Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17).
   3. To condone the human sacrifice which God condemned as heinous on the part of the Canaanites.
   4. To make impossible all the promises made to Abraham.

C. Abraham's faith, however, was so strong that he believed that, if necessary, the Lord could raise up children from the very stones to fulfill His promises (He 11:19).

D. The seeming contradiction was resolved when God appeared to Abraham and commanded him not to kill his son but to offer a ram (Gn 22:12-13).

II. It seemed so in Jesus' experience.

A. What a disappointment was the whole life of Jesus to the Jews! (The Old Testament had predicted the glories of the coming Messiah, Gn 49:10; Ps 2:10-12; 110:6; the Messiah's kingdom was to stretch to the uttermost parts of the earth, Ps 72:8.)

B. What a seeming self-contradiction was life of Christ!
   1. Although He was the Creator of the universe (Jn 1:1-3), He lay as a helpless babe in Mary's arms (Lk 2:7).
   2. Although He helped people both spiritually and physically, He had many enemies during His public ministry (Mk 2:7; Lk 4:28-29).
   3. Although He was completely innocent, He was condemned to death and died as a criminal (Lk 23:33).

C. The seeming contradiction was resolved on Easter morning when Christ, who died on Good Friday for the sins of the world, was raised for our justification (Ro 4:25; 2 Cor 5:18-20).

III. It seems so in our experience.

A. God has given Christians numerous promises that He will help and sustain them (Ps 1:3; 4:3; 50:15; Mt 28:20; He 13:5).

B. How often, however, in our experience do these promises seem to go unfulfilled!

C. Eternity, however, will reveal that in some way God has kept His promises. When we are safe in heaven, we will see that God does not contradict Himself!

Conclusion: In this Lenten season none of us need have a rebellious spirit. The suffering and death of Jesus assure us that God will with Jesus freely give us all good things (Ro 8:31). Ultimately all things must work for good for those who love God (Ro 8:28). God works for us in His own time and way. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are God's ways our ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways (Is 55:8-9).

Raymond F. Surburg

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 28:10-17 (18-22)

February 28, 1988

"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps 19:1). This kind of revelation is called general revelation and is available to everyone in the world. In the Old Testament there were a number of other ways in which the Lord gave revelation to men. Besides the simple words of God, these ways include theophany (manifestation), dream, vision, ecstasy, and certain acts of God in history. The various names of God used in the Old Testament likewise stated what the Lord was like or what He did.

Introduction: The three patriarchs of the Hebrew people received at different times divergent kinds of divine revelation. One such revelation was vouchsafed to Jacob, and on this occasion the Lord used a dream. Let us consider, then,

JACOB'S DREAM AT BETHEL

I. The events which led up to Jacob's dream.
   A. Rebekah, Jacob's mother, was told of twins in her womb (Gn 25:23).
      1. The Lord specified that, contrary to law and custom, the younger was to receive the paternal blessing (Gn 25:23).
      2. This decision was cherished by Rebekah, but Isaac either forgot it or ignored it (Gn 27:1-3; 27:5-7).
   B. Esau did not hold his birthright in high esteem but on one occasion sold it for a pot of lentil soup (Gn 25:29-34).
   C. Rebekah helped her son Jacob by stealth to obtain the paternal blessing which Isaac had planned to bestow on Esau (Ge 27:13-25).
   D. Isaac bestowed on Jacob the great Messianic blessing (Gn 27:29).
   E. Esau, feeling cheated out of his birthright, threatened to kill Jacob (Gn 27:41).
   F. Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob to their relatives in Haran.

Application: With the completion of the New Testament God no longer uses dreams or any other means to give new revelation. Divine revelation has ceased. Charismatics and modern religionists who claim to receive new revelations (even those confirming Scriptural truths) are being deceived or are deliberately deceiving others.

II. The extraordinary contents of Jacob's dream.
   A. In his dream Yahweh is the speaker, the everliving God, unchanging and sufficient, able to keep His promises.
      1. As when Christ showed Himself to the disciples at the Transfiguration, so Jacob received strength from this appearance at Bethel.
      2. Today Christians likewise receive help from studying the inscripturated revelation of God in the Bible.
   B. Jacob was promised great gifts by the Lord.
      1. His descendants would inherit the land of Canaan and become a great nation (Gn 28:14-15).
      2. Through one particular Descendant ("Seed," used in the individual sense) the salvation of mankind would come (Gn 22:18). All the nations of the earth would be blessed through this Descendant (Gn 22:18; Ga 3:16). (Christ is the unifying theme of Holy Writ.)

III. The fulfilment of Jacob's dream.
   A. Under Joshua's leadership Canaan was conquered. By David's time the land of Israel extended from "the river of Egypt to the Euphrates."
   B. Christ, the Lamb of God, took away the sins of the world (Jn 1:19). Now heaven is open to all (Jn 1:51; He 9:15).
   C. Christ is like a ladder uniting heaven and earth, a ladder by means of which all men may reach heaven.

IV. The effects of Jacob's dream at Bethel.
   A. Jacob felt the nearness of God's presence (Gn 28:16).
   B. Jacob glorified God by erecting a monument (Gn 28:18).
   C. Jacob made a vow of faithfulness to God (Gn 28:20).

Application: The plan of salvation revealed in the Bible, God's final revelation to mankind, is reason for us to thank and glorify God.

Conclusion: Many have claimed to be recipients of new revelation. Mormonism, Christian Science, Mohammedanism, and cults in our time make such Bible-denying claims. Some "evangelists" of the "electronic church" also claim to receive new revelations and ask people to support projects based on such alleged revelations. We Christians, however, have God's complete and final revelation in the Holy Scriptures. To this Word let us attend.

Raymond F. Surburg

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Exodus 20:1-17

March 6, 1988

Preaching on the Ten Commandments can easily become legalistic or moralistic if the preacher forgets to place this Law into God's covenant of grace with His people. Verse 2 is vital for a proper application of this test to the Christian congregation that today is living under the new covenant. It is because God delivered His people that He now can demand such obedience. And it is only in our remembering this salvation through faith that a proper motivation for obedience can result. Truly, love pervades any presentation of God's law to Christian ears (Ro 13:10). The love implicit in God's giving of the Law is the controlling theme behind the sermon outlined below. If the preacher wishes to devote more time to specifics in each commandment, an appropriate place might be under IB.

Introduction: As individuals and generally as a society, we have developed a dislike for authority with its dictates and commands. We have learned to hate the law, to see it as what has to be done, not what I want or love to do. The law is harsh and insensitive, and we see it more as benefiting institutions, ideals, and programs than people. Fear becomes our only motivation in keeping it. The Law that comes from the highest authority, however, is not to be feared or hated. In His giving of the Ten Commandments, God demonstrates

THE LAW AS LOVE

I. The Law is God's expression of love to us.
   A. God's Ten Commandments outline provisions for our covenant relationship with Him.
      1. God initiated the covenant by delivering us.
         a. Israel became God's own people by His choosing and bringing them out of Egypt (v. 2).
         b. We have entered the new covenant through the death of Christ and our baptism (He 9:11-18; Ro 6:3-7).
      2. We affirm our inclusion in that covenant by using the Law to show us our sin and our dependence on His grace.
   B. God's Ten Commandments are designed to bring harmony and happiness to our living. The wise Creator knows best how His creation functions smoothly.
      1. The law enables us to relate with God as He intended (vv. 3-11).
      2. The Law enables us to live a fulfilling life in our relationships with others (vv. 12-17). (Example: Faithfulness in marriage does provide the greatest happiness.)

II. The Law is our expression of love to God.
   A. Keeping and even loving the Law is a natural response for one who has experienced God's covenant of grace.
      1. Obeying the Law is not a way of keeping "our end of the bargain" or earning the right to be God's chosen people.
      2. The obedience of faith, rather, is a total surrender of self as a sacrificial thankoffering to God.
   B. The Ten Commandments give us direction in our Christian walk and dispel any Satan-inspired doubts that we allow to surface through our guesses and feeling.
      1. They teach us how to love God (Mt 22:37).
      2. They teach us how to love our neighbor (Lk 10:25-37).

Conclusion: The Ten Commandments were initially given to a small, struggling nation in a remote wilderness halfway around the world 3,500 years ago. Yet they are as relevant and applicable in our lawless world today as they were to Israel back then (Mt 5:17-20). Underneath their perfect demands and harsh threats is a strong statement of love from God to us. By the grace of God through His new covenant in Christ, there is a strong desire in our hearts to return that love.

Paul E. Cloeter
Kimball, Minnesota

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Numbers 21:4-9

March 13, 1988

This account gets both bad press (1 Cor 10:9-10) and good press (Jn 3:14-15) in the New Testament. It pictures human nature rather disgustingly, but God's grace and promise at their best. Israel had nearly completed its wilderness wandering, but now were heading in the wrong direction from the promised land (v 4). We Americans might sympathize with the Israelites in their complaining (v 5), but God's repeated demonstrations of protection, deliverance, and providence would all have to be forgotten in the process. We, no less than Israel, are a nation of complainers. We tend to forget or despise our history of divine care, together with future promises of grace and every blessing. But God in His love would seek to restore us also through our looking to the cross of Christ in repentance and faith.

Introduction: Now and then, who has not had the urge to play God? We see evil and unfairness and we think. "If I were God, I'd get those guys for that. I'd make them eat crow. I'd make things right." It is predictable that we should act that way. Thank God He is not like us in this respect. In our text we hear of

GOD'S UNPREDICTABLE RESPONSE TO OUR PREDICTABLE BEHAVIOR

I. In the face of hardship and suffering, human nature predictably will complain.
   A. Israel grumbled throughout its wilderness wandering (vv. 4-5; cf. Ex 14:11-12; Nu 11:4-6; 14:2-3; 1 Cor 10:9-10).
   B. We grumble about matters in our own life, from a slow driver in front of us to the discovery of a terminal illness in us.
   C. The sin of complaining denies God's loving providence in our lives.
      1. It forgets God's merciful acts of deliverance and blessing in the past and even condemns God and His messengers for heartless and unfair treatment.
      2. It says we know better than God what is best for us.

II. In the face of our complaining, God surprisingly acts out of love.
   A. He may have to go through the severity of "killing" us in order to make us alive.
      1. The "fiery serpents" were sent by God to work repentance.
      2. It is through our repentance that the desire for sin and our soul-destroying pride and self-centered trust are cut away.
   B. His ultimate salvation is most unexpected.
      1. The bronze serpent, the type.
         a. A sign and reminder of the very thing that was killing them would give them life.
         b. It was through faith (looking to the bronze serpent) in the otherwise hard-to-believe promise of God that saved the people.
      2. Jesus Christ, the Anti-type (Jn 3:14-15).
         a. He became sin for us that through His hanging on a tree we might have life (2 Cor 5:21)
         b. Faith trusts in the promise of God that this payment for sin saves us from death. Through our believing, we are saved.

Conclusion: God acts out of love for His people, no matter how faithless we become. That love at times may bring severe affliction, but its ultimate goal is a gracious salvation. God's action is better than anything we expected.

Paul E. Cloeter
Kimball, Minnesota

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Jeremiah 31:31-37

March 20, 1988

Jeremiah 31 is purest Old Testament Gospel, cast in the form of a promise to restore the children of Israel as Yahweh's covenant people. Verse 1 announces

salvation for all the families of Israel while verses 2-22 specify the ten tribes of Israel and verses 23-26 the kingdom of Judah. Verses 27-30 indicate Yahweh's providential concern for His restored people as well as the clarity of His righteous judgment in the new era, but verses 31-34 contrast the gracious nature of the new covenant with the legal (and broken) nature of the old covenant while verses 35-40 assure us of the holiness and longevity of the restoration. Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12 and 10:16-17 and alluded to in the words of institution, the New Testament thereby indicating that this Old Testament prophecy has been fulfilled in the gracious, saving work of Christ and that believers in Christ are the new Isreal.

Introduction: Contracts are agreements enforceable at law; and in a litigious society such as ours those who perceive that a contract has been broken are quick to take those who have broken it to court. How striking, therefore, is the conduct of God in our text who instead of enforcing the old covenant creates the new.

A COVENANT OF GRACE, NOT OF LAW

I. The old covenant, a two-sided agreement (v. 32).
   A. In a typical contract, each side promises to do something, conditioned upon the performance of the other.
   B. Such was the case with the old covenant established by God with Israel at the time of the Exodus.
      1. Though God took the initiative in rescuing His people from bondage, He conditioned His continued favor to them upon their obedience to His ordinances—an agreement that Israel assumed at Sinai but broke almost immediately and continually throughout her history (cf. in Jeremiah's own time Judah's stubborn resistance to his message).
      2. By this covenant of the Law, Israel earned not God's favor but His wrath.
   C. Similarly, any time man seeks to maintain a contractual or legal relationship with God—a two-sided agreement—the result is always failure.
      1. Man either reduces the Law to formalism and so satisfies it hypocritically (cf. 1 Sm 15:22; Is 1:11; and Ho 6:6).
      2. Or else he falls into despair at his sinfulness when measured against God's righteousness.
      3. In either case, he earns God's condemnation and wrath.

II. The new covenant, all God's grace (vv. 33-34).
   A. Since God is love, He forgoes His contractual rights under the Law to establish a one-sided agreement, completely independent of man's performance.

1. It is actually a testament or promise effected by the death of the testator, in this case, Jesus Christ, God's Son (cf. He 9:15-16).
2. Since this covenant rests entirely upon God's gracious initiative and Christ's perfect salvific work, it is solid and sure; we are forgiven, we are God's people, we are one with Him forever.

B. Therefore, too, God sends forth His Spirit into our hearts so that we might recognize and accept the testament and live lives appropriate to recipients of grace.

Conclusion: In Jeremiah's day the new covenant was only a promise, but now it is a promise fulfilled and renewed to each of us personally whenever we partake of the "new testament" of Christ's blood.

Cameron MacKenzie

PALM SUNDAY

Zechariah 9:9-10

March 27, 1988

The evangelists Matthew and John both tell us that this Old Testament word was fulfilled by Christ's entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Mt 21:5 and Jn 12:15). Accordingly, the vision of Zechariah helps us to understand more fully the significance of what Christ was accomplishing in the events of holy week. The last six chapters of the book of Zechariah consist of two oracles—(1) the "burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach and Damascus" (9-11) and (2) the "burden of the word of the Lord for Israel" (12-19)—in which the prophet depicts the warfare between the heathen world and Israel. In chapter 9, particularly, the image of warfare pervades the text as the prophet foresees God doing battle on behalf of Israel against her heathen neighbors. In the midst of such conflict the prophet envisions the triumphant entry of Judah's king into this capital city from which His kingdom of peace will spread to the ends of the earth.

Introduction: Every day, it seems, we read stories about the search for peace in the Middle East; but the warfare continues. Zechariah, however, foreseeing Palm Sunday, summons the people of God to rejoice at

THE HUMBLE KING AND HIS KINGDOM OF PEACE

I. The King (v. 9)

A. The greatest honor for a victorious Roman general was to enter a city in triumph—i.e., a parade of his men and their chariots, his defeated enemies enslaved, and himself upon a stallion or in a chariot—through the streets of the city to the acclaim of the people.

1. Since Jesus is a different kind of king who carries on a different sort of warfare, He entered Jerusalem in a strikingly different way—lowly and riding upon a lowly beast of burden.
2. But lowliness is the weapon of His warfare since, by humbling Himself under the Law even to the point of death on the cross, He effected the greatest triumph, man's redemption (cf. Php 2:5-8)
3. Therefore, Zechariah foresaw Him as "just and having salvation"; His victory was won on behalf of His people.

B. For many then and now the lowliness of this King is disconcerting.
1. First the Pharisees, but by the end of the week even His disciples, had had enough of a Messiah who would not fight, or a King whose throne was a cross.
2. So today the church is tempted to deny the humility of her King by seeking temporal pomp and power.
   a. Churchmen think "bigger is better" or use the prestige of the church to endorse political causes.
   b. Individuals forego regular use of the means of grace, preferring instead to devote time and energy to the world's status symbols.

II. But the lowly King wins the greatest victory—eternal peace (v. 10).
A. However futile the quest, men persist in the search for temporal peace, for they understand its value for themselves and posterity.
1. How much more wonderful is the peace which Christ has won that establishes a right relationship between God and sinful men forever!
2. All man's efforts are in vain to effect it, but because of what Christ has done, He proclaims it—complete and perfected—to all who will believe it, including the heathen who had previously rejected Him.

B. Therefore, the church continues Christ's work today, not by seeking glory but by seeking souls through the faithful proclamation of the Gospel of peace.

Conclusion: It is not clear from the gospels if the people who hailed Jesus on Palm Sunday had an accurate understanding of what kind of Messiah He was. But today certainly, with the eyes of faith, we can see that the humble King is also our triumphant Savior, who has established true peace between God and man. Therefore, we give heed to the prophet; we rejoice and shout for our King has come unto us.

Cameron MacKenzie

EASTER SUNDAY

Isaiah 25:6-9

April 3, 1988

Unquestionably Easter is the highpoint of the Christian church year. It is the celebration of the greatest event in history. Accordingly, the message offered on

this day will be positive, vigorous, and triumphant and emphasize the love and power of God the Victor. The text before us does all these things. The inspired words of Isaiah capture the glorious blessings that God has planned for His people. Each of the sentences in verses 6-8 has God as its subject. He has planned and authored all the blessings and triumphs. In revealing what God does for people, the text is truly Gospel-centered. The goal of the sermon is to highlight the triumphant love of God in bringing relief to people by "swallowing up death" (v.8) and offering eternal joy and salvation. Indeed, God's people have been waiting for this refreshment and rejoice in the blessing of receiving it (v.9).

Introduction: One of the most lovely images in this life is that of a mother preparing a special dinner for a son or daughter who has been away for a long time and is finally coming home. She wants everything to be perfect and works tirelessly to achieve it. Even when dinner is finished, she would not think of letting her beloved help with the clean-up. The dinner is her gift, one cherished by both the giver and receiver. Life, eternal life, is God's gift to us, made possible by the victory of Christ Jesus over sin and death. Our Lord has done it all. We are the honored recipients, and in gratitude and relief we rejoice in the eternal blessing prepared especially for us. Easter is the day for remembering all these things, a new era of triumph over "the former things." Truly this is

THE DAY OF "NO MORES"

I. No more death.
   A. God will remove the dark pall covering all people (v.7).
      1. They will no longer live in the blackness of fear.
      2. They will no longer wonder what life really means.
   B. God will swallow up death forever (v.8).
      1. He will accept the sacrifice of Jesus.
      2. He will empty the grave to show His eternal victory.

II. No more tears.
   A. God cares about the hopes and fears of people.
      1. He knows life's uncertainties frighten people.
      2. He understands their emotions and temptations.
   B. God takes a personal interest in comforting them with a triumph that turns tears to shouts of joy.

III. No more waiting.
   A. God knows that it has been difficult for His people to wait for His relief.
      1. They have suffered reproach (v.8).
      2. They have struggled with their own doubt.
   B. God rewards their patience by keeping His promises.
      1. He comes.
      2. He comes so that His people know Him.
      3. He comes so that His people know Him and can rejoice in the triumph which has finally arrived.

Conclusion: Nowhere is the power and love of God more evident than in the triumph of the resurrection. Simply stated, God wins. In this victory He lays aside eternal death, tears of fear, and years of waiting for His people. It is likened to a glorious banquet which God prepares and offers (v.6), a new era of spiritual refreshment. Best of all, it belongs to us, a gift from a Lord who is simply magnificent.

David E. Seybold
Fredonia, Wisconsin

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 3:13-15, 17-26

April 10, 1988

One of the notable features of the post-Ascension mission of the apostles is the gentle yet persistent way in which they carried forth the Gospel message. Their style was not purposely confrontational. Their purpose was not to annoy the authorities. They simply had something important to say in a way that showed they were messengers of a great and wonderful God. Not surprisingly, Peter is the spokesman. He does not attack his hearers, but in a firm and kind manner (cf. v.17) he reminds them that God was working through His long-intended plan right on schedule. What recently happened to Jesus, from His life to His death to His new life, was all part of this plan (v.21). All that remained was for people, including Peter's audience, by grace to turn from sin (v.19) to Jesus (v.26). The goal of the sermon is to emphasize the persistence of God in authoring and offering salvation and to invite the hearers to live by grace in repentance and hope of His promises.

Introduction: The familiar phrase, "Three strikes and you're out," reminds us that we usually have only limited chances to achieve something in life before the opportunity runs out. Fortunately God does not subscribe to this kind of thinking. Persistently, firmly, yet lovingly He continues to offer His salvation, even to those who oppose Him strongly, through the Good News carried by His faithful messengers. In so doing, He is showing that He wants everyone to be

PART OF HIS PERSISTENT PLAN

I. It is a plan promised.
   A. The prophets of the Old Testament saw the Savior and spoke of His coming.
      1. Moses knew He would come through Israel (v.23).
      2. Samuel and others also saw this day (v.24).
   B. The prediction to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his Seed pointed to Jesus.
II. It is a plan opposed.

A. God's own chosen people led the attack against Jesus.
   1. They denied Him (v.13).
   2. They preferred the release of a murderer (v.14).
   3. They killed Him (v.15).
B. God's own people acted vengefully but ignorantly (v.13), unable to recognize the Author of Life.

III. It is a plan fulfilled.
A. The Lord knew that Jesus would suffer just as He did (v.18).
B. The Lord received Jesus into heaven in His ascension as He had planned.
C. The Lord turned the evil of man to eternal good by glorifying Jesus (v.13).

IV. It is a plan proclaimed.
A. The disciples were witnesses of God's plan and eager to tell it.
B. The disciples knew that the preaching of repentance prepared the way for the refreshment of the Good News (v.19).
C. The disciples were eager to announce fearlessly and persistently that there was hope for all who by grace would turn from wickedness to Jesus (v.22).

Conclusion: The people of Israel, from the days of Abraham to the time of Jesus, had repeatedly tried God's patience and turned from His promises. This history of rejection culminated in the killing of the Messiah. But God did not give up. He still desired their salvation and through His messengers persistently and mercifully offered to turn them from sin to Him. The same persistence, kindness, and love are also our salvation!

David E. Seybold
Fredonia, Wisconsin

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 4:8-12

April 17, 1988

Acts 3:1 - 4:31 forms a marvelous illustration of the general statement made in 2:43-47. The healing of the lame man was but one of the "many wonders and signs done through the apostles" (2:43). It happened one day as Peter and John were "attending the temple together" (2:46). Moreover, it recounts one of the instances by which "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (2:47). Throughout the account Luke keeps referring to the *name* of Jesus as the powerful, compelling instrument by which God worked in the early church. That wonderful name is the dominant subject in this entire section. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer trust and share the powerful name of Jesus. The problem is that we tend to be timid and expect failure in our witnessing. The means is the Gospel promise that the same name that alone can save us from sin and death also empowers us for bold Christian witnessing.

Introduction: The mere mention of a person's name can be a powerful motivator. Names can motivate people to anger, joy, love, and sacrifice. In the late 1860's the name "Mudd" made people angry. Dr. Samuel Mudd had set the broken leg of John Wilkes Booth after the latter had shot President Lincoln. Though innocent, Mudd was charged with conspiracy in the assassination and was imprisoned for years. "Your name will be Mudd" was used to discourage someone from doing something wrong. "Mudd" was a powerful name to evoke anger and disdain! Our text shows us

THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME

I. Seen in the miraculous healing of the lame man.
   A. The events of that day in Jerusalem were simply amazing.
      1. Every Jew who went to the temple, resident or tourist, had known the cripple.
      2. But on that day his whole life quickly changed.
      3. Peter and John's healing of the man caused quite a stir.
   B. These events were totally undeniable.
      1. The same leaders who had Jesus killed a few months before were angry over what transpired, but they could not refute it.
      2. All they could do was threaten the apostles not to speak in Jesus' name.

II. Seen in the miracle that occurred in Jesus' disciples.
   A. They had changed.
      1. Peter, the impetuous know-it-all who had denied Jesus in the courtyard, now rose to declare Jesus before the Sanhedrin.
      2. There were two reasons for the change—namely, Easter (they had seen Jesus alive) and Pentecost (they were Spirit-powered).
   B. Their miraculous change is seen in their powerful witness to Jesus.
      1. When most would have shrunk back, they rose in boldness.
      2. These men were not learned scholars; it is no wonder the Sanhedrin sat speechless and shocked.

Transition: The same Spirit that inspired Luke to write Acts wants you and me to know that this same powerful name of Jesus is to be

III. Seen in our lives too.
   A. Jesus gave us one supreme commission: Be My witnesses.
      1. He gave that order because mankind is utterly lost without Him.
      2. Only Jesus can remove the barrier of sin. "There is no other name under heaven. . .by which we must be saved."

Summary: Jesus is mankind's only chance. To some that statement may sound pretentious, haughty, or mere opinion, but we know it to be pure truth.

   B. We too can share Jesus' name because God empowers us to do so.

1. By the power of our baptism that first tied us to His powerful name.
2. By the power of Holy Communion that strengthens that tie with Jesus as well as with one another as fellow witnesses.

C. Today the Spirit challenges us anew: Trust Jesus and declare His powerful name in word and deed.

Conclusion: Through the word of witness we speak God will change others too in a miraculous way.

Ron Weidler
Tampa, Florida

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 4:23-33

April 24, 1988

The key word is *pareesia,* "boldness" or "confidence." The central thought is that Christians are to live confidently, knowing that in Christ we have complete, lasting victory over all enemies. Lenski takes *tous idious* (v. 23) to refer only to the apostles. So also he takes the "all" in verse 31 who spoke the Word with confidence to mean just the twelve, but such an interpretation seems too restrictive. Surely 8:4 proves that preaching the Word is a task for every Christian. Chapter 4:29-31 provides an insightful explanation of the purpose, not only of Pentecost, but also of all the subsequent gifts of miracles and tongues. These were never ends in themselves. Together they were a special outpouring on the new church to bolster her speaking of the Word and name of Jesus with all boldness and confidence. The healing of the lame man immediately preceding this text is a classic illustration of this point.

Introduction: Quite often, Christians fall into the habit of wishing each other "good luck" as part of their goodbyes. Over the course of time we can slowly come to believe that chance or fate does indeed play a part in what "befalls" us. Things happen because of a "bad break" or "tough luck." Our text shows a totally different orientation to life. Rather than having us fear if another "bad break" is waiting for us around the next corner, God calls out to us today and every day of our earthly sojourn and says,

CHRISTIAN, LIVE WITH A BOLD CONFIDENCE

I. Realize that the enemies of Christ will fail.
   A. The Sanhedrin failed.
      1. They thought the cross would finish Him, but Easter said "no!"
      2. They thought they could intimidate Peter and John but failed.

B. Herod and Pilate failed (they are representatives of "the kings of the earth" and "the rulers" in Ps 2:1).
   1. They meant evil against God and His Christ.
   2. Yet God "meant it for good" (cf. v. 28 with Gn 50:20).
C. All other world rulers have failed to crush the church (cf. *LW* 340, stanza 2.)
D. And all others will fail.
   1. Not even the gates of hell can prevail against the church (Mt 16:18).
   2. The future of God's people, including you and me, is bright (cf. *LW* 518, stanza 3).

II. Remember from where our victory comes.
A. The sovereign Lord who is over all (v. 24).
   1. The One who is the Creator of all (v. 24b).
   2. The One who can do all things (v. 30, "signs and wonders").
B. The Messiah who is one with God the Father (Ps 2:2c, 7).
   1. Prophesied by and descended from David (Lk 20:41-44, both David's Son and David's Lord).
   2. Anointed by God to be mankind's Savior (v. 27) from sin, Satan, and death.
C. The Spirit who empowers all who are in Christ.
   1. Since He alone can give faith in Christ, He is the Lord of life.
   2. He is the One who equips and empowers us to live in confidence (cf. Ro 8:14-17; 2 Tm 1:7).

Transition: When we realize (I) and remember (II), then we can

III. Radiate our victory to all with whom we live.
A. Let us do "good to all, especially those of the household of faith" (Ga 6:10).
   1. The early Christians were known for their charity to all.
   2. Their love for one another was demonstrated by their mutual support (v. 32).
B. Let us, therefore, preach the Word with confidence.
   1. The apostles were eye-witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (v. 33).
   2. But we too witness and "cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

Conclusion: In Christ God has proven that He can be trusted! He will keep His promises. He will give us eternal life. Indeed, we already *have* it! Let us, then, confidently give ourselves to serving our neighbor, regardless of the cost, and in witnessing to Christ in word and deed. Our future lies not in luck or "breaks" but in Christ!

Ron Weidler
Tampa, Florida

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 8:26-40

May 1, 1988

The power of the Word of God, the good news of Jesus Christ, is witnessed in story after story in the book of Acts. There may be no stronger witness to its power than in the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. After having recorded the Gospel's power to incorporate Samaritan outcasts into the fellowship of the church (Ac 8:14-17), Luke adds another account to reveal the Gospel's power to overcome the exclusion of even a eunuch (Dt 23:1). The power of this glorious Gospel fulfills the seemingly impossible promise of Isaiah 56:3-5. The good news of Jesus who endured humiliation and death (Is 53:7,8) before exaltation and life brings joy and life to a eunuch whose own lot was that of humiliation with only the prospect of death. This is a powerful story of life for all who are like "a dry tree" (Is 56:3).

Introduction: Has the Easter cycle run its course? Is it possible that we have heard the good news of Jesus and slumped back to a life that bears no fruit, that knows no future, that experiences no joy? Perhaps you have never heard the good news of Jesus for you. Is it possible that the good news has passed you by? Maybe you cannot quite believe that it is for *you*. The good news of Jesus has power—for you. Come with me and take a chariot ride with a eunuch, and see how good the news really is.

LET'S GO FOR A CHARIOT RIDE

I. Take a ride and hear an unusual story (about the Servant of the Lord).
   A. The story is that of humiliation (Is 53).
      1. It is a story of rejection (v. 3).
      2. It is a story of shame (v. 3).
      3. It is a story of unjust suffering (v. 4).
   B. The story is that of losing one's future (Is 53).
      1. It is a story of being cut off from life (v. 8).
      2. It is a story of identification with the wicked in death (v. 9).
   C. The story is that of ultimate victory (Is 53).
      1. It is a story of life (v. 10b).
      2. It is a story of fulfilment and fruit-bearing (v. 11).
      3. It is a story of honor (v. 12).

Summary: This is the story of Jesus, the Suffering Servant. Think how unique, how refreshing, how loving, how filled with hope this story was to the eunuch.

II. Take a ride and see the powerful results of this story.
   A. Phillip had used a version of the story before with Samaritans (Ac 8:4-8).
      1. The Samaritans were outcasts also.
      2. The Samaritans were enemies.

3. The Samaritans believed and were baptized.

B. Phillip used this story with a eunuch (Ac 8:26-40).
   1. The eunuch was an outcast from Israel (Dt 23:1).
   2. The eunuch was a man without a future (Is 56:3-5).
   3. The eunuch believed and was baptized.

C. Others used this story later when reaching out to Greeks (Ac 11:19-20).
   1. The Greeks were Gentile outcasts.
   2. The Gentiles were unclean.
   3. The Greek Gentiles were the first to be called Christians.

Summary: This was a long ride, but think how powerful this story is.

III. Take a ride and listen to the story for yourself.

A. The eunuch was able to identify with Jesus.
   1. He had suffered humiliation, as Jesus had done infinitely more.
   2. He wanted the hope Jesus gave.
   3. He was joined to Jesus in baptism.

B. You can identify with Jesus, too.
   1. Be honest about your sin and your sinful status.
   2. Acknowledge your own exclusion from God as a sinner.
   3. Believe that Jesus is for you.

C. You can experience the joyful Gospel.
   1. You can through faith and baptism feel its power in your acceptance.
   2. You can rejoice in your new status with the people of God.
   3. You can live in triumph because of your hope.

Conclusion: Every once in the while we need to go on a chariot ride. We need to hear the story of "Jesus for me." We need to stop at the water and take a plunge into our baptismal experience, our union with Jesus. Then the joy of the Gospel will be felt in our lives.

David Schlie
Fort Wayne, Indiana

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 11:19-30

May 8, 1988

The power of the Word, the good news of Jesus, brought Samaritans into the family of God (Ac 8:14-17), gave hope and acceptance to a eunuch (Ac 8:34-38), and now goes so far as to extend God's grace to Greeks (Gentiles, pagans) and bring them into the family as well (Ac 11:19-26). As was the case previously (Ac

8:14; 9:32; 11:1), the church in Jerusalem had something to say. It dispatched Barnabas to Antioch to look into this new development. What he saw was the grace of God (Ac 11:23).

Luke, wanting to reveal the significance in this event, first calls this group of believers "church" (Ac 11:26). This group of people, pagan in origin, Greek by nationality, uncircumcised and unclean according to Jewish law, was part of the church. They were members of the church just like God's people in Jerusalem. While they did not have the privilege of being associated with the founding of the church, yet they were the first to be called "Christians." They were recognized as being devoted to the worship of Christ.

This was a movement affecting a world. This movement, however, was not marked by division and internal struggles for leadership. It was united and supportive. Immediately after recording the events brought about by the grace of God among the Greeks, Luke relates a remarkable turn of events. These new Christians demonstrated the effect of that grace by generously breaking bread with their benefactors in Jerusalem.

Introduction: In the life of God's people breaking bread is significant evidence of the presence and power of God's grace. In a world of independence the church has all too often suffered from a lack of bread-breaking and the resultant lack of strong bonds among brethren. Today we can learn much from those new Christians of Luke's day by considering

BONDS BY BREAD

I. The breaking of bread is a major emphasis in Scripture.
   A. Two prophets were remembered for their "breaking of bread."
      1. Moses with regard to the manna in the wilderness.
      2. Elijah with regard to the widow's flour.
   B. Jesus is remembered for "breaking bread."
      1. Jesus miraculously fed five thousand and four thousand people on different occasions.
      2. Jesus ate and drank with sinners.
      3. Jesus made Himself recognizable to the Emmaus disciples while breaking bread.
   C. The early church "broke bread."
      1. The Christians broke bread daily in their homes.
      2. The Greeks "broke bread" at a distance with the believers in Jerusalem.
      3. Paul appealed to Corinthian and Macedonian Christians to "break bread" with those in Jerusalem.
   D. In Jesus and what He did "breaking bread" takes on spiritual meaning.
      1. Jesus is the Bread of Life who gave His life to heal our separation and bind us to God.
      2. Jesus used bread to share His body in the Lord's Supper.
      3. We Christians who eat that one bread in the Lord's Supper are one body.

4. From Jesus' act of "breaking bread" with us on the cross and in the Eucharist flow all our acts of "breaking bread" with our fellow human beings.
   a. When we let Jesus feed us through Word and Sacrament we will be strengthened to help ("break bread") with others.
   b. When we feed on Jesus by faith we will be moved to help ("break bread") with others.

II. Christians who do not "break bread" easily break bonds.
   A. Christians sometimes break bonds with each other in the church.
      1. Denominations often compete against each other rather than work against evil.
      2. Congregations often have factions and strife.
   B. Christians break bonds in their personal lives.
      1. Christian homes are often places of disunity rather than harmony.
      2. Christians bear resentment toward each other.

III. Christians who "break bread" build bonds.
   A. We build bonds by sharing the Bread of Life.
      1. In homes—devotions.
      2. In Bible studies.
      3. In open discussions.
   B. We build bonds by sharing "bread" with others.
      1. The poor need actual bread.
      2. The unlearned need our resources.
      3. The sick need our care.
      4. The lonely need our presence.
      5. The troubled need our support.
   C. By this "breaking of bread" we strengthen the bonds of love and concern between ourselves and others.

Conclusion: Just as the Gentiles who received the "Bread of Life" from Jewish believers shared their daily bread with their newfound brothers and sisters who were in physical need, so we can build bonds by "breaking bread."

David Schlie
Fort Wayne, Indiana

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 1:15-26

May 15, 1988

Introduction: This text underscores a concern of many Christians—the failure of some to function effectively as workers in the church. The text deals with the

original disciples, and so all the details are not applicable to the ministry today. But there are lessons to be learned from Judas, Matthias, and Barsabbas which are applicable to the church of today and its ministry. Can the church excuse or ignore failures in the ministry? But an even more serious question is raised: Does God know what He is doing when He calls men to be His servants?

DOES GOD KNOW WHAT HE IS DOING?

I. Man can fail in faith and mission.
   A. The betrayal of Judas demonstrates the weakness of men as Christ's servants (vv. 17-19).
      1. God calls and chooses flesh-and-blood men to serve Him. They are saints-and-sinners, not supermen (vv. 15-16).
      2. They can fail in their mission and even lose faith (v. 20).
      3. But God does not change the plan or lower the goals (v. 20).
   B. God holds His people responsible for faith and action.
      1. The tragedy is not simply failure in mission but the loss of faith in Jesus (King Saul and Hymenaeus).
      2. God judges each one by his faith or works (v. 18).
      3. The life of Judas is a warning to all believers (Jd 7).

II. God's chosen men depend on God's sure word.
   A. Christ died on the cross to forgive all sin of all men (Jn 3:16).
      1. This message is the central task of the church (2 Cor 5:20).
      2 Christ chose believers to deliver that message (v. 21).
      3. This is God's proclaimed plan to save mankind (v. 20).
   B. Called servants (clergy and lay) follow God's plan.
      1. Personal faith and knowledge of Christ are required (v. 21).
      2. God's goals and standards never change (v. 22).

III. The church calls, trains, and commits men to God's mission.
   A. A group of the disciples (120) was involved in this call and commissioning. The whole church was responsible (v. 23).
   B. Structure and requirements are evident in this calling (vv. 24-25).
   C. Prayer and commendation to God are part of this commission (vv. 23-24). Approval comes from both God and men.
   D. The office is served and the Gospel is to be proclaimed (v. 26).

George Kraus

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Ezekiel 37:1-14

May 22, 1988

The vision described in the text was God's way of reviving the hopes of the people of Israel, who in their Babylonian exile thought the prospects of national revival

were as unlikely as skeletons coming alive. The resuscitation of Israel would take place through the power of the same God who called into existence everything that is and who formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The expression "son of man" was a continual reminder to Ezekiel of his humanness and weakness. Yet he who was troubled by his impotence and failure would be instrumental in God's great work, for he (Ezekiel) would speak the word through which the miracle would be performed. Through that Word of the Lord spoken by the prophet, the Holy Spirit would reawaken Israel to spiritual and national life. Finally, on the last day Christ will call all the physically dead from their graves, some to life everlasting and some to eternal shame and contempt. The vision emphasizes the mighty work of resuscitation effected by God's Holy Spirit through the Word.

Introduction: We sometimes speak of self-made persons who, by hard work and total dedication to the tasks at hand, have gained prominent positions in which they have benefited others. We all like to attribute our accomplishments, whatever they may be, to conscientious performance of duty. But as Christians we are not self-made persons. Today when we focus on the work of God and Holy Spirit we have an opportunity to reflect on the role of the Holy Spirit in making and keeping us Christians. The vision God granted Ezekiel dramatizes

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. The Spirit's power is seen in the kind of people He works with.
   A. These people are like dry bones.
      1. In their captivity the Israelites felt like dry bones (v. 11).
      2. Many people today feel like dry bones. They are confused, their lives in disarray, no reason for living and no hope in dying.
      3. Other people, though they too are like dry bones, may not feel that way because they are outwardly successful, believe in God, and try to do God's will.
   B. We are like dry bones.
      1. Through our natural birth we were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) with no more power to come alive than scattered bones in a valley.
      2. Even though we are Christians we may sometimes feel more dead than alive. We so easily get wrapped up in ouselves and forget others in their need. We so often fail to read God's Word and to pray. The world so subtly lures us from God. We see the power of the Holy Spirit when we consider what the Spirit has to work with—dry bones, people who are or who sometimes feel like dry bones. That is not much to work with.
II. The Spirit's power is seen in making people alive.
   A. The Holy Spirit makes people alive through the Word.
      1. Ezekiel was asked to speak God's Word to the dry bones (v. 4).
      2. Also today the Spirit works through God's Word, the Holy Scriptures (Jn 6:63).

B. Only by the power of the Spirit in the Word are we made alive (v. 9).
   1. Wherever the Word is spoken, in north, south, east, or west, there the wind of the Spirit blows to vivify and resuscitate (v. 10).
   2. It is a mystery how the Spirit can make alive (Jn 3:8), but He does it. In the Word connected with baptism the Spirit raised us up with Christ into a new existence.

C. Only by the power of the Spirit in the Word are we kept alive (v. 14).
   1. When we feel more dead than alive because we fall short in our zeal and witness and service, the Spirit leads us to repentance and renews our faith in God's forgiveness.
   2. When we are burdened by difficulties that cause us to wonder if we can stay alive, the Spirit points us to our source of strength in God (Is 49:5).

Conclusion: The power of the Holy Spirit is very great. Look at the kind of people He has to work with. Look at what He does to them. As the Jewish exiles lived again, so the Spirit of God has made us alive. Finally, on the last day, Christ's Spirit-filled Word will raise us from our graves and place us in the heavenly land where we shall enjoy life in all its fullness and everlastingness.

Gerhard Aho

TRINITY SUNDAY

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

May 29, 1988

Introduction: There are three uses for the word "one." It is used as an exclusive: "There is only one God and no other." It is used numerically: "This class is one of many." It is used to describe wholeness, completeness. In our text we stress the third use, though the first is also involved. The text deals with the Blessed Trinity, God's grace, His will for His people, and our response as forgiven, renewed people of God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE

I. We live in a fragmented world.
   A. Sin has isolated us from God, the world, and ourselves.
      1. We are born in sin and alienated from God. We cannot by ourselves obey God's will (v. 5).
      2. We are alienated from others (examples: war, divorce, strife, etc.).
      3. We are alienated from ourselves. Psychiatry demonstrates that man is working against himself (e.g., King Saul).
   B. This alienation brings God's judgment.

1. God's verdict is that the wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23).
2. We are without hope or help by ourselves (Ro 3:20).

II. Christ has restored wholeness to the world.
   A. Jesus came to heal fragmented man. This was His chief purpose in entering our world as man (Ga 4:4).
   B. Jesus carried all humankind's sin, death, judgment, and alienation in His own body. By His perfect life and death He cancelled the world's guilt (1 Jn 1:7).
   C. Now God is at peace with His world—at-one-ment (Ro 5:1).

III. As God's renewed people we respond to God's word and will.
   A. The text speaks to God's new people, whole people.
      1. God reminds them that there is only one God, the Trinity. This point is made not merely to provide information but to produce spiritual growth (v. 4).
      2. Obedience to the Great Commandment is the response God expects from His forgiven people (v. 5).
      3. His words are to be in our hearts, not just our heads. They are life to us (v. 6).
   B. God's whole people are shaped and directed by His Word.
      1. His Word forms our life-style and defines our goals in life (v. 8).
      2. His word instructs our families, adults and children (v. 7).
      3. His Word reaches out to each culture with the good news of God's grace and healing (v. 9).

George Kraus

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

June 5, 1988

This Old Testament lesson focuses on the Sabbath and relates to the gospel (Mk 2:23-38), in which Jesus overcomes the Pharisee's objection to the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath by declaring, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Set in the context of the second giving of the law, with Israel poised to enter the promised land, this commandment gives as the reason for observing the Sabbath God's mighty deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt (Dt 5:15) rather than God's rest on the seventh day of creation (Ex 20:11).

Introduction: Worship and rest grace the Christian life and pulsate through the Christian community gathered around Word and Sacrament. The Old Testament Sabbath stands as a monument to the ongoing need for worship and rest among New Testament Christians, liberated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Lord of the Sabbath. Today's Old Testament lesson from the giving of the law in Deuteronomy 5 helps us to view

THE SABBATH AS A RESPONSE TO GOD'S DELIVERANCE

I. Desecrating the Sabbath ignores God's deliverance (vv. 13-14).
   A. Moses repeats God's Sabbath commandment because of disobedience in the wilderness and future temptation in the Promised Land.
      1. People tried to gather manna on the Sabbath (Ex 16:27, 28).
      2. A man gathered wood on the Sabbath and was punished (Nu 15:32, 35).
      3. Many desecrated the Sabbath in Israel by working (Ne 13:15; Jr 17:27; Eze 22:8).
      4. God condemns such desecration (Ez 20:13).
      5. God continued to deliver Israel and remained faithful to His covenant.
   B. The Sabbath commandment exposes our rejection of regular worship and rest as ignoring God's gracious deliverance in Christ.
      1. We often despise worship by giving it low priority in our lives.
      2. We often refuse rest because we seek to control our own destiny by unrelenting work.
      3. God condemns such rejection of worship and rest by pointing to our disobedience and selfishness.
      4. God continues to deliver us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

II. Formalizing the Sabbath replaces God's deliverance.
   A. The Pharisees, following post-exilic Sabbath abuse, reduced the Sabbath to man-made rules which replaced God's gracious acts of deliverance (Mk 2:24, 27).
   B. Despite Jesus' death and resurrection, we sometimes turn our day of worship into a series of man-made rules (Col 2:16-17). We confess our sin of self-righteousness.

III. Observing the Sabbath celebrates God's deliverance (vv. 12, 15).
   A. Moses describes the joy of remembering God's mighty deliverance from Egypt by observing the Sabbath (see also Is 58:13-14).
   B. Because the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, we joyfully worship regularly and rest in His love (see also Col 3:16).

Conclusion: Confessing our desecrating and formalizing of worship, we receive God's deliverance in Christ and respond with joyful worship.

Stephen J. Carter

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Genesis 3:9-15

June 12, 1988

Part of the fall account in Genesis 3, this Old Testament lesson sets the stage for the gospel (Mk 3:20-35), which counters the charge that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, by asserting that Satan cannot drive out Satan. The lesson describes the ongoing opposition between Satan and the Offspring of the Woman; Jesus Christ, while mortally wounded, crushes the serpent and wins the victory. Indeed, Satan cannot drive out Satan.

Introduction: In today's gospel a battle rages between Jesus and Satan. The Pharisees join Satan by accusing Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub. In order to find our place in this age-old battle, we turn back to the third chapter of Genesis, where our Old Testament lesson describes

JOINING THE BATTLE

I. We join the battle on Satan's side against God.
   A. Adam and Eve joined Satan in rebellion against God.
      1. They ate the forbidden fruit (v. 6).
      2. They tried to cover up and hide from God (vv. 7-8).
      3. They tried to blame each other and Satan (vv. 10-13).
      4. They stood with Satan under God's judgment (vv. 14-19).
   B. We join Satan in rebellion against God.
      1. We bear the sin of Adam and Eve from birth.
      2. We try to cover up and hide from God.
      3. We try to blame each other and Satan. ("The devil made me do it.")
      4. Like the Pharisees in the gospel, we stand with Satan under God's judgment of our sin.

II. God joins the battle on our side against Satan.
   A. God promised a Savior to crush the head of Satan on our behalf.
      1. He curses the serpent, Satan, to crawl on his belly in the dust (v. 14).
      2. He predicts an age-long enmity between humanity and Satan.
      3. He promises victory for God and humanity through a final life-and-death struggle between Satan and the Woman's Offspring, Jesus Christ.
   B. God fulfilled His promise of a Savior for us and continues to join us in the daily battle with Satan.

1. He sent Jesus to crush the serpent's head on Calvary in a victorious battle.
2. He joins our battle with Satan through baptism.
3. He sustains us through Word and Sacrament for the daily battle until we join Him eternally in heaven.

Conclusion (The Lutheran Hymnal, 262, stanza 3):

Tho' devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He's judged, the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

Stephen J. Carter

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ezekiel 17:22-23

June 19, 1988

In the verses prior to the text Ezekiel uses an allegory and its interpretation to speak of Nebuchadnezzar's deportation of King Jehoiachin and others of the royal family to Babylon in 597 B.C. (vv. 3-4, 12), Nebuchadnezzar's installation of Zedekiah (Jehoiachin's uncle) as his vassal (vv. 5-6, 13-14), Zedekiah's sinful rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar in league with Egypt (vv. 7-8, 15), and, therefore, the imminent deportation of Zedekiah and the destruction of his nation by Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 9, 16-21).

The Messianic prophecy, then, which follows takes its form from the preceding allegory. Thus, "the cedar" (v. 22) is the family of David. Its regrowth to lofty proportions, despite its decapitation by Nebuchadnezzar, places the events predicted in the distant future, as well as implying the Messiah's descent from another division of the Davidic family than Jehoiachin's (cf. Jr 22:30; Lk 3:31). The sprout plucked by God is the Messiah. The designation of Him as a shoot or branch, regarding either His Davidic ancestry (Is 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15) or His divine generation (Is 4:2), was so common in the Old Testament church that "Branch" became a Messianic title (Zch 3:8; 6:12). The specific word used here, *yonek*, as well as the description of the shoot as "tender" *(raq)*, indicates, as in Isaiah 53:2, the lowly circumstances of His human origin—that is, His state of humiliation. God's implantation of the shoot evidently signifies His inauguration of the Messiah's kingship (cf. v. 5)—here

His office as King of the church, the kingdom of grace. The mountains mentioned in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament ordinarily refer to the New Testament church (e.g., 20:40; 37:20; 40:2; 43:12; Is 11:9; 65:25). Here the construct clause "mountain of Israel" identifies the mountain as the New Testament Israel (v. 23). The Messiah's state of exaltation, in which He would take up the full and continual exercise of His kingship, is symbolized here by the transformation of the tender shoot into a "splendid cedar" (cf. Is 53). The "birds of every plumage" who "dwell under" the tree and "in the shade of its branches" signify people of every nation in the world who will find peace with God in the kingdom of grace through reliance upon the Messiah. The "fruit" which the tree bears to attract the birds and retain them in its branches is, then, the sustenance provided by the Messiah in His kingdom of grace, His Word and sacraments. (Longer studies of this pericope and the one following are available from the author.)

Introduction: Although few would rank Joyce Kilmer among the greatest poets of the English language, "Trees" contains several of the best known lines of American poetry:

> I think that I shall never see
> A poem lovely as a tree ...
> Poems are made by fools like me,
> But only God can make a tree.

The prophet Ezekiel compares the Messiah to a majestic cedar. The grandeur of this cedar is, indeed, so sublime that we cannot help but marvel:

ONLY GOD COULD MAKE THIS TREE!

I. Its origin.
  A. Its parentage.
    1. Davidic: the Messiah was to be the descendant of David (v. 22).
      a. Through His virgin mother (Is 7:14).
      b. In the distant future (v. 22).
    2. Divine: the Messiah was to be the Son of God.
  B. Its humility.
    1. The fact (v. 22).
    2. The reason:
      a. The sinfulness of man bringing God's wrath upon us.
      b. The love of God issuing in the substitutionary atonement.

II. Its growth.
  A. First among the Jews (vv. 22-23).
    1. Through the preaching of Christ Himself.
    2. Through the preaching of the apostles.
  B. Then among all the peoples of the world (v. 23).

1. Through the preaching of the apostolic word (now enshrined in the New Testament).
   a. The Law, which convicts us of sin.
   b. The Gospel, which relieves us of sin.
2. Through the administration of the sacraments.

III. Its role.
   A. With respect to men: the provision of spiritual rest (v. 23).
      1. A rest which we could find nowhere else.
      2. A rest which we can find in Christ.
   B. With respect to God: the confirmation of His omnipotence.
      1. Who is able to do whatever He wills (v. 24a).
      2. Who told us beforehand what He would do (v. 24b).

Douglas McC.L. Judisch

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Job 38:1-11

June 26, 1988

In 31:35-37 Job has gone so far as to rank his righteousness above God's, calling the Almighty to account! In chapters 38-41 God takes up the gauntlet thrown down by Job. Intervening directly in the discussion of His conduct, God underscores the basic theme of the book—that the sufferings of the godly ultimately redound to their eternal good according to a divine design which we cannot necessarily discern in this life. God's appearance in a storm (38:1; 40:6) confronts the eyes of Job with the same "awesome majesty" as His words do his ears. The first divine discourse (38:1-40:2) demonstrates the omniscience of God and the ignorance of man. For God's omniscience eventuates in His wisdom, the sound use of knowledge (which, in turn, implies justice). Likewise, this omniscience is intertwined here with the eternity and the omnipotence of God; His knowledge of everything comes in part from His creation of everything in the first place and His governance of everything throughout history. Specifically, 38:4-7 connect God's omniscience with the basic creation of the earth on the first day (Gn 1:1); and verses 8-11 relate to the creation of specific bodies of water on the third day (Gn 1:9-10) by elevating specific areas of land above the surface of the primaeval world-ocean (8b-9; Gn 1:2). The "sons of God" (v. 7b) is a figurative title which the Book of Job gives to the angels (1:6; 2:1) by virtue of their comparative similarity, as incorporeal spirits, to the divine essence. Evidently, the parallel phrase, "the morning stars," is likewise a metaphorical designation of the angels—drawn from their celestial glory—since God did not form

the various heavenly bodies until the fourth day (Gen 1:14-19). Genesis 1 says nothing about the creation of the angels, but Exodus 20:11 necessarily implies its occurrence sometime within the hexaemeron, while we infer from Job 38:7 that God created the angels simultaneously with the basic substructure of the universe (Gen 1:1) so as to sing from the beginning the praises of the Creator of all.

All this emphasis upon the omniscience of God throws into relief all the higher the ignorance of man. The answer to the rhetorical question of verse 4 is, of course, "nowhere"; and, in response to verse 1, Job or any other man "darkens counsel" when he speaks such "words" as those quoted in 31:35-37. The basic point is that man speaks "without knowledge" whenever he says things about God which God has not said, a point which Job himself admits in his penitent response to the Lord's double discourse (42:1-6). Man can only know those things of God which He has chosen to reveal. God manifests His omnipotence, His wisdom, and even His goodness in nature (38-41 *passim*); but He reveals His grace only through His inspired spokesmen—the prophets of the Old Testament (33:13-18) and the apostles of the New—and, most fully, in the Messiah (e.g., 19:23-27).

Introduction: One of the popular television programs of the fifties, constantly rerun down to the present, was "Father Knows Best." In a typical episode Bud or Betty or Kathy finds himself or herself in a problematic situation in which the sage advice of their father proves invaluable. By virtue of his experience a father does usually know better than his children themselves what is best for them; but even the wisest human father is sometimes wrong. The text, however, reminds us that God knows no limitations. Those who are the children of God can always say with certitude:

THE FATHER KNOWS BEST

I. Man's ignorance.
   A. We are only creatures (not the Creator) with finite intellects (38-41).
   B. We are also sinners with corrupt intellects (38:2; 40:2, 7-8).
      1. As we come into the world.
      2. Even as Christians, e.g., Job (38:2; 40:2, 7-8).

II. God's knowledge.
   A. Its infinitude (38-41 *passim*; e.g., 38:16-20, 33).
   B. Its connection with
      1. His eternity (especially 38:4-10, 21).
      2. His omnipotence (38-41 *passim*, e.g., 41:10-11).
      3. His wisdom (38-41 *passim*; e.g., 39:26).
   C. Its significance in the Christian life.
      1. His preservation of the world on behalf of His people.
      2. His salvation of the world.
         a. God knew the only possible way to the salvation of men.
         b. God accomplished the salvation of men through the work of Jesus Christ in accord with His eternal plan.

c. God has made known His salvation to all nations.
3. His sanctification of His people.
a. Including the use of suffering.
b. According to His special plan for each individual Christian.

Douglas McC.L. Judisch

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lamentations 3:22-23

July 3, 1988

The boundaries of this pericope have been established along thematic lines; the whole of chapter three forms an alphabetic poem (an acrostic), in which each letter of the Hebrew alphabet stands at the beginning of three verses (a-a-a, b-b-b, etc.). It is an island of hope in the midst of Jeremiah's mourning over the ruins of Jerusalem and the house of God. These verses steadfastly refuse to permit us any mingling of Law and Gospel. The true nature of confession is seen in the troublesome statement (v. 29), "There *may* yet be hope." (See similar statements in Amos 5:15 and Jonah 3:9.) Confession must not be construed as our own prearranged deal with God; rather, we "resign ourselves to hell," being fully aware that forgiveness can be initiated only through a love which resides in God. Lamentations contains few specific requests for deliverance. Nor are there many references to the actual sins of Judah. A mere bemoaning of the current devastation is carefully distinguished from admitting the people's sin, the *cause* of the devastation. Jeremiah simply asks God to see Judah's affliction, and then he waits in hope for the true colors of God's grace to shine through (3:25, 26). One might here review the "alien" and "proper" work of God, so clearly evidenced in 3:31-33.

The grace of God is spoken of in terms that are reminiscent of Exodus 34:6-7, where God revealed His true nature to Moses. In verse 22 the twin terms of God's grace are both in the plural; thus one can rightly speak of God's merciful *acts* and refrain from conceiving of only an inert disposition. God in His faithfulness finds fresh ways of working out His love each and every morning (cf. Jer 33:19-21). Rather than revel in a territorial inheritance (see "portion" in v. 24), the Lord Himself is the only real cause for rejoicing. From our Christocentric point of view Lamentations contains many allusions to Christ; He bore the very punishment man had to face because of his sin. As in the Psalms, the Christian can sense that Christ Himself was speaking in this book about the sufferings He bore for the sin of the world.

THE TRUE COLORS OF GOD

I. The sin of Jerusalem aroused the righteous anger of God.
A. The people's unbelief manifested itself in active rebellion against God.

B. The people's unbelief prohibited them from truly confessing their sin.
   1. They bemoaned the physical results of their sin.
   2. They did not bemoan the very cause of their plight, their sin.

II. The Spirit leads us through the Law to see the true colors of our sin.
   A. As sinners we are in no position to bargain with God.
   B. Resigning one's self to hell is beyond human capability.
   C. With nowhere to turn, we throw ourselves upon God's mercy, our only hope.

III. The true colors of God shine through in His Son Jesus Christ.
   A. Grace resides in the very nature of God.
      1. He quickly moves from His "alien" work to His "proper" work.
      2. The person who waits in hope will never be disappointed.
   B. The true colors of God became incarnate in Jesus Christ.
      1. He bore the physical and mental pain that we deserved.
      2. Through His one sacrifice fresh mercy is ours every single morning.

Conclusion: Man's business is to repent, confessing his sins from "A to Z"; forgiveness is God's business, a miracle of His own gracious choosing.

James Bollhagen

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ezekiel 2:1-5

July 10, 1988

This pericope, which could be extended through verse 7, is part of the call of Ezekiel (chapters 1-3). Ezekiel experienced a second "call" or reconsecration in chapter 33, but to state that his first call was a summons to preach the Law, while his second was a Gospel call, would be an inaccurate oversimplification. The designation "son of man," which is used repeatedly for Ezekiel, should not be loaded with messianic freight; the term simply accentuates Ezekiel's human weakness in vivid contrast to the glory of God he had just seen. But neither should we be too harsh in our psychoanalysis of Ezekiel's personality. We might ask ourselves what we would do if we had an urgent message to deliver from God Himself and at the same time were prohibited from speaking. Christological cues for a sermon can be derived from a comparison of Ezekiel and the Apocalypse. Note the similarities in style, content, and the activity of the Spirit (cf. Eze 3:12 and Re 1:10, 4:2).

As a man already in captivity (1:3) Ezekiel explores the meaning of this and other imminent calamities. The root cause of these is the hard-hearted sins of the people. As in the New Testament, it was not individual transgressions that spelled the people's doom (if that were true, we would all be lost); it was their idolatrous unbelief and lack of repentance. The terms used in these verses for Judah's sins depict open and

deliberate rebellion against God, and the people are urged to accept personal responsibility for their sins. Repentance here does not include merely complaining about environmental factors, such as the circumstances which originally "forced" them into sin or the circumstances of the judgment at hand.

In the theological forefront of this pericope is the "second use of the Law." This doctrine is immediately discernible when one asks of this text: In the midst of judgment why did God even bother to give the people this one last warning about their sins? The answer is found in the Gospel, that God does not desire the death of any man; in His grace He wants him to live (Eze 33:11). Thus, repentance continues to be a crucial aspect of the message spoken by heralds of the New Covenant (Lk 24:47).

THE DETERMINATION OF GOD

I. Sinful man remains stubborn in his rebellion against God.
   A. Each generation repeats the sins of its ancestors (v. 3).
   B. He stubbornly refuses to repent.
      1. He throws the blame for his sin upon his environment. ("I wasn't raised right." "I was born on the wrong side of the tracks.")
      2. His complaints about God's discipline only lead him to harden his heart all the more.
II. God remains stubborn in the enforcing of His will upon man.
   A. Like Ezekiel we refuse to compromise the will of God (3:9).
   B. We deserve not only the temporal but the eternal punishment of God.
   C. We have no one but ourselves to blame.
III. God remains stubborn in the promises of His grace.
   A. God's determined grace has persisted right up to this very hour.
   B. His Son Jesus Christ walked with all gracious determination the way to the cross (Lk 9:51; Is 50:7).
   C. "Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ."

James Bollhagen

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Amos 7:10-15

July 17, 1988

Prophets at the time of Amos were very "professional." They were trained in saying those things that pleased the ears of the people (1 Kgs 22:6-8). Amos was not that kind of prophet. He was a simple man used by God to bring His Word to bear on Israel (Am 1:1). Amos was not concerned about pleasing those to whom

he spoke. He was not in their pay. When Amaziah urged him to return to his native land of Judah and earn a prophet's salary there, Amos replied that he did not work for the money (vv. 14, 15).

Amos prophesied to a people who were very comfortable (Am 6:1-6). They were untroubled by sin and had no desire to repent (Am 4:6b, 8b, 9b, 10b, 11b). In some ways our world today is very much like the world of Amos. We may not like what he has to say, but his call to repent cannot be ignored without tragic consequences (Am 6:4, 6). The central thought of the text is that, although the word of God may sting, it cannot be ignored. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer will respond to God's call to repent.

Introduction: Although we may have an appreciation for comfortable living, we are not the only people who ever have. Life in the eighth century B.C. in Israel was quite comfortable.

A PROPHET WHO COULD NOT BE BOUGHT

I. Amos lived in a comfortable world.
   A. Israel was prospering.
      1. The culture and economy were strong (Am 6:1, 4-6).
      2. Religion was popular (Am 4:4b, 5).
         a. Sacrifices and rituals were observed in detail (Am 5:21-23).
         b. Prophets were professional.
   B. Israel's moral fiber was falling apart.
      1. She cared nothing about those in need (Am 2:6, 7).
      2. She lived for herself (Am 6:6b).
      3. Her prophets did not serve God (vv. 10, 11).

II. The message of Amos was not comfortable.
   A. His message stung the Israelites.
      1. He did not say what other prophets said and the people wanted to hear (vv. 12, 13).
      2. He spoke the Word of God.
         a. This Word condemned (2:6-8).
         b. This Word called to repent (5:4).
   B. His message stings us.
      1. Our world is like that of Amos.
         a. People are little troubled by sin.
         b. People are little concerned for others.
      2. His words are unsettling.
         a. He speaks judgment.

b. He calls to repent.

III. What is the response to this prophet?
  A. Israel rejected him.
    1. Amos was ignored (v. 12).
    2. Judgment came to the nation (2 Kgs 17).
  B. How do we react?
    1. God wants us to repent (Mk 1:4, 15).
    2. God is serious about forgiving sin.
      a. He does not want us to feel guilty and ashamed (Is 1:18).
      b. He sent Jesus to save us from our sin (Mt 1:21).
        (1) Jesus lived the life we are afraid to live because it might cost us our comfort (Jn 13:3-5).
        (2) His death atones for our wrong (1 Pe 2:24).
    3. God is serious about empowering us for the life Amos calls us to live (Am 5:24; Php 1:6).

Conclusion: The truth of God's Word may hurt for a moment, but God is eager to bless where there is repentance and faith.

Lawrence Mitchell
Bloomington, Indiana

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jeremiah 23:1-6

July 24, 1988

Jeremiah is writing in the last days of Judah. As the history of the nation is about to reach its conclusion, the land is in a sorry condition (2 Kgs 24:1-7). Although much of the countryside was in ruins a far worse tragedy was the spiritual ruin of the people. The shepherds (a term used especially of kings but also inclusive of religious leaders) had failed miserably in their task (Jr 22). They were actually responsible for scattering and driving away the sheep of God's fold. Where they should have attended to the needs of the flock, they were unconcerned (v. 2). How the faithful of the Lord must have felt forsaken (Hab 1:1-4)! But through Jeremiah God declares that He is aware of the situation (v. 1). He will hold the false shepherds accountable. He will restore His people. He will provide them with true shepherds. He will provide a righteous Shepherd-King — a righteous Branch — who will make security possible for the people of God (vv. 5-6). The central thought of the text

is that God knows what is happening to His people, and He is committed to blessing them. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer will be comforted by the assurance that God knows our plight and in His Son He shepherds us.

Introduction: When things go well in life, it is easy to feel that God loves and cares for His people. When things do not go well, we are tempted to feel as if God has forgotten His own.

A PEOPLE NOT FORGOTTEN

I. God knows the plight of His own.
   A. The people of Judah must have felt forgotten (Hab 1:1-4).
      1. They were scattered sheep (v. 2).
         a. They were led by shepherds who drove the sheep away.
         b. They were led by shepherds who failed to attend them in their need.
      2. Through Jeremiah God shows that He remembers His own.
         a. He will hold the erring shepherds accountable (v. 2b).
         b. He gives a promise of restoration (v. 3).
   B. Sometimes we may feel forgotten.
      1. It is easy for problems to so overwhelm us that God seems far away.
      2. God does remember us.
         a. He is just as aware of our plight as He was of the plight of the people of Judah (Mt 10:29-31).
         b. He has a good plan for us although it may not always be clear to us (Jr 29:11).

II. He has raised up Jesus to shepherd us (v. 5a).
   A. He remembers how frail we are.
      1. Jesus does not deceive or provide false counsel like the shepherds of Judah (v. 5b; Jn 6:68).
      2. Jesus is not unwilling to care for us in our need (Mt 11:28; Jn 10:11-15).
   B. He is the Good Shepherd.
      1. He gave His life for us (Jn 10:11).
      2. He declares us precious and remembered (v. 6; Jn 10:27, 28).

III. He provides shepherds today (v. 4).
   A. They are gifts from God (Eph 4:11).
   B. They are not perfect.
   C. They caringly apply the Gospel to the sheep of God (1 Pe 5:2, 3).

Conclusion: Friends and acquaintances may forget us over the years. They may be unaware of our problems and unconcerned about our needs. But our God knows and cares in His Son Jesus Christ.

Lawrence Mitchell
Bloomington, Indiana

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exodus 24:3-11

July 31, 1988

Introduction: At Mount Sinai the Lord gave Moses the Law in written form. The children of Israel signified their willingness to obey. The God of Sinai is the God that continues to call to each of us today. While we must recognize our failures, may we also stand with our forefathers in the faith and pledge:

"WE WILL OBEY"

I. God reveals His will.
   A. The Law of God is part of the Lord's revelation.
      1. The Law describes God's just expectations of us.
      2. The Law serves as a guide for us who desire to walk in the Lord's way.
   B. The Law of God is given for our good.
      1. The Law is an aid to us in leading our earthly life.
      2. The Law allows us to distinguish better between that which is contrary to God's will and that which is in keeping with His will and purpose.

II. The fellowship of believers is an aid to our obedience.
   A. We have a "cloud of witnesses" (He 12) who have demonstrated for us the value of keeping of God's Law.
      1. The altar erected by Moses was built on twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel.
      2. We today build on the heritage that is ours in the Word delivered to us by the apostles and prophets.
      3. Our unity as believers within our congregations is an encouragement as we strive to keep the Law.

B. The God who spoke to Moses is the same God who continues to speak to us today in Holy Scripture.

III. We "obey" through the power of the God who has revealed Himself to us.
A. The "blood of the covenant" is the seal of our relationship with God.
1. By the blood of the New Covenant, the blood of Christ, we are called into a relationship with Him today.
2. By the blood-bought union of each person and God we are empowered to shun the world and live for God.
3. By the blood of the cross, the symbol of our covenant with God through Jesus Christ, we are assured that our life is not in jeopardy because of our failure to obey as we should.
B. The "blood of the covenant" is our call to obedience.
1. We obey not because of our fear that God will destroy us if we fail.
2. We obey because of our "blood" relationship with our God.

Conclusion: The children of Israel responded well. May we likewise, in response to the promises our Lord has made to us and sealed in His Son our Saviour, say, "We will obey."

William G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exodus 16:2-15

August 7, 1988

The children of Israel lived in Egypt for 430 years. Their arrival in the country of the Pharoah was pleasant. Joseph was an important leader, the right-hand man of the Egyptian ruler. However, the biblical account tells us that in time a new king came to power "who did not know about Joseph" (Ex 1:8). He was afraid of the Israelites. Therefore, he worked the people "ruthlessly," they were "oppressed," "their lives were made bitter."

Introduction: Such was the plight of the children of Israel until God freed them from their imprisonment in Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses, by the miracles of God, by virtue of the mercy of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the children of Israel were set free. The words that compose the Old Testament lesson today offer an account of these newly freed people only thirty days following their

miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. Plainly and simply the writer says:

"IN THE DESERT THE WHOLE COMMUNITY GRUMBLED"

I. Grumbling often comes when our memories are too short.
   A. The children of Israel had very short memories.
      1. Too quickly they forgot how oppressed they had been.
      2. Too easily they forgot the miracles God had worked on their behalf.
   B. We, like the children of Israel, too often have short memories.
      1. We forget what conditions we have made for ourselves and what punishment we deserve because of our sin.
      2. We too frequently in the face of trial fail to recall all that our Lord in His grace has done for us and all that is promised to us through His Son.
      3. Grumbling robs us of the joy of appreciating what we have received and anticipating what is in store for us.

II. The grumbler too often overlooks the blessing of the moment.
   A. The children of Israel had grumbled so much that many of them doubted the gift that was given them in the manna.
      1. They doubted the worth of their freedom.
      2. They could not understand what the manna was.
      3. They did not believe that enough manna would be provided each day.
   B. We resemble our Israelite forefathers in many ways. When we grumble so much, we rob ourselves of the ability to recognize blessings as blessings.
      1. One who grumbles is usually suspicious of the gifts that are received and therefore often robbed of the joy of receiving.
      2. Those who grumble too frequently are so absorbed in self-pity that they fail to see the potential that exists even in their troubles. (The children of Israel were in the wilderness in preparation for entering the promised land.)
      3. Those who grumble too regularly seldom find comfort or security, for they normally assume things can only get worse.

III. The God of our deliverance gives us every reason to rejoice and stop grumbling.
   A. In spite of their grumbling, God in His mercy provided for the needs of the children of Israel. If they had trusted in the Lord, they would have saved themselves a lot of grief.
   B. The same God still speaks in His mercy to our need. We have the added advantage of the seal of His promise given in Jesus Christ. "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" (Ro 8:32).

Conclusion: Grumbling—what is its purpose? May we grow in faith to grumble less and trust more.

William G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

1 Kings 19:4-8

August 14, 1988

This text begins rather abruptly with the statement that Elijah came to a broom tree, sat down under it, and said that he wanted to die. When the time comes to read the text, it would be very helpful to read 19:1-8 and to recap the career of Elijah for the hearers' better understanding of just what Elijah was facing. After Elijah had killed the prophets of Baal, Jezebel sent word to him that she would kill him. Elijah's reaction was to flee to the desert and call on God to let him die. Even in light of his experience with the prophets of Baal, the end of the drought, and his running ahead of Ahab to Jezreel, the reality of his own limitations was all to apparent to Elijah. He would not be able to set things totally right in Israel. Jezebel is too strong for him. Sin still abounds and the righteous will continue to suffer.

The resolution of this problem is not ultimately that of the angelic ministrations recorded in the text. The solution to Elijah's despair at the apparent result of his work was to be told that the Lord works, that he was not the only one left, and that he would be provided a colleague to carry on the prophetic work. The malady addressed in this text is that of discouragement and loss of zeal in the Lord's work, something caused by our dependence on ourselves rather than God. The goal is that the hearer will take advantage of the provisions God makes for carrying out His will and living as His children. The means is that God has provided for our ultimate needs in the Bread of Life—Jesus Christ (cf. the gospel of the day).

Introduction: What do you do when you finally have to face your own powerlessness? Many of us each day find out that we cannot change the world, and that we have done no more—if even as much as—our ancestors in righting the wrongs of society. When we are tired of trying, when we get discouraged, when we lose heart and our zeal flags, we can thank God that

WHEN MAN'S STRENGTH FALTERS,
GOD'S SUFFICIENCY FLOURISHES

I. Our strength and zeal do at times grow weak.

A. Big dreams are dashed against the hard rocks of reality.
   1. Such events are common experience (farm foreclosures, bankruptcies, divorces, business failures, forgotten diets and the like might be shared).
   2. Elijah's experience was the same (read the text and recap the events of Elijah's ministry).

B. When such things happen, we are often truly discouraged, even despairing.
   1. We think that perhaps we are the only ones who really care.
   2. We are ready to give up and try no more—no matter the cause or the value of the goal for which we strive (even in the church in evangelism, education, and stewardship endeavors).
   3. Elijah knew this feeling as well. He was ready to die. He recognized that he had accomplished no more than his ancestors. He was ready to give up everything. "Let me die," he said.

C. The real problem we are facing in these times is that of our own insufficiency and perhaps even sinful self-dependence.
   1. We will each have to come to grips with his own insufficiency and impotence sooner or later. Even if we never pray to die, we will each one day face death for himself.
   2. We cannot save the world. We cannot even save ourselves.
   3. Elijah faced his own limitations in this same way. And in the same way that he received help and hope from God, we too can be thankful that, "When man's strength falters, God's sufficiency flourishes!"

II. God provides strength and encouragement to finish our course with Him.

A. He provides for our needs in this world.
   1. Every good and perfect gift comes from God (Jas 1:17). Luther's Small Catechism in its explanation of the First Article is an excellent summary of God's daily provision for all our needs.
   2. Sometimes He works in wondrous and miraculous ways, at other times is more common ways. The disaster relief work of Lutheran World Relief is but one example of God at work—this time through people. The angel's miraculous provision for Elijah is another example. But God did not stop there; He soon provided a co-worker for Elijah. God provides whatever we need on earth to do His will.

B. He provides for our eternal needs as well.
   1. He provides life, hope, and eternal power that go beyond the length of our days on earth. Our days may end, but God's mercy, grace, love, forgiveness, and life will never end.
   2. He has saved the world through Jesus Christ. What neither Elijah, nor Paul, nor Luther nor anyone else could do, He has done in Jesus. Our sins are forgiven, justice has been established, evil has been conquered, death and the grave are no longer victorious—all because *God* has acted in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Our strength, zeal, and hope may, indeed, grow dim. But we can take courage; "When man's strength falters, God's sufficiency flourishes!" Amen.

David L. Bahn
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Proverbs 9:1-6

August 21, 1988

In Proverbs 8 and 9 both "Wisdom" and "Folly" extend invitations to the simple. Both call out and encourage passers-by to come near, follow their ways, and reap their benefits. Folly mocks wisdom (9:13-17), but the end of wisdom is life. The end of folly is in "the depths of the grave" (9:18). If Christ is God's wisdom from on high—higher than the heights of the city (even His folly is wiser than man's wisdom)—then this text is rightly understood as referring to Jesus and His call to discipleship together with the promises of the Gospel (the essence of that call).

Without Christ we are lacking spiritual vitality and judgment; we are "simple" (note the parallelism in verses 4 and 5). The promise of life is found only in Christ. By the Spirit's work in our hearts, we are enabled to turn to Him and live. Such is the invitation. How will we respond? The malady addressed in this text is that, unless we are guided by Christ (God's wisdom), we will surely follow folly and die. The goal of this sermon is that the hearer will respond to God's call to repentance and receive the life He offers. The means to this goal is the spiritual food and drink we have in the Gospel and sacraments.

Introduction: We have all probably received a great number of invitations in the mail that we have tossed aside without a second thought. Whether it be the premier showing of a collection of jewelry or the grand-opening of the newest grocery store in town, we can easily ignore such "wonderful, one-time only" offers. God, too, is constantly inviting us to enjoy life and the riches of His gifts through Jesus Christ. His, however, is

AN INVITATION WE MUST NOT IGNORE

I. The invitations are being sent to you.
   A. God wants us to know His love and receive His blessings.
      1. He announced His love by sending His Son to the world.
      2. He tells us today that through Jesus we are invited to a great feast of love and life at His house (v. 1).

B. He sends invitations to everyone.
   1. He sends missionaries, pastors, Sunday school teachers, speakers on radio and television, Christian parents and friends to tell us that we are invited to come to Him.
   2. Whoever we are, this invitation is for us. No one is beyond the saving reach of the Gospel. There is hope and a place for you too.
   3. Wherever we go, we can share the invitation, too. Whose life can you touch? Whom can you invite? Anyone!

II. How will you respond?
   A. Turn away from the simple way of self-service and live.
      1. Self-service kills. We, too easily, care only for ourselves and will thus "lose life" (Mt 16:25, 26). We cannot save ourselves.
      2. God saves us by Christ's death and resurrection. He forgives. He gives life (v. 6). The invitation is going out today through Word and Sacrament (9:5). It is for you. Respond in repentance and faith. A great blessing awaits you in Christ.
   B. Recognize the beauty of God's "house."
      1. Heaven is a glorious place, "many mansions."
      2. Really, anything else that would compare itself to God's heaven only mocks and proves to be a cheap imitation of His true glory.

Conclusion: Recently I was introduced to the fantastic sound available to audio enthusiasts in compact discs. These small circles of plastic and aluminum are read by lasers and produce an incredibly clean, clear sound. I was amazed. When I commented on the clarity of these audio wonders, the reply of the technician was simple. "Everytime I hear one of these," he said, "I remember that they are just a substitute for the real thing." What God invites us to enjoy through Jesus Christ is the real thing. This *is* an invitation we must not ignore!

David L. Bahn
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

August 28, 1988

In preaching on this text two points must be emphasized—first, no "choice" can be made for God unless God Himself gives such faith, as Jesus reminds us in the appointed gospel, "No one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled him"; secondly, the Father calls us to such uncompromising faith through the means of

grace, as Luther has taught our church so clearly for over four hundred years: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel..." The apostle reminds us of this fact in the appointed epistle, where he points us to our baptism as the means through which Christ made us His people, making us holy "by the washing with water through the word" (Eph 6). The first word in verse 14, "and now" *(weatah)*, shows that while 3-13 are not included in this pericope, they certainly are an integral part of our text and provide the background for Joshua's call to faith; for in these verses Joshua proclaims the "good news" to Israel of God's saving acts which made her His people.

The phrase, "fear the Lord" (v. 14), is not a call to be afraid of the Lord or to tremble before Him (as the English translation "fear" probably suggests to most people today) but is a call to faith and trust, similar (but with far greater depth of meaning) to the New Testament's invitation, "Believe in the Lord Jesus." New Testament faith was expressed in the Old Testament with the phrase, "fear Yahweh"; see, for example, Deuteronomy 6:13 (and parallel references) where, having heard of her Lord's grace (5:10-12), Israel is invited to "fear the Lord..." Note that the "fear of the Lord" is called the "beginning of wisdom" throughout the wisdom corpus. "Fear of Yahweh," like "faith in Jesus," is the beginning of one's relationship with God.

In verse 17 the people rightly confess that Yahweh is "*our* God"*(elohenu)*, not because they have "served Him" or chosen Him but because of His grace alone; "He is the one bringing us up" (a hiphil participle). Note the word "us" (*otanu*); the Egyptian deliverance was not merely history but a story with personal involvement. The rabbis later taught the people, "In every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt..." (Mishnah, Pesahim, 10:5).

Introduction: We make many decisions in life every day. Some matter little, others can spell the difference between success and failure, even life and death. But no decision we can ever make matters more than one Joshua asked Israel to make several thousand years ago at Shechem: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." May the Holy Spirit move us always to respond with ancient Israel:

WE WILL SERVE THE LORD

I. We will serve Him by throwing away all the false gods around us.
   A. Many false gods constantly try to draw us away from our Lord (see v. 16).
      1. Israel was tempted by many gods, the gods of their forefathers (see 24:2) and the gods of the peoples whose land God was giving them (v. 15).
      2. The people in Jesus' day were tempted to fall away from the Lord Jesus and follow the "gods" of their own imaginations (Jn 6:66).
      3. There are many false gods tempting us today, trying to pull us away from our Lord and His life-giving Word.
   B. These false gods can never help us nor give us salvation.

1. Isaiah the prophet ridiculed the impotent false gods of his day (Is 44:6-20).
2. Peter realized that only Jesus could give eternal life: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (Jn 6:68).
3. All the money, all the education, all the political and military power in the world can never give us peace of mind before God nor help us through death into eternal life. Joshua encouraged Israel (and God is encouraging us likewise today), "Throw away these impotent, false gods and fear the Lord and serve him alone."

II. We will serve Him by placing our confidence in the Lord alone.
   A. He is the one who saved us and has made us what we are.
      1. It was God who had made Israel a nation with hopes and dreams (see vv. 3-13).
      2. This same Lord in the person of His Son Jesus Christ has given us an eternal hope by conquering our spiritual enemies and opening for us the way into eternal life (Eph 5:25).
      3. He made our Lord's victory ours individually when we were baptized (Eph 5:26), so that we can say, "I died with Christ and rose with Him."
   B. Trusting in Him we will never be disappointed or ashamed.
      1. Joshua pointed the people to their Lord's great power (vv. 17-28).
      2. The mighty Lord who fought for Israel and fulfilled His promises to them by giving them the land He had promised (v. 28) is the same Lord who will give us our inheritance as He has promised: "I go to prepare a place for you"; "Because I live, you too will live!"
      3. We have assurance of our heavenly victory in the Holy Supper our Lord has given us.

Conclusion: Considering the mighty salvation accomplished by our Lord, can there really be any "choice" but to respond with ancient Israel, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!" For, as Peter centuries later exclaimed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!"

Steven C. Briel
Osseo, Minnesota

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

September 4, 1988

This text might seem at first glance to teach that one can earn "life" by obedience to God's laws and commands (see especially v. 1, "follow them so that you may live..."). This is certainly the way in which many Jews understood it later. However, such an understanding ignores the entire context. In the previous three chapters Moses

has just rehearsed for the Israelites the work which their Lord had done for them, work which was done by God's grace alone. Furthermore, one must not overlook the significance of the pronominal suffixes attached to God's name (v. 2, "*your* God"; v. 7, "*our* God"), which clearly show that Yahweh was the God of the Israelites before they had even begun to live out the requirements of His Sinaitic covenant with them. Indeed, the participle in verse 1 in the phrase, "...which I am teaching you," clearly indicates this fact too, for even though Moses has not yet finished teaching the Israelites God's commands, God calls Himself "their God" and "your God."

While in verse 1 God addresses Israel initially as a boy (*Shema*, in the singular), He then shifts to the second person *plural*, reminding Israel that each individual person is responsible for his obedience. The phraseology in verse 2, "Do not add ...do not subtract," represents *lo* with the imperfect in the Hebrew, indicating permanent or objective prohibition. God will not have His Word twisted to fit human opinion (cf. Re 22:18-19).

Unfortunately the New International Version translates the Hebrew *torah* (v. 8) as "body of laws." Such a translation continues to perpetuate the mistaken popular idea that the Old Testament is Law while the New Testament is Gospel. Each occurrence of Torah should properly be translated as best fits the context, here perhaps as "Word."

Introduction: A wasted life is such a tragedy. God especially does not want any Christian to waste his life; God has saved us for a purpose as St. Paul writes, "Christ died for all that they which live should not live for themselves any longer but for Him who died for them and rose again." God wants to know from each of us today the answer to this question:

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR LIFE?

I. In His loving grace God has made you His child so that, living according to His Word, you can enjoy the blessings of that Word.
   A. We certainly cannot earn the status of being God's people by obeying His Law. We are God's people because He freely chose us and made us His people apart from anything we have done.
      1. The Israelites were God's people, not because they obeyed His Law, but because He had freely chosen them and brought them out of Egypt (see Dt 1-3); God was *their* God before and without their works.
      2. In our baptism God called us into His family, the church, by grace alone (see Tt 3:5).
      3. We live according to His Word, not in order to become God's children, but because we already are, by grace alone, His redeemed children.
   B. God desires that, as His people, we live according to His revealed Word and not according to our own desires.
      1. God very carefully commanded Israel to follow His laws and observe them carefully, neither adding nor subtracting from them (v. 2).

2. Our risen Lord desires the same from us today (see Jn 14:23 and similar texts).
3. He warns in the gospel today that a life lived apart from God's Word cannot please Him (Mk 7:6-8).

C. By His grace He has promised us rich blessings through His Word.
1. Through His Word God promised the people a full and happy life and possession of the land promised to Abraham and their fathers (v. 1).
2. Through His Word God today wants to bless us with many gifts of His love.

II. But God wants us to live according to His Word, not just to enjoy His blessings, but also to attract others to Him.

A. God's Word is the "magnet" which God uses to attract people to Himself.
1. Through Moses God told Israel how the nations would be attracted to the Lord when they saw and heard about His "righteous decrees and laws" (v. 8).
2. Today, too, people are attracted to God through us as they notice how His Word comforts in distress and guides us in living contented and happy lives.

B. We should pray that the Holy Spirit may keep us faithful to our Lord's Word.
1. Jesus warns us today how easily we can fall from God's Word and live lives according to our own sinful passions (see Mk 7: 20-23).
2. Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him that he might declare God's Word "fearlessly, as I should" (Eph 6:20).
3. In these days when many compromise God's Word, we should pray that the Holy Spirit may keep us and our church faithful to God's Word so that we also may continue to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jd 3; v. 2 in Hebrew, "guard the commandments").
4. But we should also pray that the Spirit may help us to live lives which reflect His Word (v. 6 literally, "you shall guard and you shall *do*...").

Conclusion: Living a life according to God's Word will never be a wasted life. For not only will God bless us individually in countless ways, but He will use us to draw more precious people to Himself for life and salvation. We pray with Luther, "Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word!"

Steven C. Briel
Osseo, Minnesota

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah 35:4-7a

September 11, 1988

In the gospel of the day Jesus is confessed as He who "does all things well, making the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." In this way Jesus is identified with the God of whom Isaiah speaks, as the one who would come and save, whose coming would be signaled by the blind being made to see, the deaf made to hear, the lame made to leap, and the tongue of the dumb made to shout. Isaiah speaks words of promise for the future in the face of God's visitation of judgment upon a world typified by Edom (chapter 34) and upon Jerusalem for her apostasy. As the people of God are affected by this punishment—lest they become weak in faith, lose hope, and despair—Yahweh calls upon them to cheer up, for He is coming and will save them. The infliction of punishment is the immediate object of His coming, but the ultimate object is the salvation of His people.

Isaiah points forward to the day of salvation with signs signaling God's time of deliverance. These healing signs are to be taken literally. Accomplished by Christ in fulfilment of prophecy, they authenticate Jesus' messianic claim—a claim further validated by His suffering, death, and resurrection, through which Yahweh saves and thus is the source of comfort and hope.

GOD WILL COME

I. The immediate object of His coming is to inflict punishment.
   A. He comes with divine retribution (v. 4).
      1. Upon Edom as typical of the pagan neighbors of Jerusalem.
      2. Upon Jerusalem for her apostasy.
   B. God's people are affected by God's infliction of punishment.
      1. The innocent often suffer with the guilty.
      2. The people of God are tempted to become weak in faith, lose hope, and despair (v. 4).
      3. God calls upon His people to "take courage" and to "fear not" (v. 4).

II. The ultimate object of His coming is the salvation of His people.
   A. He comforts the afflicted church.
      1. Not only in the just punishment of the wicked.
      2. But also in the word of comfort God speaks: "But He will save you" (v. 4).
   B. He promises salvation.
      1. Yahweh gives signs of the day of salvation (vv. 5-7).
      2. Yahweh points directly to the time of the Messiah.
   C. He fulfills His promises.
      1. Climaxing in the death and resurrection of the promised Messiah, Jesus.

2. Proclaimed in the Word of God, which produces spiritual abundance (v. 7).

Norbert H. Mueller

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah 50:4-10

September 18, 1988

The Introit sounds the dominant note of the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost: "The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion." The Servant of the Lord, whom Isaiah introduces in the text and whom Peter identifies as Jesus the Christ in the gospel of the day, follows the instructions of Yahweh (vv. 4,5); in willing obedience fulfils Yahweh's saving purpose for mankind (vv. 6-9); speaks the sure word to "sustain the weary" (v. 5); offers deliverance from tribulation ("darkness") to those who "trust in the name of the Lord" and "rely on His God" (v. 10). The way of the Servant's calling leads through a shameful condition of humiliation (v. 5). As Delitzsch indicates, what was predicted typically and prophetically finds in the Servant, i.e., Jesus Christ (cf. Mt. 27:67; 27:30; Jn 18:22), its perfect fulfilment. In the light of these facts we flee for refuge to the "strongest tower, the name of the Lord [cf.Pr 18:10], and there every righteous man will be made to rejoice, and even the dead will be made alive" (Luther).

THE SERVANT IN WHOSE NAME WE TRUST AND UPON WHOSE GOD WE RELY

I. The Servant is instructed by Yahweh.
   A. He listens to Yahweh (vv. 4, 5).
   B. He is obedient to Yahweh (v. 5).
II. The Servant suffers.
   A. He sets His face like flint (v. 7).
      1. Willingly endures suffering (v. 6) (cf. Ph 2:6-8; He 12:2).
      2. Willingly suffers rebuke and contempt (v. 6).
   B. He is innocent and sinless (v. 8).
   C. His accusers shall wear out and fail (v. 9).
   D. He is vindicated by Yahweh (vv. 8, 9) (cf. Php 2:9-11).
III. The Servant comforts and strengthens the weary and those in "darkness", i.e., in tribulation.
   A. His "tongue ... sustains the weary one with a word" (v. 4).
   B. He summons all to "trust in the name of the Lord," to "rely on His God" (v. 10).

1. "Darkness, clouds, trials, invitations on the part of demons and of men will come our way" (Luther).
2. We cannot defend ourselves with human resources.
3. We flee for refuge to the Servant, Jesus Christ.
   a. In whose name we trust.
   b. Upon whose God we rely.
4. We pray: "O Lord, let Thy mercy be upon us, as our trust is in Thee. O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded."

Norbert H. Mueller

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jeremiah 11:18-20

September 25, 1988

The gospel reiterates last week's lesson with Mark's second passion prediction, but it adds another twist—the greatest in the kingdom of heaven must be last and a servant of all. The Old Testament lesson from Jeremiah 11 perfectly complements Mark 9, since a type of the suffering of Jesus can be seen in the life of the persecuted prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 11:18-20 occurs in the midst of plots against the prophet's life, plots that are even instigated by his family and friends. The focus of the lesson is verse 19, clearly reminiscent of Isaiah 53 where the silent suffering of the Servant is emphasized. Jeremiah is a persecuted prophet because of the message he brings to Israel, a fact that may be indicated by the statement of his enemies that they must "destroy the tree with its fruit...that his name be remembered no more" (Jr 11:19). A sermon on Jeremiah 11 could focus on the prophet's persecution, tying it to the gospel by seeing Jeremiah as a type of the Messiah. The message and the person of the one suffering for the kingdom could be observed in the lives of Jeremiah, Jesus and all those who bear the mark of the crucified and risen one.

THE PERSECUTED PROPHET

I. Tells the truth about the covenant with Yahweh (Jr 11:1-8).
   A. The covenant made at Sinai.
   B. The covenant to restore people to the land.
      1. By passing through the Red Sea.
      2. By receiving manna in the wilderness.
      3. By the trek through the wilderness.
      4. By the crossing of the Jordan into the promised land.
   C. The new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34.
      1. "I will be your God, and you shall be my people" (cf. Jr 11:4).
      2. "I will forgive your iniquity, and I will remember your sin no more."

II. Tells the truth about the sins of the people (Jr 11:9-10, 18-20).
  A. The breaking of the covenant by Judah (v. 10).
    1. By returning to the iniquities of the fathers (v. 10).
    2. By refusing to hear the words of the Lord (v. 9).
    3. By serving other gods (v. 9).
  B. The plots on the life of the prophet (Jr 11:18-12:6).
    1. The Lord reveals the evil deeds of the people to Jeremiah (v. 18).
    2. The people desire the death of God's prophet (v. 19).
    3. The prophet remains faithful in the midst of persecution (v. 20).

III. Tells the truth about the repentance of the people (Jr 11:11-13, 21-23).
  A. They do not cry out to the Lord but to false gods (vv. 11-13).
  B. The judgment of the Lord is upon them (vv. 14-17) for persecuting the Lord's prophet (vv. 21-23).

IV. Tells the truth about the suffering of the Lord's Anointed One.
  A. Jeremiah knows that the new covenant is one of righteousness.
    1. The Lord will raise up for David a righteous Branch (Jr 23:5).
    2. The Lord will execute justice and righteousness in the land (Jr 11:20; 23:5).
      a. By the suffering and death of God's Anointed One (Is 53).
      b. By the vindication of God's plan through the resurrection (cf. Mk 9:31).
  B. Jeremiah-Jesus is like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter (Jr 11:19).
    1. To bear the name of the Messiah is to suffer like Him (cf. Mk 9:35: "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all").
    2. To suffer like Him is to confess Him as the righteous judge.
    3. To confess Him as the righteous judge is to trust Him.
    4. To trust Him is to receive the forgiveness of sins.

Arthur Just, Jr.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29

October 2, 1988

Although Israel spends forty years in the wilderness, Numbers handles them in eleven chapters (Nu 10:11-21:9). In those eleven chapters Israel conceives one rebellion after another, culminating in Moses' rebellion at Meribah (20:7-13) that keeps him from entering the promised land. Thus, the wilderness becomes paradigmatic of Israel's spiritual condition (and ours), for the more Yahweh provides for them, the more they grumble. This phenomenon may seem incredible to us since the ark was always with them, until we ponder our own situation today. Since Numbers 11 includes three examples of grumbling, the sermon may want to focus on the

relationship between God's gracious presence in the wilderness and the people's unbelieving response. We are still a people who depend on God's grace to guide us on our pilgrimage in the wilderness.

With this approach, one must be careful that the sermon does not turn into a moralizing lecture on our ungratefulness in the face of God's graciousness. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-14 gives us an example of how to handle the comparison between the Old and New Israel: "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come...God is *faithful*, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." Instead of dwelling on the grumblings of Israel, the sermon will want to concentrate on God's faithfulness to the world in providing the way of escape in His Son Jesus Christ, even in the face of all our grumblings. This idea continues the theme of the last two weeks, although today the focus is on the response of God's people when the theology of the cross enters their lives. Do our sufferings draw us closer to God or cause us to reject Him? Israel's example calls us to remember that it is only by God's grace that we remain His children. Many have observed the close relationship between the gospel from Mark 9 and Numbers 11. The Spirit's presence in the midst of the people is another example of God's faithfulness.

GRUMBLINGS IN THE WILDERNESS

I. The grumblings of the Israelites over the lack of meat (vv. 4-6).
   A. Despite God's deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.
      1. A deliverance that is *the* redemptive act of God.
      2. A deliverance that is remembered every year in the Passover.
   B. Despite God's faithfulness in providing for Israel in the wilderness.
      1. They "all ate the same supernatural food" (1 Cor 10:4).
      2. They "all drank the same supernatural drink" (1 Cor 10:4).
      3. "For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them" (1 Cor 10:4).
      4. "And the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4).

II. The grumblings of Moses who cannot deal with the complaining Israelites (vv. 10-16).
   A. Despite God's faithfulness in providing him with the means to lead the Israelites.
      1. God promises to be with Moses (Ex 3:12).
      2. God reveals His name to Moses (Ex 3:13-15).
      3. God gives Moses signs to show His faithfulness (Ex 4:1-9).
      4. God gives Moses a spokesman (Ex 4:10-17).
   B. Despite God's constant presence in the midst of the Israelites.
      1. God is present in the burning bush (Ex 3).
      2. God is present on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19).

3. God is present in a vision and a meal (Ex 24).
4. God is present in the tabernacle (Ex 25).
5. God is present in the cloud (Nu 9:15-23; Ex 13 and 14).

III. The grumblings of Joshua over the prophecy of Eldad and Medad (vv. 24-29).
A. Despite the presence of God's Spirit with Moses (Nu 11:24).
1. The Lord comes down in the cloud and speaks to Moses (v. 25).
2. The Lord shared the Spirit upon Moses with the seventy elders (v. 26).
B. Despite the Spirit-inspired nature of the prophecy (v. 26; cf. Mk 9).
1. Moses said: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (v. 29).
2. Joel prophesied the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh.
3. At Pentecost the church was empowered by the Spirit.
a. A church now empowered to preach Christ crucified, Christ risen from the dead (Lk 24:46).
b. A church now empowered to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name to all nations (Lk 24:48).
c. A church that is continually in the temple praising God (Lk 24:52).

Arthur Just, Jr.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Genesis 2:18-24

October 9, 1988

Genesis 2:4-25 is essentially topical. It tells us how the Lord God lavished His love upon His foremost creature, man. This fact is especially evident in this text, the last eight verses of chapter 2, which treats of the creation of woman and of the institution of marriage. It is introduced by God's own assertion, "It is not good for the man to be alone." These verses are extremely important to all order in human life. At creation God established two classes of humankind and assigned distinctive roles to man and to woman for this earthly life. The view that the first man was bisexual until God divided him into male and female finds support neither in Genesis 2 nor in the seven times these verses are cited in the New Testament (1 Cor 11:8-9; 1 Tm 2:13; Mt 19:5; Mk 10:6; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31). It should be noted too that the creation took place just as reported in the first two chapters of Genesis. God acted just as the account says. What He said about Adam and Eve and their union in marriage is definitive for people of all succeeding times. His words here have a direct bearing on us yet today.

Something which is quite difficult for us to understand and explain today is the teaching of the "orders of creation." These orders involve God's design for man and woman in the world. Moved by His deep love, God arranged for man to live as a social being, with the woman as "a helper" for man, yet "one like man" in

that she corresponded to man physically, mentally and spiritually. This institution of the union between man and woman is the foundation for all other orders of society—family, state, government, church and every other social structure.

In addition, there is a moral structure initiated here. There is a role of subordination of man to God and of woman to man. This subordination, however, is not an oppressive subordination, but a "unity-subordination." The latter occurs in a relationship that is "carried on for the sake of a unity or a higher cause" (S.B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* [Servant Books, Ann Arbor, 1980], p. 41). This is the order to which Paul refers in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 when he states that woman is "not to exercise authority over a man" because "God formed Adam first, then Eve" (cf. 1 Cor 11:3-16; 14:33b-36). The Augsburg Confession (Articles 27 and 28) teaches that marriage is a function of the state and that it is a lawful and God-pleasing contract for all who "are not fitted for single life." It should also be noted that the "orders of creation" are being discussed not merely by conservative Christians, but also on rarified intellectual levels by secular scholars. An example is *Cosmogony and Ethical Order: New Studies in Comparative Ethics*, edited by Robin Lovin and Frank Reynolds (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1985). The contributors to this volume see a moral structure implanted in people of all times and in every civilization thus far studied. These "orders" belong to the natural law; they ought to be developed in detail on the basis of God's special revelation in Scripture.

Introduction: So few today model their marriage on God's precepts. So many who are married want to escape this relationship because they find no happiness in it. In reality, however, all Christians—those already married, those contemplating marriage and those who have the gift not to marry—should thank God for the gift of marriage by saying:

I LOVE MARRIAGE

I. Because through marriage God establishes order.
   A. It fills the needs of man.
      1. The psychological need: companionship ("not good for man to be alone," Gn 2:18).
      2. The physical need: procreation ("be fruitful and multiply" Gn 1:28).
      3. The moral need: decency ("better to marry than to burn" 1 Cor 7:9).
   B. It involves sexual distinctions.
      1. God created the female as a separate class and counterpart to the male.
      2. God established the roles of male and female (cf. 1 Tm 2; 1 Cor 11; 14).
   C. It is the foundation of human society.
      1. The family is the basic unit of society.
      2. The community, the state and every other social structure rest, in turn, on the family.

II. Because through marriage God provides for the happiness and holiness of mankind.

A. The family is connected with happiness.
   1. In the Christian family love is planted, nurtured and expressed.
   2. In the Christian family happiness predominates.

B. The family is connected with holiness.
   1. God blesses all the families of the earth through the Seed of the Woman (Gn 12:1-3; cf. Ps 68:5; Jr 31:1; Eph 3:15).
   2. Paul uses the marriage relationship to picture the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:22-33).

Conclusion: The church must keep its respect for marriage high. Every other unit of society rests on the foundation of marriage. Many regard it as obsolete, but marriage is like the blacksmith's anvil: The more people hammer against it, the better and truer and tougher it becomes.

Waldemar Degner

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

October 16, 1988

Amos, the shepherd-turned-prophet from Tekoa (ten miles south of Jerusalem), bids Israel heed the verdict of the Judge of the nations. From the south (Judah), Amos approaches the ruler of the Northern Kingdom in Bethel, the prosperous King Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.). Yet little more than thirty years after Jeroboam's death, his capital fell to the Assyrians and the Israelites were carried away into captivity (9:8-10). Jonah and Hosea were contemporaries of Amos. Amos reeks of judgment. The sins for which Israel is judged (2:6-8) are primarily the social sins: oppression of the poor, uncontrolled lust, adultery, covenant breaking, ingratitude and idolatry. In the end all of these sins are due to Israel's rejection of the Lord God and His Word. Anybody who in disbelief rejects God's Word also hardens his heart against the grace of God (1 Pe 2:8). Worse, when people reject the Word of Grace, God withdraws the Word from them. He will "send a famine on the land...of hearing the words of the Lord" (8:11-12).

Amos 5 begins with a dirge over obdurate Israel. Her doom is so certain that the prophet can speak of Israel's doom as though it were already past (5:2). The "virgin" Israel's death is untimely; she dies before she has attained motherhood. God's judgment includes a call to repentance and a promise of forgiveness.

Introduction: Belonging to a Christian congregation very often becomes something like belonging to a club. People become comfortable; they pay their dues; they attend meetings. Yes, many even attend to the formalities of worship. It is all part of the

routine. But the "fire" has gone out. There is no sense of urgency, no cross, no daring to heed the call of Christ. Thus, when comforts come first, when conformity to the world is normal, when faith grows dumb, then we need to hear Amos. He tells us:

SEEK GOD AND LIVE!

I. Amos asks, "But what do you, in fact, seek?"
   A. Amos' question is relevant because there is a judgment of sinners (v. 6).
      1. God condemned the Israelites for grievous sins against fellow men—turning "justice into wormwood" (i.e., a bitter draught serving as a figure of injustice).
      2. The "righteousness" of God is "laid to rest in the earth" unless the consciences of men are aroused by the evil treatment of their fellow men.
   B. God's Law measures us; God is the one whom we fear, love and trust above all else.
      1. Do we turn from what is right?
      2. Do we reject God's judgment of our actions (v. 10)?
      3. Do we treat our neighbor unfairly (v. 11a)?
      4. Do we adapt ourselves to the standards of the world (v. 12)?
      5. Do we divorce faith from life?
   C. Each of us must echo the words of earlier believers.
      1. Luther said: "We daily sin much!"
      2. David, who did not see his sin for a time, said: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sm 12:13a).
II. Amos says, "Seek the Lord and live!"
   A. Nathan the prophet told David that he was forgiven: "The Lord hath put away thy sin" (2 Sm 12:13b).
   B. Amos proclaims the Lord as the source of life.
      1. Amos was a messenger of grace in troubled times.
      2. God's grace in Word and Sacrament raises us up when we are laid low by the judgments of God.
      3. The penitent are the "remnant of Joseph" to whom the Lord God will be gracious (v. 15).
   C. Each of us must heed the call of Amos.
      1. Do I confess my sin, including such sins as Amos enumerates?
      2. Do I look with faith to Christ Jesus of whom Amos prophesied (cf. 9:11)?

Conclusion: In the end, it is not we who seek, but it is God who seeks us. He has found us. Therefore, we sing to Jesus (*The Lutheran Hymnal* 350, stanza 3):

O Hope of every contrite heart,
O Joy of all the meek!

To those who fall, how kind Thou art,
How good to those who seek.

Waldemar Degner

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah 53:10-12

October 23, 1988

These verses, along with Isaiah 52:13-53:9, present perhaps the strongest biblical statement of the substitutionary atonement offered by Christ to God. In examining this powerful text, we may note the following:

In verse 10 the KJV and NASB correctly translate *chaphetz* as "pleasure," reflecting the original's emphasis. The RSV and NIV are weak when they translate "will of the Lord," suggesting that the *satisfactio vicaria* was an arbitrary movement of God's "sovereign will."

Verse 10a says the Lord Himself "crushed" the Suffering Servant, His Christ. He "put Him to grief," i.e., caused Him to be sick or suffer (the hiphil perfect). This suffering was accomplished when the Christ offered Himself as the "guilt offering" (literally, "His soul will place a guilt offering"). In offering up His soul once and for all, the crucified Christ was both the full compensation for our offenses and the atoning sacrifice for our guilt.

In verse 10b the grammatical subject is the Suffering Servant. As a consequence of having made a guilt offering with His soul, He will have offspring (literally, "see seed") and live long (literally, "prolong His days"). In this way, the Lord's pleasure will continue. Here "seed" (*zera'*) designates human offspring in the sense of those who derive their life from another in a spiritual manner.

In verses 11-12 the Lord becomes the speaker and He refers to the Servant in every personal use of the third person singular. In verse 11, following His suffering, the Christ will enjoy a satisfying sight (literally, "He will see and be satisfied"). He will be pleased to consider His own sacrifice, for thereby the Righteous One "will justify the many" (emphasizing the greatness of, not any limitation in, the number of those declared righteous because of Christ). This justification is objective; the Servant has accomplished it Himself. He suffers, He bears iniquities, thus He justifies and this justification occurs "by His knowledge" (subjective genitive). This knowledge (*da'ath*) of Christ includes not only His understanding of us, but also His obedience to God for us (cf. BDB, p. 395).

In verse 12 we see the height of Christ's exaltation as the result of His humiliation for us sinners. The Lord "will give Him a portion with the great." Even "the great," the most powerful people of earth, are under His rule and will have to pay Him homage one day. Furthermore, "He will divide the spoils with the strong." As the

glorious Victor, Christ alone is rightly exalted; nonetheless, He will share His glory with "the strong," i.e., with His spiritual seed.

Introduction: You can tell how much someone loves you by how much he is willing to endure for you. And you show others how much you love them by how much you are willing to endure for their sake. In our text, God shows us just how much He loves us by showing how much He has endured for our sakes. He loved us so much that when He looked at His only Son, Jesus Christ, suffering and dying on the cross, He was actually pleased. It is amazing to consider

THE LORD'S PLEASURE IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST

I. The Lord was pleased with the cross of Christ.
   A. Not because of some evil within God.
      1. True, the Lord was actually pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief, making Him sick, causing Him to suffer (v. 10a).
      2. But God so acted, not because He by nature had a wrath which He had to vent (Ps 5:7); He is righteous and just (Dt 32:4).
      3. Neither did God so act because Christ Himself deserved punishment; the Father was well pleased with His perfect Son (Mt 3:17; 17:5).
   B. But because Christ thereby made Himself a guilt offering for us.
      1. God's Law reckons us as guilty because of offenses against God and others (Lv 5:17).
      2. We sinners cannot truly make amends for our offenses, to God or others (Mt 18:25). We deserve to be thrown into the prison of hell until every last cent is paid (Mt 18:34, 5:26).
      3. But the Lord loves us so much that He put Christ on the cross to pay our debt for us. As the antitype of the Old Testament "guilt offering" (v. 10), the crucified Christ made full compensation for our offenses and offered the sacrifice which has freed us from the verdict of "guilty."

II. The Lord continues to be pleased with the cross of Christ.
   A. As a result of His cross, Christ now has "offspring" (v. 10).
      1. Christ's "offspring" are those like Him in righteousness. He has caused them to be reckoned as righteous by bearing their iniquities (v. 11).
      2. Christ's "offspring" are also to be like Him in carrying a cross (Mt 16:24). As Christ served us though we did not deserve it, so we serve others even if they do not deserve it.
   B. As a result of His cross, Christ has now received all glory.
      1. He has exchanged His cross for a crown. He "lives long" (v. 10); He has been raised. He has His due "portion" (v. 12); He is exalted above all, even above "the great" on earth. One day even they will bend the knee.
      2. His glory is His to share. He will divide it with the "strong" (v. 12), His offspring who firmly trust in His righteousness and are willing to carry His cross.

Conclusion: Because the Lord has taken pleasure in His cross, we too can find pleasure in the cross of Christ until He exchanges our crosses for crowns.

Jonathan E. Shaw
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THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jeremiah 31:7-9

October 30, 1988

This text almost seems "out of character" for the weeping prophet, Jeremiah. After promising restoration to His people in the first part of the chapter, the Lord through the prophet here urges them to seek that restoration and to rejoice in His deliverance. The problem is that in difficult times we often see nothing but the darkness of our circumstances. The answer is to look in confidence to our God Who is right there with His forgiving, sustaining love all the time. The theme of separation and restoration ought to be enriched with illustrations and applications relating to the Reformation.

Introduction: Many of you will recall a popular entertainer who loved to use the phrase: "How sweet it is!" In speaking to His people of old—and to us—through the prophet Jeremiah, God urges us in the opening verse of the text to exclaim:

HOW SWEET LOVE IS!

I. Love is sweet when life is bleak.
   A. There is the bleakness of separation in an earthly-physical sense.
      1. Israel was separated from its homeland through captivity.
      2. People are separated from each other today on account of college, military service, employment, disasters, illness, etc.
   B. There is the bleakness of separation from God on account of sin.
      1. Jeremiah exposed the national sins of Israel (Jr 3:20-21).
      2. Luther felt acutely the burden of his sinfulness.
      3. The sins that so easily beset us also upset us.

Transition: To be alone, to feel alone, to know that you deserve aloneness is a bitter pill to swallow. How sweet it then is to receive love anyway!

II. Love is sweet when the love is from God (v. 3).
   A. There are many counterfeit love offers—all cheap, illusory, fleeting.

B. God's love is inclusive (v. 8).
   1. He gathers the separated (Jr 3:18; 16:15; 6:22).
   2. He is concerned with the vulnerable (v. 8).
   3. He still reaches out with an open invitation (Mt 11:28; 22:9).

C. God's love restores.
   1. We come repenting of our sin (v. 9a).
   2. His is a Father's love.
      a. Forgiving, like the love of the prodigal son's father's (Lk 63:16).
      b. Guiding and sustaining (v. 9b; Is 48:21; Ps 23:23).

Conclusion: Love is sweet if it meets the real needs of people. God's love is sweet! Directed to our hearts and lives through Jesus Christ, God's love brings us back to call Him our Father and to live confidently as His children.

Lloyd Strelow
Tustin, California

THIRD LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR

Daniel 12:1-13

November 6, 1988

While some expositors take these words to refer to the persecution of Antiochus, before the first advent of Christ, or the Romans at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, they are best taken to refer to the period of tribulation before the second advent of Christ.

Introduction: As we near the year 2000 speculation abounds about the end of the world. Many focus on the great and awesome day in itself, claiming the imminence of doomsday. "We're on the eve of destruction," runs the headline of a national Roman Catholic weekly. Television evangelist Jerry Falwell does not expect his children "to live out their full lives." Others find a fascination in assigning modern-day events to all the details of prophecies concerning the last times—consider Hal Lindsey in "The Late Great Planet Earth." Certainly such sensationalistic speculation is not what the Holy Spirit had in mind in revealing truths about the days before the end. These truths were given to lead us to sober steadfastness as we patiently await the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ. This concern is clearly the emphasis in Daniel's words today as he encourages us:

HANG ON, PEOPLE OF GOD

I. Hang on, people of God, inasmuch as the last days are days of great trial and tribulation (v. 1).

A. This tribulation is unlike anything ever experienced (v. 1).
   1. Consider a greater tribulation than that which occurred to the people at the time of the flood or the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
   2. Consider God's grace in alerting us (making us wise, v. 10).

B. This tribulation serves to purify our faith (v. 10).
   1. Persecution is God's polishing stone to brighten His church.
   2. In this purpose we see God's love (He 12:6; Re 13:19).

II. Hang on, people of God, by going your way and doing the work God has given you.

A. Instead of working there is always that human tendency to get caught up in empty speculation about the details of the final events of history (v. 8).
   1. Such speculation is a waste of time since it is not for us to know all things (v. 8).
   2. Speculation sidetracks us from our work.

B. The greatest work we have been given to do is to "lead many to righteousness" (v. 3).
   1. It is Jesus who makes many righteous (Ro 5).
   2. We bear witness of His work and so are His instruments in leading others to righteousness (Ro 10:14).

III. Hang on, people of God, being confident of God's ultimate victory.

A. Everyone whose name is found written in "the book" will be delivered (v. 1).
   1. This book is "the book of life" and includes all those whom God has destined to eternal life (Ph 4:3; Re 3:5; 8:8; Lk 10:25).
   2. There will be deliverance for the faithful who are living at the end (v. 1).
   3. There will be deliverance too for those who are asleep in Christ; they shall awaken to everlasting life (v. 2; John 5:28, 29).

B. Special honor will be given those who have led many to righteousness.
   1. All who believe in Christ shall receive eternal life and will be perfectly happy.
   2. Yet there will be a distinction in the honor given to each of the faithful (1 Cor 15:41, 42).

Conclusion: Reminders of the last day should not make us come unglued, but cause us to hang on more tightly and move us to greater earnestness in our faith. May the Holy Spirit accomplish this goal in us through the words of Daniel which we have heard today.

Dennis S. Perryman
Acton, Massachusetts

SECOND LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Daniel 7:9-10

November 13, 1988

The context of this pericope is Daniel's vision of four great beasts coming from the sea. The beasts correspond to four earthly kingdoms. While there has been some debate over the exact identity of these four kingdoms, the main point of Daniel 7 and the text is that God is the ultimate judge of all earthly rulers. He has ultimate control over all political forces. This point should be applied to God's people today in two ways. Christians need to know that God is in control of their lives and that He is in control of all world events, so that His kingdom does not depend on earthly efforts, either individual or national.

Introduction: The best known and most competent judges of our judicial system are not perfect. They do not always judge fairly. Often they do not have all the facts. They have a tremendous backlog. They give verdicts which, even if fair, never really change people very much. Thankfully we have a Judge who rises above all the shortcomings of earthly judges.

GOD IS THE ULTIMATE JUDGE

I. God is the ultimate judge because He judges all.
   A. He is the "Ancient of Days."
      1. He has always existed.
      2. So he knows all things and all people.
   B. All people will stand before Him on the last day (v. 10).
   C. No one is free from God's observation and control.
      1. Whether these be great world leaders.
         a. In the past, the leaders of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.
         b. In the present, the leaders of Libya, Central America, Russia and America.
      2. Or the smallest child.

Transition: God not only judges all people but He judges them fairly.

II. God is the ultimate judge because He judges fairly.
   A. His appearance in Daniel's vision symbolizes His perfect purity.
      1. His snow white garments.
      2. His pure wool hair.
      3. Flames and burning fire.
   B. The books reveal everything.

1. No circumstance is hidden.
2. No excuse is allowed.
3. No grievance goes unanswered.

C. So all His verdicts are based on all the facts.

Transition: Such universal righteous judgment would mean condemnation except that God judges graciously.

III. God is the ultimate judge because He judges graciously.
A. He looks at us through Christ (vv. 13-14).
1. Who has conquered all the forces of evil.
2. Who has redeemed all people.
3. Who forgives all that "the books" reveal.
B. His judgment makes us His.
1. In His Son.
2. Through His Word.
3. To all eternity.

Conclusion: Probably the best known judge in America today is Judge Wapner. He is fair-minded, seems to judge an endless array of cases and is compassionate. But even this useful man is nothing compared to God, our ultimate Judge. He judges all, He judges fairly, He judges graciously.

Klemet Preus
Grand Forks, North Dakota

LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR

Isaiah 51:4-6

November 20, 1988

This pericope is a prophecy of the new testament and the gracious rule of God's Servant, the Messiah, in all who believe. The key idea is expressed in the words "justice," "righteousness" and "salvation." The *mishpat* ("justice") of verse 4 is "a judicial pronouncement, a judge's verdict" and here refers to the conferral of forgiveness; *tsedeq* ("righteousness") and *yesha'* ("salvation") connote the forensic pardon of God and its renewing strength. The *torah* of verse 4 is not Law as opposed to Gospel, but rather instruction. The idea is that God has a new proclamation of justice, righteousness and salvation. God's people of old anticipated with faith the establishment of Christ's gracious rule. They are cautioned against

any attachment to this world as they wait for the coming of justice, righteousness and salvation. God's people today believe that Jesus is the fulfilment of past hopes and the source of our confidence in God's gracious rule today. For homiletical purposes "grace" is probably the best word to capture the meanings of all three words to which we have made special reference.

Introduction: Whenever things no longer seem to be going right, we tend to wish that something would happen to change it all. The favorite team is losing in the final seconds and we say, "Oh, if only we could have ten more minutes on the clock." We try to figure the budget and conclude with, "If only we had two hundred more dollars or another paycheck." The marriage is floundering, or we have lost a job, or the children fail to honor us and we say, "If only someone would change it all." God seems far away and distant and we pray, "If only..." Isaiah brings us the great news that our "if only's" have been answered by our God, who comes to us with grace.

GOD COMES TO US WITH GRACE

I. Grace is needed.
   A. Because we are sinful mortals (v. 6).
      1. Who have offended God (50:1).
      2. Who deserve His punishment (50:11).
   B. Because no other help is apparent (v. 6).
      1. Neither other gods.
      2. Nor humanity.
II. Grace is attractive.
   A. Only to those who see their need (v. 6).
   B. To people from all nations (vv. 4, 5).
   C. Because God comes down to us (v. 4).
      1. As a lowly man.
      2. Living among us.
      3. Never repelling us.
   D. Because grace requires no work on our part (vv. 4-6).
      1. God takes the initiative.
      2. God assumes all the responsibility.
         a. No one can say, "He does His part if I do mine."
         b. No one can say, "He saves me when I'm ready."
III. Grace is effective (it works).
   A. Its source is God.
      1. In Christ He is no longer angry.
         a. Darkness is a figure of anger.
         b. God provides light.
      2. He loves us.
      3. He pronounces us forgiven for Christ's sake.

a. Justice.
b. Righteousness.

B. It changes us.
1. We are renewed in Christ (salvation).
2. We no longer want to live for ourselves.

Conclusion: Grace is a wonderful gift of God. Through it He intervenes in our lives. Grace in Christ is needed, attractive and effective. Because of Christ and His grace, "if only" is never something we need to say as far as our relationship with God and eternal life are concerned.

Klemet Preus
Grand Forks, North Dakota

Book Reviews

BWV 37 (G2772): WHO BELIEVES HIM AND IS BAPTIZED (ASCENSION OR GENERAL): WER DA GLÄUBET UND GETAUFT WIRD: BWV 68 (G2801): SO GREATLY GOD HAS LOVED THE WORLD (PENTECOST-WHITMONDAY): ALSO HAT GOTT DIE WELT GELIEBT; BWV 145 (G2800): WAKE, MY HEART, THE SAVIOR'S DAY (EASTER OR FUNERAL): AUF, MEIN HERZ, DES HERREN TAG. Edited by Daniel G. Reuning with the collaboration of John Bernthal. G.I.A. Publications (7404 South Mason Avenue), Chicago.

The Bach tercentenary has been responsible for the production of numerous new editions of his sacred music. First there was the new edition of the *Orgelbüchlein* edited by Robert Clark and John David Peterson and published by Concordia Publishing House. Later this year this same publisher will bring forth Bach's Leipzig Chorale Preludes edited by Clark Kelly.

The church cantatas have not been neglected in this respect and the anniversary year has brought out three in what is hoped and expected to be a continued process. These have been edited and translated by Daniel Reuning, with the collaboration of John Bernthal with respect to the keyboard aspect. Reuning has supplied ample historical, performance and practical notes in the many pages of the introduction to the complete vocal score of each cantata. Also included are homilies by Reuning's colleague at his seminary, Gerhard Aho. The defense of his approach to translation is quite sound and the result can stand on its own merit when compared to others also available. His view of the three-year lectionary in contrast to the old pericopes of Bach's time is also commendable, thus indicating that these works are just as applicable in our day as they were in Bach's.

Reuning's American editions of the cantatas are based on the authoritative *Neue Bach Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke* published by the Bärenreiter Verlag of West Germany. In addition to his "ecumenical" translation, Reuning has also kept the original German text which, quite obviously, will make for a wider use of the editions. In keeping with good musicological practice for works of this period the editor has left out dynamic indications, but has made helpful suggestions for the execution of certain ornaments. Collaborator Bernthal has also indicated the use of the various organ manuals and pedals in the complete score with the organ reduction.

A choir library represents an expensive investment since it involves multiple copies of any composition. Reuning has successfully attempted to solve this important practical consideration. Each cantata is published in two separate forms. First there is the complete vocal score with the organ reduction, of which only two copies would be needed—one for the choir director and one for the organist. In addition, there are also copies which contain only the vocal parts, choral as well as solo. This form, of which multiple copies would be needed, costs only $1.25 a copy as compared to the full vocal score, which costs $6.00 a copy.

Professor Emeritus M. Alfred Bichsel
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ANCIENT RECORDS AND THE STRUCTURE OF GENESIS. A CASE FOR LITERARY UNITY. By P.J. Wiseman. Edited by D.J. Wiseman. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985. 148 pages. $6.95.

This is a revision and update of P.J. Wiseman's *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*. The reissue and updating was done by his son, Donald J. Wiseman, an archaeologist and epigrapher formerly on the staff of the British Museum and later Professor of Assyriology at the University of London. P.J. Wiseman's book came out to support the unity of Genesis and thus took issue with the Final Documentary Hypothesis. As a theory of literary composition, "the paste and scissors" method has failed to satisfy critical scholars themselves, for nowhere in the ancient Near East was any extra-biblical literature composed in the manner proposed by the Graf-Wellhausen school of literary criticism.

The volume contains thirteen chapters, preceded by a foreword and an introduction. The foreword was written by P.J. Wiseman's son, who presents a history of the Final Documentary Hypothesis and a brief statement concerning the contribution made by his father's book, published in 1936. Professor R.K. Harrison was convinced of the logic of P.J. Wiseman's arguments and adopted them in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1969). In the preface Harrison points out the weaknesses of the Documentary Hypothesis and assesses the strengths of Wiseman's position.

P.J. Wiseman used archaeological discoveries from Mesopotamia and endeavored to link the writing of Genesis with Mesopotamian documents. Many cuneiform tablets that have been uncovered and deciphered employ a specific literary form which comprises a title, the body of the text and a colophon. The latter feature generally contains the name of the owner or scribe and some attempt at dating. Since the colophon comes at the end of a tablet or a series of tablets, it naturally refers to materials that precede it on the tablet. Wiseman believed that the Hebrew phrase *elleh toledoth* ("these are the generations") concludes a family history in each of its occurrences in Genesis and, indeed, that these colophons conclude eleven cuneiform documents which the author of Genesis employed. His juxtaposition of these various sections with a minimum of editorial work presents a history of mankind from the creation to the time of Joseph. Wiseman also claimed that the contents of Genesis argue for an Egyptian or Canaanite cultural background rather than a Mesopotamian one. Harrison opines that Wiseman's book represents an advance in the area of source criticism of Genesis—that the latter's views represent a realistic theory concerning the sources of Genesis, while the facts of the case are totally incompatible with the JEDP documentary hypothesis.

Raymond F. Surburg

GOD'S PEOPLE IN CRISIS: International Theological Commentary on Amos and Lamentations. By Robert Martin-Achard and S. Paul Re'emi. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1984.

The title of this volume provides the thematic behind this rather unusual combination of biblical books, for Amos and Lamentations speak of God's punishment of the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. This commentary series has as its stated goals to be "international" by employing the talents of men from various cultures and to be "theological" by going beyond bare historicism and the determination of connections with the New Testament. At least with this volume in the series the reader will not be particularly aware of any international treatment of the subject matter.

The authors accept historical-critical methodology and findings which, from a conservative Lutheran point of view, may somewhat color or place limits upon their theological conclusions. The Lutheran preacher will find some of the linguistic and historical data to be very helpful (especially in allowing the Old Testament to speak to us in its own terms), but he will find that a major portion of his theological task remains to be done, particularly in the area of Christology. The actual references to the New Testament are very sparse and tend to point out on-the-surface correspondences. In fairness, the book's brevity should be borne in mind and the idea of a *theological* commentary raises the question of just where does commentary end and homiletics begin. Also, the book's historical-critical approach is much milder than many other such treatments. For example, external worship forms *per se* are not belittled in favor of a purely internal "religion of the heart," and social issues are not divorced from man's relationship with his Lord. Lurking in the background of Martin-Achard's discussion of Amos is the question of to what extent was the religion of Jeroboam I in the North a worship of Yahweh and to what extent was it an entirely new religion.

The discriminating reader of *God's People in Crisis* will find the book useful for entering the milieu of the prophets and for giving the text an "unchristianized" reading. This being done, the preacher will have laid some necessary groundwork for moving from history to His story, for Christ is at the very center of the Old Testament too.

James Bollhagen

SPEAKING THE GOSPEL TODAY. A THEOLOGY FOR EVANGELISM. By Robert Kolb. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1984. 212 pages.

Robert Kolb has provided his church with a good resource in its war on evangelistic ignorance. He is occasionally profound, always pastoral, contemporary and quite orthodox, all of which is difficult to find in combination today. This book would best be placed in the hands of advanced laymen, college students of synodical schools,

and pastors attempting to bridge the gap between academic theology and that garden-variety world for which they must forge tools.

The general format of the book assumes the catechetical approach of First, Second, and Third Articles, with the subject of sin and its nature being treated after the opening emphasis upon God as Creator. It is in this second chapter entitled "Against You, O Lord, Have I Sinned" that Kolb performs his most masterful work. For example, condemnation of what he calls the "Manichaean escape" (God hates the sin but not the sinner) is delightful proof that Kolb is a clockmaker keeping time with good theology. The precise account of the psychology and sociology of sin in this section helps to fill that gap which Beisenthal and Kennedy leave.

More intense readers may not be adequately rewarded. There are many precious gems, but much of the book is homiletical in style, weighted down with pious phrases and theological rhetoric. It is, moreover, disconcerting that Kolb speaks of the redemptive work of Christ as though it were a "means" to restoring us to the pre-fall Adamic state. He writes: "Furthermore, faith does experience the joy and peace which comes from realizing that God loves us, died for us and rose for us, so that He might give us new life, the life which He designed for us in Eden" (p. 168). The book is filled with references to a nondescript "image of God." "Only when faith rests secure in Jesus' hand can we truly function as God designed us to function, as the image of God which pours out its love, care and concern" (p. 193). The impression given by words like "obedience" and "God's design" could result in a Reformed notion of discipleship taking precedence over calling, or sanctification over justification. "Instead of a heavenly goal, the goal of Jesus' design for Christian witness is discipleship" (p. 152). To put the best construction upon such phraseology, faith without the additional context of the Christian as God's workmanship is like an idea without an object.

Yet the greatest problem we face in witnessing is a failure to comfort Christians with the knowledge that, unlike Adam who could proclaim God's glory without sin, we always proclaim it despite our sin and at the foot of the naked tree, not as the naked man. The rub is not in the call to fulfill God's "plan" or design, but rather in the nature of that design. The design of God is experienced only in the continual justification of the sinner before God. In reality, the First Article, after the fall, now serves as an introduction to the Second. The idea that we experience the fulfilment of our design in terms of the First Article always leads to a theology of glory and not a theology of hope.

John Fiene
Sandy, Utah

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ST. AUGUSTINE FROM NEOPLATONISM TO CHRISTIANITY, 386-391 A.D. By Alfred Warren Matthews. University Press of America, Washington, D.C., 1980. 314 pages.

The working hypothesis of this specialized study of the crucial developmental period in Augustine's life, from his conversion in 386 A.D. until his ordination five years later, is straightforward: "...immediately after his conversion Augustine was a believer in Christ who wanted to know more about himself and his God. Although he had accepted the authority of Christ, he was willing to use Platonist thought to help him understand his belief" (pp. 3-4). By extensive use of the appropriate primary sources, Dr. Matthews expands on this premise to reveal an Augustine who is neither a true philosopher nor yet an accomplished theologian, a man who uses what tools and knowledge he controls in his groping towards greater understanding of his new faith. Thus, the Augustine seen in the garden on the night of his conversion is a man who can reconcile many critical aspects of Neoplatonism with Christianity, while the newly ordained priest of five years later cannot; yet it is clear that he retains modes of thought informed by his earlier knowledge and experiences.

The author's strong suit is his truly detailed synthesis of Augustine's early writings from the time period under investigation (based on a solid chronological reconstruction), which, in chapter after chapter, illustrates the theologian's growth in biblical knowledge with subsequent modification of former views. He presents Augustine in an existentialist framework, a man seeking himself and his God in a struggle of old and new, the classic story of adult conversion.

The book does, however, suffer from some significant defects which somewhat vitiate the strong areas. Though the sources are quoted quite extensively in the text and footnotes, the index is absurdly small, making the interior material less available to the casual researcher than it should be; thus reading the whole book becomes more important in this case than it would be with a more extensive index. Then, too, the text is full of typographical and editorial errors which make the reading process very distracting (though in fairness, since many U.P. authors are forced to be their own typists and editors so as to pare the cost of publication, these defects are more comprehensible here than in a standard publication). The content, though good in its synthesis and use of the sources, tends, in its conclusions, toward critical evaluations of Augustine's thought in comparison with modern theological ideas, a process which is actually beside the point, especially considering that the material being evaluated is not representative of the mature Augustine of later years. Furthermore, Dr. Matthews seems to place more faith in the assertions of modern existentialist thought than seems advisable (granted that Augustine probably influenced Tillich, one regrets that the influence did not have more salutary results). There are benefits to be gleaned from this work and the bibliography is complete and up to date. However, those who benefit most will be those who have the time to read the entire book, as well as the patience to sift through a somewhat sloppy text.

Gregory James Lockwood
St. Charles, Missouri

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION, 1517-1559. By Lewis W. Spitz. Harper and Row, New York, 1985. $22.95.

With *The Protestant Reformation* Lewis Spitz returns to the material he first covered in comprehensive fashion in the second volume of his work of 1971, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements.* Although in both its approach and organization this new work is similar to the earlier one, Spitz incorporates the results of the latest research into his new book so that *The Protestant Reformation* provides a fine up-to-date introduction to the Reformation period. Indeed, the bibliographical essay at the end of the book (pp. 385-429) is itself an excellent overview of recent scholarship.

Spitz sets himself a difficult task, "to emphasize the account of the religious Reformation as the most characteristic and dominant achievement of the time, but to include also the most significant developments in other areas of life throughout the European world" (p.3); but he accomplishes it rather handily. After an introductory chapter which sketches the economic, demographic and social trends of the period, Spitz proceeds to the Reformation, with chapters on Luther, the Swiss, Calvin, the English and the Roman Catholics, before concluding with a chapter on East-West relations and another on major social and cultural developments. His emphasis is upon the "real people" who "make history"; but he is fully aware that events result "from the interaction of societal forces and individual drives and decisions" (p. 346).

Among those "real people" who made the Reformation is, of course, Martin Luther; and Spitz certainly does not slight the Reformer's influence, declaring that Luther's words at Worms "altered the shape of Christendom and changed the course of human history" (p.75). Overall, Spitz's treatment of Luther is excellent and his discussion of Luther's theology illustrates his ability to summarize the research of others while stating his own views clearly. Thus, Spitz examines the relationship of Luther's thought to mysticism (citing Ozment and Bengt Hoffman), to scholasticism (citing Oberman and Grane), and to Renaissance humanism, but insists upon Luther's originality and profound simplicity (pp. 87-88):

> The unity and coherence of Luther's theology was guaranteed by the centrality of Christ as the subject and object of his evangelical theology. He was the Copernicus of theology with a Son-centered universe. His method was characterized by dynamic concreteness, by his biblical realism, and by his acceptance of paradoxes that are essential to theology in which, unlike speculative metaphysics, the key to difficulties lies in the transcendent beyond... Luther was not interested in creating a grand theological structure but rather in reducing religious faith to the essential relationships.

In attempting to write a work of this type an author must necessarily give short shrift to some topics while concentrating on others. Inevitably, then, he leaves himself open to what is the essentially unfair criticism that he has not selected those topics

for extended treatment which some particular reviewer might have preferred. In this case, Spitz is likely to receive brickbats from some for his failure to say more about topics now in vogue, e.g., popular religion or society and the sexes. In my opinion, however, Spitz's book is right on target, for the most important facet of sixteenth century European history, in terms of long-range consequences and significance, was the Reformation; and it was Luther, Calvin, Cranmer and Charles V who made the Reformation. Lewis Spitz rightfully focuses on the achievements of such men as these to give us a thorough, well-written narrative of that which the title precisely denotes, the Protestant Reformation from 1517 to 1559.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

CHURCH ROOTS. Stories of Nine Immigrant Groups That Became the American Lutheran Church. Edited by Charles P. Lutz. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1985. 224 pages.

While the concept for this book may have developed when a highly successful television production made root-probing the "in" thing, the American Lutheran Church, as it looks toward the 1988 merger and further loss of identity, has good reason to retrace its past. The individual contributors are fittingly characterized as "heirs of the traditions they describe...able to write with a certain detachment." These essays about nine immigrant groups, from which the American Lutheran Church of 1960 is the harvest, are interesting in themselves and basic for understanding the ALC today. The groups include the following:

(1) The Ohio Lutherans with John Stauch, the pioneer missionary of fifty-five years, whose long-range influence is seen as late as the founding of Wittenberg University and Hamma Divinity School (now part of Trinity Seminary, Columbus);

(2) Johannes Grabau and the Buffalo Synod, which presumably was forged out of long, troublesome experiences in Germany, spawning a mindset that clashed with other Lutherans and the American spirit;

(3) The Norwegians under Elling Eielsen, one of many apologists for Hans Nielsen Hauge, the folk hero who was sadly misunderstood in his own country but who, as this account shows, was a balanced, sincere Lutheran shaping Norwegian American Lutheranism through Eielsen and his earnest followers;

(4) The unique Texas synod, largely a product of Christian Spittler's influence through the St. Chrischona mission school in Switzerland;

(5) The "Big" Norwegian Synod of 1853, "an interesting experiment of merging faith and culture in such a way as to produce noble service";

(6) The Iowa Synod of 1854 with Wilhelm Loehe as the European mastermind, interested in evangelism, especially reaching out to American Indians;

(7) The Inner Mission non-Grundtvigian Danish Lutherans guided by such leaders as Jens Dixen and P.S. Vig "on a course between an un-Lutheran subjectivism and an equally un-Lutheran formalistic orthodoxy";

(8) The merger of the Norwegian Augustana Synod, the Conference, and the Anti-Missouri Brotherhood in 1890—three groups "in the middle" between the Haugeans and the "Big" Norwegian Synod of 1853—with the later contributions of Johan Aasgaard, Lars Boe, Frederick Schiotz, and E. Clifford Nelson in the development of the ALC of 1960;

(9) The strong-minded Georg Svendrup and the Lutheran Free Church formed in 1897 that "felt so strongly about church polity and congregational freedom that it did not join the ALC until 1963, and even then 40 of 330 congregations remained outside."

The roots—persons, and groups—are all unique. Perhaps the devotion of seventeen out of twenty-six pages to work among the Indians is not truly representative of the Iowa Synod. Were other early Ohio leaders just as representative as John Stauch and should some space have been devoted to major roots that developed later (Loy, Lenski)? Given the space limitations, can one fairly question the selection? Those who know little or nothing about the ALC of 1960 will appreciate these essays—likewise the more informed; they will realize one must begin somewhere. Some may appreciate the more conceptual and interpretive observations—for example, those by Leigh Jordahl on the Norwegian Synod of 1853; yet all provide interpretations in their own way. Gerhard Schmutterer and Charles Lutz (editor) discuss Wilhelm Loehe and C.F.W. Walther quite objectively, leaving the images of both untarnished. All the essayists whet the reader's appetite and inspire further exploration of the ALC's roots and branches—a delightful book.

Wilbert Rosin

BEGINNING OLD TESTAMENT STUDY. Edited by John Rogerson. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1982. 157 pages.

This is a handbook written by four British Old Testament scholars and is intended to serve as a guide, not to the contents, but rather to the academic study of the Old Testament. The writers of this volume look upon the Old Testament as an exciting collection of books in its own right. The book has a total of nine chapters written by David J.A. Clines, Paul Joyce, John Barton, and the editor of the volume, John Rogerson, who is Head of the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield. Rogerson is also an honorary canon of the Cathedral of Sheffield. Three of the scholars are Protestants, while one (Paul Joyce) is a Roman Catholic layman on the staff of Ripon College, Cuddlesdon, Oxford.

These four lecturers have written on the history of Old Testament interpretation, ethics, sociology, and the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament. The

publishers state on the back side of the volume: "Although the critical approaches they employ derive from the literary and historical methods already familiar to scholars, they are freshly explained here in order to convey a simple and common sense feeling of how they work and why they are important."

The volume is interesting for the insights it gives into the manner in which British Old Testament scholarship handles the interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures and the way it relates the two testaments to each other. For these four British scholars the only correct and viable approach to the Old Testament is the historical-critical, which strangely is called the historical-grammatical method. The problem with this book is that history is revised according to the canons of an approach which does not accept the supernatural. The presuppositions which underlie the essays in this volume are those which have been utilized since the age of rationalism. The Final Documentary Hypothesis is considered proved and the books of Genesis through Judges are not considered as factual history. On page 21 Rogerson writes: "Critical scholarship with its open-endedness has produced a description of the history of Israelite religion radically at variance with that in the Old Testament itself." The same scholar believes that the divinity of Christ did not prevent him from making mistakes in statements he made about the authorship of Old Testament books (p.21).

Raymond F. Surburg

JERUSALEM. THE REBIRTH OF A CITY. By Martin Gilbert. Viking Press, New York. 238 pages. $25.00.

Jerusalem, whose history begins before the time of Abraham, dates back to at least the twenty-third century B.C. It is a city which has stirred more hearts over the centuries than any other city of antiquity. The Holy City has had a variegated history, being attacked, sacked, and conquered many times. Jerusalem has been under the domination of many different people in its four thousand year existence.

Gilbert's book deals with Jerusalem's condition under Turkish rule during the nineteenth century. The author begins his chronicles with 1838 and concludes with 1898. Edward Robinson, one of the earliest archaeologists to work the city, lamented that "the glory of Jerusalem has indeed departed." From its ancient high estate "it had declined in the nineteenth century into a neglected capital of a petty Turkish province." It had a population of fewer than 16,000, consisting of 5000 Muslim Arabs, 3000 Christian Arabs, 6000 Jews, a Turkish garrison, and a small colony of European traders and missionaries. At the end of the century guidebooks were still stressing its stagnation and decay while most travelers were expressing their disappointment. Theodor Herzl, who visited the city for the first time in 1898, wrote these words in his diary: "When I remember thee in days to come, O Jerusalem, it will not be with delight." If he had had his way, he would have torn everything down except the sacred sites.

Despite these opinions about Jerusalem, Martin has shown that important changes had been occurring, changes that eventually were to draw Jerusalem back into the

mainstream of history. There were transformations occurring that had not been noticed by visitors and travelers. In 1839 a British vice-consul was located in Jerusalem. Russian and French consulates followed in 1841; the same year saw the creation of an Anglican bishopric. In due time the Germans, Austrians, and Italians made their presence felt. In 1857 an American consulate was established. With the establishment of the consulates came an increase in missionary activity, which sometimes became a cause for dissension. The religious life of the city was colorful and intense.

The largest population gain between 1838 and 1898 was by the Jews. By 1896 Jerusalem's population was 45,000, of whom 28,000 were Jews; the rest was divided equally between Christians and Moslems. The Jewish population came from many different parts of the world, with the Ashkenazim, who came from Eastern Europe, predominant. The other major group of Jews was the Sephardic immigrants from many parts of the world, even from Yemen and Bukhara. Attempts were made after Montefiore's visit in 1827 to effect social and educational reforms that were secular and favored technological changes. Orthodox Jews endeavored to resist the changes. In 1840 the first printing press was established, in 1848 the first bank, and the first hotel in 1843. In 1892 the first single-track railway made its appearance, going from Jaffa to Jerusalem. Toward the end of the nineteenth century two significant happenings took place, namely, the visit of Kaiser Wilhelm to Jerusalem in 1898 and the visit of Theodor Herzl. Martin has written a lively book, containing many excellent quotations. He has given glimpses of personalities as diverse as Herman Melville and Emperor Maximillian of Mexico. This is a handsome book, furnished with a large number of striking photographs.

Raymond F. Surburg

THE CHRISTIAN'S CALLING. By Donald R. Heiges. Revised edition [first published in 1958]. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1984. Paperback. 108 pages.

Like many other efforts at interpreting Luther's emphasis upon the priesthood of believers, or royal priests, to whom God has entrusted the keys, or the ministry of the Word, Heiges broadens ministry in New Testament terms to such an extent that everyone is considered to have his called ministry. The net result is that the special office of the called pastor, who comes into his office by the call of the royal priests, as ordained by God, slips into a parallel sort of leveling alongside these other "calls." There is no doubt that this revised version comes off worse than the original in view of the evident dependence upon categories and canons of the social gospel emphasis, especially the WCC Faith and Order Commission document drawn up at Lima, Peru, in 1982. "This mission needs to be carried out in varying political, social and cultural contexts," and the members of Christ's body "will seek relevant forms of witness and service in each situation" (p.87). Little wonder that *preaching* the Gospel of Christ's vicarious atonement for sin and sinners pales in significance before *"doing* the gospel" by improving society. There can be no criticism of Christians being concerned for the man in need. This is a *diakonia* which is directly an outflow of the faith in the heart, active in love. But a miserable mishmash results

when, in an effort to accentuate this fruit of faith, the whole company of God turns out to have a "ministry," each according to his prior calling as a believer in Christ. Luther, indeed, has much to say about the Christian man and woman fulfilling his or her station in life faithfully and caringly as a follower of Christ, but he never ends up confusing this calling with the special and totally unique calling which God has established in the office of the pastor called by the congregation of believers. It is that call that makes the *man*—Heiges leaves things open for women preachers in the LCA today—a pastor, and not the "charism" of ordination "which sets him apart and which abides with him forever" (p.87). It seems that the moral of the story is that it is best not to revise if the bottom line is a changed theology. In Heiges' handling of the material Luther's great contribution as regards vocation in the believer's life remains largely unaffected, but Luther's teaching as regards the office of the pastor has been seriously distorted.

E.F. Klug

LEFÈVRE: PIONEER OF ECCLESIASTICAL RENEWAL IN FRANCE. By Philip Edgcumbe Hughes. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984. 224 pages. Paperback, $14.95.

Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples is one of those figures who so flit about the margins of Reformation history that many have heard of him but few know anything about him—except perhaps that he was a French humanist and is also known as Jacobus Faber, or Stapulensis. This is not to say that Lefèvre was unimportant in his own day or insignificant for later history, but it does indicate that Lefèvre was not an actor in the great dramas of the German, Swiss or English Reformations and that he died (1536) in the early stages of the French religious struggle. In point of fact, however, Lefèvre was, like Erasmus, a leading figure in the northern Renaissance and, unlike Erasmus, a proponent of both moral and doctrinal ecclesiastical reform although he never broke formally with the institutional Church of France.

Philip E. Hughes' new book cannot by itself make up entirely for the relative neglect of Lefèvre, especially in English-speaking scholarship, but it does provide an excellent introduction to Lefèvre's thought and achievement. Born around 1455, educated at the University of Paris and ordained a priest, Lefèvre lived and worked within a narrow circle of scholarly French ecclesiastics but through his writings participated in the major intellectual movements of his day. Early in his career Lefèvre rejected the scholasticism of the Sorbonne, preferring first the philosophy of Aristotle, several of whose works Lefèvre edited, published, and commented upon, and then the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, Raymond Lull, and Nicholas of Cusa. Increasingly, however, Lefèvre's pursuit of truth led him to the Scriptures so that by 1509 biblical interpretation had become his major concern. In that year he published his *Quintuplex Psalterium*, containing five Latin versions of the Psalms along with his own commentary; and in 1512 he produced his *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*. Luther used both of these for his early lectures at Wittenberg.

But what could Luther have learned from Lefèvre? Hughes argues persuasively that in his biblical studies Lefèvre "firmly grasped and propounded that evangelical faith which has commonly been regarded as the preserve of the theologians of the Reformation and, what is more, that he did so in the precise terms of formulations that were destined to become the distinctive hallmarks of Reformation theology" (p.97). Furthermore, Hughes demonstrates that Lefèvre, like Luther, while insisting on the primacy of the literal sense in scriptural exegesis, also maintained that the literal was always Christological. In other words, Hughes portrays Lefèvre somewhat as a Protestant before the Protestants.

Moreover, Lefèvre was not content just to write about theology; he also sought to implement his insights by assisting one of his disciples, Guillaume Briçonnet, bishop of Meaux, in the reform of his diocese (1515-25). Here, for example, Lefevre produced a vernacular commentary on the epistles and gospels of the church year designed for the use of parish priests in their ministry among the people. Subsequent to his stay at Meaux, Lefèvre enjoyed the patronage of Marguerite, sister to Francis I, queen of Navarre and Protestant sympathizer. Because of this association with the royal family, Lefèvre never lost hope that the Gallican Church might become a Reformed one.

Despite Hughes' book, scholars will undoubtedly continue to debate the degree of affinity between Lefèvre's theological views and those of the Protestant Reformers. However, for those who are interested in either Renaissance humanism or the Reformation in France, *Lefèvre* is an important book because it demonstrates how in Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples the former movement prepared the way for the latter.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DIVORCE IN THE CHURCH? By Richard Lyon Morgan. Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1985. 184 pages. Paper, $12.95.

The author is himself a divorced and remarried clergyman in the Presbyterian church. As such, he brings rich insight to the psychological and spiritual dynamics born of his own personal experiences. Therein lies one of the contributions of this volume. Faced as he is with the reality of divorced persons in the congregation, the pastor is introduced to the problem and trauma experienced by the divorcing and divorced. There is no quarrel with this point. The church is to be compassionate. However, the author's insistence upon the church's condoning divorce, even considering it to be "redemptive" and, in many instances, to be in accord with God's will, gives pause and causes concern for those who uphold the Scriptures' high view of marriage. At times there also is an apparent sacrifice of Biblical principle to secular methodology. There are incorporated helpful suggestions to pastors and congregations as to how compassionate response, intervention, and help can be extended to the divorcing and the divorced. Based on the premises that divorce and remarriage are here to stay and in the future the number of divorces and remarriages is destined

to increase, the author states: "Simply put, how the church welcomes divorced members tests its integrity and the authenticity of its gospel" (p. 148). The text is strong in raising sensitivity to the problem; it is programmatically helpful, but theologically weak.

Norbert H. Mueller

DEVOTIONS FOR THE DIVORCING. By William E. Thompson. Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1985. 99 pages. Paper, $6.95.

If a divorced person is looking for appropriate guidance applied to his particular situation, he can forget this book. As the author himself says: "These devotions are designed to be reflections. I hope that you are seeing and feeling yourself within them and, more important, that you are seeing and feeling God's presence in them." Consequently, there is no summons to repentance, no resting upon the promise for help or the Word of God for instruction. The devotions are certainly not Christocentric in their orientation. On the other hand, the "devotions" help one to understand what a person may or may not be experiencing as result of a divorce. But in these materials, one seeks in vain for God's remedies or guidance.

Norbert H. Mueller

THE SACRAMENT OF LOVE. By Paul Endokimov. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.

It is no secret that the church has been unduly eager in many settings to adopt the language of "rights," "mutuality," and "human fulfillment" without a critical inquiry into the effect of such language on the Biblical vision of the human condition. This is perhaps most transparent in the church's discussion of marriage. One might legitimately probe the Lutheran ethos with the inquiry: "If the stained glass and ecclesiastical setting were removed, what does the church offer its nuptial couples? Where is the teaching of the church on what it means to be man-husband-father and woman-wife-mother? Or, where is our theological rationale for fidelity?"

For example, James Nelson, in the still influential book, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Augsburg, 1978), seriously recommends that the church alter its definition of what marital fidelity means. Gilbert Meilander, in a superlative review *(Concordia Journal,* November 1979, pp. 216-221), rightly suggests that the church's view of embodiment is more profound with respect to human nature than the proposed alternatives: "A 'presumptive rule' in favor of fidelity is not likely to be sufficient to fulfill the healing purpose of marriage. It can only mean, 'I promise...unless and until new possibilities for growth and self-realization lead me to a new partner.' If that is the promise the church wishes to witness and to which it wants to give its blessing, it ought to be spoken in precisely

such language. That kind of promise, however, will never discipline the desires of sinful human beings. It will not serve the healing which all the children of Adam need" (p. 219).

If we are in danger of losing a whole conceptual network, traditionally based on the First Article, it is time to reexamine inferences that the Gospel necessarily results in egalitarian views of human ordering. The perceptive call of William Weinrich ("Feminism in the Church: The Issue of our Day," *CTQ,* April 1986, pp. 140-144) to eschew a modern gnosticism strike the same note as Meilander. Could the church forget that God, before the advent of sin, did not create interchangeable "persons," but He made "male" and "female"? To reduce this polarity to a cosmetic-surface reality or, with our culture, to speak only of plumbing differences is to impoverish not only the language of the church, but its biblical view of man and woman.

Both Meilander and Weinrich would, I believe, join the reviewer in applauding the fundamental posture which informs *The Sacrament of Love,* namely, that creation counts. There is profound insight in a passage such as Endokimov formulates: "Conqueror, adventurer, designer, man is not paternal in his essence. This truth has a far-reaching implication: It explains why the religious principle of dependence, of receptivity, of communion, is exprssed more directly through a woman; the special sensitivity for the truly spiritual is greater in 'the feminine' than in 'the masculine.' The Bible exalts woman as the instrument of spiritual receptivity in human nature. Indeed, the promise of salvation has been given to woman: It is she who receives the Annunciation; it is she to whom the Resurrected Christ first appears" (p. 35).

Here and throughout *The Sacrament of Love* there is no hint that different placement or differentiation of being entail superiority-inferiority or provoke a contest over what "rights" can legitimately be acquired over against the other. By posing the question in that manner the modern Christian not only forces on the Scriptures an alien world, but risks missing the coherent nature of Scripture's witness on the married estate. One example will illustrate. Endokimov writes: "It is not by mere chance either that St. Paul puts his magistral teaching on marriage in the context of this Letter on the Church, Ephesians. There is more here than a simple analogy. Biblical symbolism depends on a very intimate correspondence between the various levels, showing them as different expressions of a single reality" (p. 122).

Surely we Lutherans need to recapture this sense of a single reality, so that our marriages are not divorced from the life of the church but become another expression of the *one* truth. Endokimov's description of this single reality is organized topically with respective chapters on "Anthropology," "Marriage and the Monastic State," "The Royal Priesthood of the Believers," "Love and the Sacrament of Love," "Sexuality and Nuptial Chastity," and "The Institution." This book is heartily recommended to every pastor who seeks a vocabulary that will provide a "vision" *for* and a "vocation" (Luther's language) *to* the married estate in terms of the one theological reality articulated by the Scriptures, entered by Holy Baptism, and nourished by the Eucharist.

Dean O. Wenthe

LUTHER ALS PREDIGER. By Detlef Lehmann. Lutherische Theologische Hochschule, Oberursel. LUTHER UND DIE EINE HEILIGE CHRISTLICHE KIRCHE. By Manfred Roensch. Lutherische Theologische Hochschule, Oberursel. LUTHER UND DIE RECHTFERTIGUNG. By Gottfried Hoffmann. Lutherische Theologische Hochschule, Oberursel. 56 pages.

The faculty of the Lutheran Theological School in Oberursel (near Frankfurt) has for the past several years issued monographs resulting from lectures either at home on its own campus or at conferences or church gatherings in Europe or America. At the same time it has published the quarterly journal *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, successor since 1977 of the well-regarded *Lutherischer Rundblick*. This faculty of five men is to be commended for its industry and high-quality literary output. The three monographs noted here are no exception. In compact form the reader benefits from a three-pronged focus on Luther. All the world knows that the Reformer was a highly effective preacher whose sermons packed significant content flowing from his profound biblical knowledge and addressed to the needs of the Reformation (Lehmann). Not least among the Reformer's great theological contributions was clearing up the vital doctrine of the church (Roensch). How man, the fallen sinner, is able to stand righteous before God is the distinctive article of the Christian faith, by which the church either stands or falls (Hoffmann). These three studies are excellent contributions, particularly the last, on the doctrine of justification. It is also available in English, since it was first presented in the 1983 Reformation Lectures at Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota, and then published in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* (March 1984). We commend these studies to readers able to handle the German.

E.F. Klug

HISTORY, HARMONY AND THE HEBREW KINGS. By E.W. Faulstick. Chronology Books, Spencer, Iowa, 1986. 304 pages. $19.95.

It has been aptly remarked that chronology and geography are the two eyes of history. Problems in both of these areas have at times made it difficult to comprehend completely a biblical passage. In the last 140 years archaeology has helped us by shedding light on these two areas of biblical study. So far, however, no scholar has been able to propose a scheme of biblical chronology commanding universal acceptance. E.W. Faulstick believes that he has succeeded where such scholars as Albright, Thiele, Finnegan, Begrich, and others have failed. Most reference works have followed the schemes worked out either by Albright or by Thiele. Those scholars who are critically-oriented as a rule follow Albright, while those of a conservative persuasion frequently adopt the conclusions of Thiele.

Faulstick has faulted Thiele's assumptions and calculations. Since 1944 Thiele, an Adventist missionary and professor, has issued three books in addition to his doctoral dissertation written at the Oriental Institute and has penned many articles dealing with the problems and intricacies of the Bible's chronology. Faulstick's book

is mainly directed against Thiele's chronological studies, including the latter's most recent work, *The Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*. Faulstick is an engineer, a mathematician and computer expert, and a serious student of the Bible, who has devoted the last ten years of his life to trying to unravel the chronological problems of both the Old and New Testaments. Faulstick's method differs from other attempts to establish an accurate Old Testament time frame in that he does not predicate his work primarily on Assyrian documents or exclusively on the Bible. Rather, he links astronomical calculations with Biblical and non-Biblical data in determining major reference dates. As Dr. Mansoor has noted: "This is a chronology of Israel from the Exodus through the divided monarchy developed with the aid of computers."

The volume has ten chapters, followed by a concluding one in which the author has summarized his findings, giving dates beginning with David (1015-985 B.C.) and ending with Zedekiah of Judah (598-588 B.C.). This chapter shows the differences between the dates Thiele has worked out and those of Faulstick. The volume is furnished with seven appendices, giving lists of Assyrian and Babylonian eponym and kings lists. The reader will find an excellent bibliography which shows that the author has thoroughly researched the subject of Near Eastern and Biblical chronologies. In order to arrive at his dates for the kings of Judah and Israel, Faulstick has rejected the chronological assertions in a number of Assyrian documents accepted by others as accurate—for instance, the date for the battle of Qarqar as 854 B.C. or the defeat of Jehu as 841 B.C. In chapters 5,6,7 and 10 Faulstick has challenged what he calls the "Thiele Anachronisms." Albright placed the beginning of the separate monarchy of Judah in 922 B.C. and its end in 587 B.C., Thiele dates these events to 930 and 587 B.C., and Faulstick gives the dates of 946 and 588 B.C.

Raymond F. Surburg

THE SUFFERING OF GOD: An Old Testament Perspective. By Terance B. Fretheim. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1984. 203 pages. Paperback, $10.95.

This book strikes a number of notes that have all too often fallen on deaf ears. Fretheim calls them "neglected metaphors" (p. 13). They might be summarized under the category of the "presence" of God in the Old Testament over against His "transcendence." If it is true that many Christians view God's way with Israel as remote and other-worldly (with an occasional descent from the heavens for an appearance on Sinai), then *The Suffering of God* should serve not only as a corrective, but also as an invitation to behold the gracious and the real presence of God with Israel. God's consultation with Abraham over His forthcoming actions toward Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18), His anguish over sin and unilateral extension of mercy (Hosea 2), His tabernacling presence in ark and temple (Exodus, Samuel-Kings), His accessibility in Zion (Psalm 132), His immanence in Israel's history (Isaiah 12), His appearance on Israel's behalf in warfare (Judges 5), His use of human forms (Genesis 17-18)—these and cognate texts are brought together by Fretheim in a lucid and readable narrative.

Perhaps the most suggestive discussion comes in chapter 10, "Prophet, Theophany, and the Suffering of God." Here it is proposed that the prophet's life, particularly in its suffering for the kingdom, is done as "an embodied Word of God." The classical Lutheran posture that the offices of prophet, priest, and king were typical of Christ finds a near parallel in the eloquent last paragraph of the book: "Finally, we should note that the prophet's life as embodied Word of God is partial and broken. The OT does not finally come to the conclusion that God was incarnate in a human life in complete unbrokenness or in its entirety. While a prophet such as Jeremiah was set aside from the beginning of his life, the notion of the Word of God becoming flesh is associated only with his call. The Word of God, enfleshed in an unbroken way in the totality of human life, must await a new day. Yet, in the prophet we see decisive continuities with what occurs in the Christ-event. God's act in Jesus Christ is the culmination of a long-standing relationship of God with the world that is much more widespread in the OT than is commonly recognized" (p. 166).

This perspective invited further reflection on the ways in which Jesus himself makes this connection. "A greater than the temple is here" (Matt. 12:6). "Destroy this temple and in three days, I will rebuild it." (John 2:19). Though standard critical isagogics are assumed and components of process theology inform some of the discussion, the Lutheran pastor who is also a critical reader can find much of value here. The tension, for example, that arises from stressing the "incarnational" and concrete nature of God's presence with Israel while at the same time using "gender-neutral" language throughout will not escape the sensitive reader.

Dean O. Wenthe

JESUS AND JUDAISM. By E.P. Saunders. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1985. Cloth, xiv + 444 pages.

The quest for the historical Jesus, particularly when undertaken in accord with the canons of critical historiography, never quite comes to rest. Whether it be the cautious and conservative constructions of a Johannes Weiss (*Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom*, 1892) or the skeptical perspective of D.F. Strauss (*Life of Jesus*, 1835-36) a bit earlier, the academic pursuit of a plausible portrait of Jesus of Nazareth has occupied some of the most capable minds in every subsequent generation. The names of Albert Schweizer (*The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1910), William Wrede (*Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 1906), and Rudolf Bultmann (*Theology of the New Testament*, 1951) are only representative of the large guild of scholars who have continued the discussion. More recently a number of articulate voices have returned to the themes which attend the quest: A.E. Harvey's *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (1982), Morton Smith's *Jesus the Magician* (1978), and G. Vermes' *Jesus the Jew* (1973).

For the pastor who wishes to stay abreast of this discussion, E.P. Saunders' *Jesus and Judaism* is a must. Not only does Saunders' interact with the vast literature, he lucidly informs the reader about the methodological moves which he makes in acknowledging or challenging another viewpoint. Saunders basic tack is to suggest that previous studies have unduly stressed "Jesus as teacher." The critical debate on which sayings, if any, are authentic and the doubt as to whether any teaching could have led to crucifixion cause the author to focus on the life of Jesus as the best point of entry for any reconstruction.

Saunders regards as virtually secure the following events: (1) Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist; (2) Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed; (3) Jesus called disciples and spoke of there being twelve; (4) Jesus confined His activity to Israel; (5) Jesus engaged in a controversy about the temple; (6) Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities; (7) after His death Jesus' followers continued as an identifiable movement (p.11). With this interpretative framework, Saunders explores how first-century views on eschatology, miracles, the kingdom of God, and cognate themes could illumine the historian's pathway through the texts. While most readers of this journal will find the methodological assumptions in tension with a confessional hermeneutic, it is noteworthy that no simple polemic against those who "deny the supernatural" will suffice. One only needs to examine Saunders' treatment of miracles (pp. 157-173) to realize how inappropriate such a response would be. The Gospel is surely better served by the fine distinctions which a thorough reading will bring than by the indiscriminate rhetoric of the past.

Saunders' conclusions are nuanced along a spectrum from "virtually certain" to "incredible" (pp.326-327). Again, while these might appear all too minimalistic to many, it is important to note the considerably more conservative nature of these assertions over against an earlier and rather doctrinaire skepticism. If one were to place this work in conversation with such studies as Martin Hengel's *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (1980) and *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (1985), a great deal of methodological refinement would surely occur. Perhaps then there would arise a generation of exegetes with both the confessional conviction and exegetical expertise of an Adolf Schlatter or a Theodore Zahn.

Dean O. Wenthe

ECCLESIASTES: A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY. By J.A. Loader. Translated by John Vriend. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1986. 136 pages. Paperback, $6.95.

Grocery stores these days are stocking lots of "lite" foods. Publishers seem to be doing the same with Bible commentaries, which frequently appear in slimmed-down size for laity and for preachers who feel they have no time for a "heavy meal" as they prepare for their messages. J.A. Loader's book on Ecclesiastes, the latest in the new *Text and Interpretation* series by Eerdmans, is definitely on the "lite" side. Some readers will complain that it is too light. No translation of the text is

provided, even though the author sometimes makes his case by rejecting the renderings of the KJV, RSV, and NIV. Moreover, some of the author's observations are too simplistic to be helpful. For example, "if God is love, He does not cause times of hatred, suffering, and war" (p. 38). Nevertheless, there are some tasty morsels in this brief work. A listing of twelve kinds of wisdom sayings, along with examples, in the book's introduction helps the reader pay better attention both to Ecclesiastes and to Proverbs. Here and there little diagrams of the chiastic arrangement of certain sections (like the "time" observations in chapter 3) provide relief for the eye and stimulus for the mind.

Loader asserts that Ecclesiastes is a protest against the pat answers classical Jewish wisdom gave to suffering. The tension between the two points of view is nearly portrayed by Hegelian-sounding triads of "thought-counterthought-tension" phrases. The value of Ecclesiastes, he says, is that it gives us an excellent look at life as it appears to one who is without (or before) Christ. Preachers will find this book useful. Ecclesiastes is divided into 32 bite-sized pericopes. Loader's comments are readable and generally thought-provoking. At the close of each section, Loader himself becomes a preacher, often citing the New Testament to remind the reader of the new perspective our Lord brings. Before ordering the whole series for the church library, readers may want to sample other entrees. But this volume, though less filling, did "taste great."

Michael D. Kasting
Akron, Ohio

WOMEN, AUTHORITY AND THE BIBLE. Edited by Alvera Mickelson. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1986. 304 pages. Paperback, $9.95.

The book here being reviewed is a selection of essays and responses to them presented at the Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible held in October 1984 in Oak Brook, Illinois. It is divided into six parts, five of which include a response or responses to the previous essays. The sixth part contains three evaluations of the colloquium under the heading "What Have We Accomplished?" The headings of the other five parts are the following: "Why Are We Here?", "Biblical Authority," "Biblical Views of Authority and Headship," "Difficult Passages," and "Changing the Church." As J.I. Packer has pointed out in one of the evaluations, the colloquium "suffered from the built-in awkwardness of a double-barreled agenda," a fact documented by the difference between the fifth section mentioned above and the other four sections. This review will confine itself to comments on the biblical material offered and conclusions drawn from it.

I think it is fair to say that there is a great deal of valuable material offered in the exegetical studies of the various essays, and the responses on the whole take care of weaknesses and inadequacies of the main exegetical presentations. The essay of Klyne R. Snodgrass on "Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?" is probably the best of them all. W. Ward Gasque, in his response, declares: "In my opinion,

he has said just about all there is to say on the text at hand." My own comments later will show that he missed something very important indeed, but otherwise I think I could concur in the judgment of Ward Gasque. I cannot, however, at all agree with Packer when he asserts that "the New Testament papers in particular make it evident that the burden of proof regarding the exclusion of women from the office of teaching and ruling within the congregation now lies on those who maintain the exclusion rather than on those who challenge it." It is a pity that only those known to be in favor of the ordination of women were invited to the colloquium (see p. 298).

Although one cannot really claim that Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 (37?) or in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 are particularly convincing—he seems to have taken the matter rather lightly—nevertheless to dismiss his views as meant only for the existing situation in Corinth and elsewhere is quite out of keeping with what St. Paul actually says. A reference to 1 Corinthians 14:36 with its reference to the "word of God" (and also to 37 with its reference to "the command of the Lord") makes us think of something far different from a parochial, time-bound direction. A comparison with 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 (especially v. 16) shows the big difference in the nature of the apostolic authority being expressed. References to women active in the church and in the Old Testament are really irrelevant, for they do not answer the question whether women should occupy ruling positions in the church. The same comment fits the repeated references to the Spirit's gifts to the church. The question is whether the gift of ruling is one which is appropriate for and one which is given to women (*ho proistamenos en spoudee*, Rom. 12:8). Of course, what can happen in an exceptional case or in times of emergency is another matter. And it is such a situation in which we see Deborah active as judge in Israel. It is, by the way, interesting to note the omission of such prominent ruling women as Jezebel, Athaliah, and that other Jezebel of Thyatira (Rev. 2:20-23) from the list of active and energetic females.

Now, the really important biblical text for the movement towards female ordination is Galatians 3:28. So it is described in various places and in various ways in the essays, as in this sentence: "Galatians 3:28 is the necessary theological starting place for any discussion of the role of women in the church" (Gasque, p. 189). If this is the case, one must be aware that it is a mischievous text to have on one's side when used for the conclusion desired. Stripped to its basics, the argument runs: We are all one in Christ; women believers are in Christ; therefore women should be ordained. This is an illegitimate argument as the following *reductio ad absurdum* indicates. We can also argue, in precisely the same way: We are all one in Christ; children are in Christ; therefore children should or may be ordained. Or we could argue: We are all one in Christ; the mentally defective are also in Christ; therefore the mentally defective should or may be ordained.

A second problem with Galatians 3:28 is the difference in the third pair of contrasts from the other two. The translation of the passage literally runs: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male *and* female."

The emphasized *and* shows the difference in the third member. Now the difficulty is this: many relations in life can change; a Jew can renounce his Jewishness and become a gentile, and the opposite also can occur. Similarly, a slave may become free, or a free man may through certain circumstances become a slave. But male *and* female remain on earth no matter what happens. Unless we can get a better interpretation of Galatians 3:28 than what has been presented in the papers of the colloquium, Paul cannot be saved from the attack that he has written nonsense.

The better interpretation is contained in a proper understanding of the "in Christ." Snodgrass approaches it in one place only to sheer off from it because of his basic theology of the church (p. 179):

> Some traditionalists grant that Galatians 3:28 speaks of newness in the male and female relationships, but they view these words as descriptive of the *eschaton*; that is what life will be like after Christ's return. They say, however, that we still live in the old age, the age of sin, and therefore the words of 3:28 cannot be implemented on the practical level. This will not do: Christians are still residents of the old age, but they are people for whom the new age has already dawned. Our task is to actualize the new age in the midst of the old. We cannot allow ourselves to be ruled by sin and the old age, but only by Christ and the presence of the new age.

It is the view of the New Testament that the new age is not merely coming but that it is here already. It is here because Christ has come (Mark 1:15; Luke 11:20; 17:20) and because He has risen from the dead, *the* sign of the presence of the new age is in the world *now*. So Christians have indeed been "delivered from the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4, which phrase must be seen behind the "in Christ" of 3:28 and a great deal of the Galatians letter besides). They live in the overlap of the old age and the new. But—and here the obvious is missed by Snodgrass—the new is here only in hidden form. We live in the new only by faith in what is not seen, something which includes all the assertions of the ecumenical creeds, except the references to Jesus' death under Pontius Pilate. We see none of the things we confess there, and we do not see the oneness of all believers in Christ either. While this age endures, the conditions of creation endure, male *and* female remain. The realities of the new age cannot be translated into the conditions of the old. Here we can live only in the love by which faith is active, allowing Christian love to smooth over the conflicts and abysses of the old, corrupt aeon. But we cannot get rid of the conditions of creation, including sex.

And it is at this point that there is an underlying assumption in all the essays and responses (Packer almost gets away from it) which must be taken up, however briefly. The assumption is concentrated in the very frequent reference to gender rather than to sex. The reader gets the impression that all human beings are fundamentally very much the same, and that differences of sex can be reduced to curiosities of noun classification. The fact is, of course, quite, quite different. Sex is an all-pervasive fact of human personality, affecting not only the outward, visible bodies of men and women but their whole make-up as well. Apart from exceptions—for which in some cases we are very thankful, like Helen Waddell, Dorothy Sayers,

and Margaret Thatcher—women approach things in a very different way from men. This distinction is illustrated in the first essay by Patricia Gundry. Her passionate feeling and emotion, irrelevant combinations, and impossible logic contribute to a result which infuriates any man. I have come across this type of thing in every woman I have ever met. This is no matter of gender. It is something far deeper. And what has this distinction to do with authority? We have to go right back to basic, primary facts. Dr. Sasse used to say that female ordination is not only unbiblical, it is also *unnatural*. The whole question of male-female relations, of authority and rule and the like, goes back to the basics of the normal sex act itself. Verbum sapienti sat.

H.P. Hamann
Adelaide, Australia

CLERGY MALPRACTICE. By Thomas L. Needham and Samuel Southard. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1986. 185 pages. Paperback, $12.95.

Recent developments give clear evidence that pastors and congregations no longer can claim any special immunity from litigation. Drawing upon recent case histories, the authors discuss from a multidisciplinary perspective the areas of vulnerability to lawsuits and ways in which pastors and congregations can protect themselves from such vulnerability. Thus far the secular courts have been loath to enter into cases which have to do with self-governance and the theology of the congregations, including requirements and standards for training and certifying clergy of the respective traditions. This leads to the basic premise of the book that postulates that, as long as the pastor remembers and is faithful to his role as pastor and in that capacity limits himself to counseling only members of a congregation of which he is pastor, the risk of litigation is minimal. Pastors at the same time should also remember their limitations so that proper referral can be made in cases where the depth of counseling is beyond the competence of a pastor. It is suggested that "walk-ins" (people outside the congregation who approach the pastor for counseling) be briefed by the pastor on his essential role and competence at the outset lest misunderstandings arise as a result of unrealistic expectations. In other words, the pastor ought to be candid, saying that he is a pastor who works from certain scriptural presuppositions and with scriptural principles with which he will seek to enable the person to apply those precepts to his own situation.

Recent history has produced a number of lawsuits relating to church discipline and disciplinary procedures. The chapter on this topic is extraordinary, not only from a legal standpoint but more importantly and especially from a theological perspective. Congregations with day schools or pre-schools have a special vulnerability to litigation, especially in the areas of child abuse and child molestation. Current societal sensitivity is directly affecting the availability and cost of liability insurance for congregations with day schools or pre-schools or day care centers. Careful screening of teachers and helpers is absolutely essential. This book is highly recommended, not only to apprise the pastor and congregations of important developments with regard to legal accountability, but also as a refresher for pastors

of some basic pastoral ethics that could, on the one hand, stave off possible litigation on charges of malpractice and, on the other hand, build a higher level of trust making for more effective ministry.

Norbert H. Mueller

THE CULT OF THE VIRGIN MARY. By Michael P. Carroll. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986. Cloth, 253 pages.

Roman Catholicism is distinguished from other Christian denominations by a profound devotion to the Virgin Mary. In *The Cult of the Virgin Mary* Carroll examines the historical evidence to determine the origin of this devotion. The book's subtitle, "Psychological Origins," indicates where he intends to find the answer. Very little devotion to Mary is found in the first three centuries. In the early fifth century it appears suddenly. Carroll explains that during the fourth century a large number of lower class Roman citizens were taken into the church. Unlike the upper and middle class families with strong father figures, the lower classes were characterized by "father ineffective" families and thus the devotion to Mary was an extension of an Oedipal process. Since such families are more common in the countries bordering on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, the cult of Mary has flourished there, but not, for example, in the northern countries of England and Germany. Poland is one exception.

Whether one accepts Carroll's hypothesis depends upon a number of factors, not the least being the viability of Freudian categories for understanding human nature. Still his hypothesis is valid, and the historical evidence brought in to answer the question of the origin of the Marian cult is invaluable. He examines the possibilities of its origin in Roman pagan deities, but the virgin-mother combination, characteristic of Mary in Roman Catholicism, cannot be found there. A careful distinction is made between Roman Catholic devotion to Mary as the virgin and Eastern Orthodox devotion to her as the mother of God. The historical examination goes from the first century up to the present, including Marian apparitions and shrines to her honor.

Carroll, who seems unfavorably disposed to the cult, is pessimistic about its discontinuation. A steady decline in devotion to Mary can be noted in the 1950s. The cult suffered a serious setback at Vatican II, which rooted the arguments for devotion to her in the Bible and said that devotion to her must be subordinated to that due her son. A shift may have taken place with the accession of John Paul II as pope. His devotion to her can be explained by the prominent place she has in his homeland. More importantly, Carroll argues, as Marian devotion gratifies the Oedipal desire of both sexes, any decline in the cult will soon be marked by revival, especially in societies marked by paternal absenteeism. A combination of theology, history, and psychology, this is one book that will both challenge and interest.

David P. Scaer

OUR EUCHARISTIC PRAYERS IN WORSHIP, PREACHING, AND STUDY. By Raymond Moloney. Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1985. 165 pages. Paperback, $7.95.

Eucharistic prayers have a controversial history in our church. People seem to be adamantly for them or against them. No matter what side one takes, it is important to notice that the Christian church has been praying at the eucharist from the time of the Didache (c. 90 A.D.) and that much sacramental theology may be learned from reading eucharistic prayers. In Raymond Moloney's new contribution to Michael Glazier's *Theology and Life Series*, we have a commentary on the four current eucharistic prayers used in the Roman Catholic church for the benefit of the "ordinary priest, seminarian, teacher of religion and interested laity." Since most of us do not fall into these categories, this book is not for us. However, if one is interested in sacramental theology, there is something to be learned from this book. Moloney gives us the texts of these prayers in both English and Latin, including at the end of the book the canon of Hippolytus and the Alexandrian Anaphora of Saint Basil. By including these two ancient prayers in the discussion, Moloney shows how faithful Vatican II was to traditional eucharistic prayers. The commentary in the book is also very good. The chapter entitled "The Eucharistic Prayer in General" gives a simple but thorough history of the canon from its Jewish precedents to the Reformation and an explanation of the principal parts of the canon. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book. Moloney's brief discussion of the canon of Hippolytus is superb. For each of the four prayers, Moloney's commentary is insightful and informative, handling such problems as the epiclesis and the eucharistic sacrifice. Although we would disagree with much of what is said, it is helpful to hear an opposing position stated clearly and succinctly. No matter what we might think of eucharistic prayers, a book like Moloney's introduces us to another tradition that believes in the "profound biblical quality running through all the canons" and sees in these eucharistic prayers "the Word of God implemented and applied in the living Church."

Arthur Just, Jr.

ACTS. AUGSBURG COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Gerhard A. Krodel. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1986. Paperback, 527 pages.

The Augsburg Commentary series is intended for laypeople, students, and pastors. From this fact the conclusion should not be drawn that the enterprise is substandard and unscholarly. This conclusion would be far from the truth. Krodel's credentials as a New Testament scholar serve as the foundation for this most readable and usable commentary, which acquaints the reader with the most recent research on the Books of Acts. Going through the Book of Acts, Krodel offers a commentary on individual words and phrases which are set in bold print so that the reader can easily distinguish the Biblical text from the commentary. Greek words are offered

only occasionally and with parentheses so that the less than fully informed reader may move without interruption. An introduction provides an overview of the current state of the art and Krodel tends toward caution in putting forth his own conclusions.

The author of Acts is also the writer of the Gospel, a companion of Paul, though it is not absolutely certain that he can be identified as the Luke named in the epistles as his companion. As he was dependent on Mark, the two-volume work appeared in the decade of 80-90. From his writing it can be determined that the author was a cultured person, equally at home in Greek and Jewish worlds, with a flair for language, able to fit a variety of materials into a unified narrative. In contrast to some comtemporaries, Krodel sees no division between Luke's picture of Paul and the one found in the epistles. In contrast to Mark and Matthew, Luke begins the "salvation history" before the birth of Jesus and continues beyond his resurrection into the history of the early church, which is the subject of Acts. Jerusalem is more central for Luke than it is for Matthew. Just as this city is not the end but the beginning of the Christian mission, so Rome is not "the ends of the world," but the new center of Christian mission activity. Krodel, while crediting Luke as a theologian, sees him as being a faithful historian, as many of the places and persons are known from secular history. The intriguing distinction between the longer Western text and the shorter Alexandrian one is introduced, but resolved only by reference to a definitive work by Metzger. A difference in length of nine percent is important. One solution not offered by Krodel is that the scribes who gave us the longer Western text believed that the "salvation history" of Acts really did not come to an end.

For most serious students of Luke-Acts, the identification of the author is the first question. Do the "we" passages really require that the author was with Paul? Krodel finds no support for the idea that the "we" sections were taken from an earlier source, since they do not differ from the rest of the material stylistically. Vernon Robbins has shown that "we" was used when authors described sea voyages, even if they were not on board. This point is dismissed by Krodel since in most of the sea narratives of Paul "we" is not used. The best explanation is that the author was the apostle's companion.

Of particular interest is the interpretation of certain passages (e.g., 2:42) as eucharistic. Problematic in this regard is 27:33-38 since, if taken eucharistically, the passage might suggest participation in the eucharist by pagans. Krodel does favor the eucharistic interpretation but points to some manuscripts which add "after he gave bread also to us," i.e., the believers traveling with Paul. It is hard to take exception to Krodel when he says, "Yet Luke's wording does remind the reader of the Eucharist. Jesus who was present with Paul in the desolation of the storm is present in hopeless situations when we celebrate the Eucharist." Any pastor preparing for a Bible study on Acts would do himself a disservice if he did not get hold of Krodel's *Acts*. In fact, any excuse to read it would be valid.

David P. Scaer

AUGUSTINE. By Henry Chadwick. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986. 122 pages. Cloth, $14.95.

This little book is an outstanding and readable introduction to the thought of Saint Augustine. It is part of the *Past Masters* series which provides "concise, lucid and authoritative introductions to the thought of leading intellectual figures of the past whose ideas still influence the way we think today" (cover). There could hardly be a more authoritative guide than Henry Chadwick, recently retired as Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University, England. As one can expect, Chadwick is encyclopedic in breadth and penetrating in his presentation while yet maintaining enough clarity and simplicity for the beginner.

No one influenced Western Christianity and spirituality more profoundly than did Augustine. Our understanding of the primacy of will, of personhood, of the social nature of God, of the purpose of government, of the just parameters of war, of relative moral values, of history, of the force of evil, as well as our introspective character, all of these and more are the inheritance bequeathed to us by Augustine. To a large extent these still provide the form and substance of large areas of our thought and life. Some appreciation of Augustine is essential for any educated person. Yet Augustine's thought can be daunting. All the more helpful, then, is this small book, which is highly recommended for the shelves of church library, study, and home.

In short but pithy chapters Chadwick discusses the formative influences on Augustine's thought (Cicero, Mani, Plato, Christ) and Augustine's own ideas concerning education, free choice, vocation, creation, Trinity, nature and grace, church and sacraments. A brief bibliography for further reading will lead the interested student into the deeper waters of the Augustinian sea.

William C. Weinrich

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE. By Anthony A. Hoekema. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1986. 264 pages.

Those who like their theology to be based on the Holy Scriptures and to be faithful to the Lutheran Confessions are well aware of the urgent need of a comprehensive and up-to-date treatment of Christian anthropology. Until such a work is made available, profitable use can be made of Anthony Hoekema's treatment of the doctrine of man in *Created in God's Image*. Hoekema is Professor Emeritus at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We cannot, therefore, expect that his treatment of man will conform to the anthropological definitions and emphases found in the Lutheran Confessions. Hoekema himself admits that "the theological standpoint represented here is that of evangelical Christianity from a Reformed or Calvinistic perspective" (p. ix). We can, however, expect Dr. Hoekema to put forth an honest attempt to make his anthropology conform to the teachings of Scripture and to interact with various contemporary models of man. In this expectation he does not disappoint us.

Hoekema shows his respect for Scripture by devoting considerable attention to the exegesis of specific passages which bear directly upon what the Bible says about man. For instance, in reference to the image of God, there is a thorough discussion of such key verses as Genesis 9:6 (pp. 16ff.) and James 3:9 (pp. 19ff.). Hoekema rejects the view that "man was the image-bearer of God in the past, at the time of his creation, and he may possibly be an image-bearer of God in the future, but he does not bear God's image now. And this is the reason why you ought not to kill him" (pp.17-18). His reason for rejecting this point of view is stated as follows (p.18):

> This kind of argumentation, however, fails to do justice to the text. The reason no human being may shed man's blood, the passage says, is that man has unique value, a value that is not to be attributed to any other of God's creatures: namely that he is the image-bearer of God. Precisely because he is such an image-bearer, not *was* one in the past, or *might be* one in the future, is it so great a sin to kill him.

On the basis of the above comments the reader should not be misled into thinking that the volume under review is simply a series of exegetical investigations. On the contrary, Hoekema achieves a good balance of exegesis and theology together with a sense of the historical and practical. This can be noted from the titles of chapters three through six: "The Image of God: Biblical Teaching"; "The Image of God: Historical Survey"; "The Image of God: A Theological Summary"; "The Question of the Self-Image." Chapter six, on the self-image, is introduced with the following comment (p. 102):

> In the discussion of the image of God, we looked at man in his three-fold relationship: to God, to others, and to nature. But is there not also a possible fourth relationship, namely, man's relationship to himself?... We should not, therefore, think of man's relationship to himself as a fourth relationship alongside of the other three. It is rather, a relationship that underlies all the others, and makes possible a person's proper performance in his or her relationship toward God, others, and nature.

Of the twelve chapters of the book the first six deal with the Christian doctrine of man and the final six with the Christian doctrine of sin. The book is well written, clear, insightful, and exhibits a good degree of order. Anyone who takes the time to leaf through its pages would be well advised to spend a few moments on pages 168 to 175, where Hoekema lists seven traits essential to sin: (1.) Sin has no independent existence (2.) Sin is always related to God and His will. (3.) Sin has its sources in what Scripture calls "the heart." (4.) Sin includes thoughts as well as acts. (5.) Sin includes both guilt and pollution. (6.) Sin is at its root a form of pride. (7.) Sin is usually masked. The book comes complete with a good basic bibliography and indices of subjects, proper names, and Scripture references. The current propaganda campaign being waged by the cult of non-sexist language has not converted our author.

Richard Muller

CONCISE DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY. By Millard J. Erickson. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986. Cloth, 187 pages.

Experienced pastors whose seminary careers already belong to the unrecoverable past may not recall the frustration experienced by new seminarians confronting a theological vocabulary for the first time. Reaching for Webster's dictionary did not remove the frustration. Theological vocabulary consists of moving targets, constantly being defined and refined by the users. Without previous training the student needs at least half a year to become acquainted with the world of theological language. Millard Erickson's *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* should make the transition into the language of theology a little easier.

As suggested by the title, topics, persons, groups, documents, and doctrines are listed alphabetically. Each entry receives at least a one-sentence explanation. Though Erickson is an avowed evangelical, he presents the positions of others, e.g., Lutherans and Roman Catholics fairly. Baptismal regeneration is said to be based on John 3:5 and Titus 3:5 and "is found particularly in Roman Catholic and Lutheran theology." A Baptist is defined as holding to "such doctrines as church membership composed solely of regenerate believers, believers' baptism by immersion, a congregational form of government, separation of the church and state, and the priesthood of believers." (With a little adjustment here and there, this theology almost sounds Lutheran.) In regard to the primacy of Peter, Erickson surprisingly and fairly says that it is accepted by both Protestants and Roman Catholics, but only the latter see in it the basis of the papacy.

It is not the definition of the traditional items, but newer ones which cause the most problems. Varieties of "criticism" are form (*Formgeschichte*), historical, literary, redaction, structural, and textual. Among the living theological pace-setters, John Hick, famed for his *The Myth of God Incarnate*, is included, but not Carl Henry, the first editor of *Christianity Today*. Charles Hodge, a prominent defender of Calvinism in the last century often mentioned by Pieper in the *Christian Dogmatics*, is included, but Walther and Pieper are not. Certain definitions might be refined for a second edition. The real presence is said to be "the body and blood of Christ physically present within the bread and wine of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper." This sounds like the doctrine not of the real presence but of impanation, which is as Erickson defines correctly elsewhere as "Christ embodied in the bread." Lutherans teach an actual identification between the bread and the body of Christ. Luther's "in, with, and under" was an attempt to explain the presence of Christ in the Supper as being beyond ordinary definitions of space, as these prepositions are in a sense contradictory. Since the presence of Christ is not bound by space, describing the sacramental presence as "physical" is inappropriate. Philippists are identified as followers of Melanchthon who compromised with the Roman Catholics. This term is really the equivalent of Crypto-Calvinists, which is elsewhere defined correctly. Millard Erickson's dictionary should have a long and successful life simply because it is so eminently useful for those taking the first plunge into the world of theology.

David P. Scaer

OEKOUMENISCHE DOGMATIK: GRUNDZUEGE. By Edmund Schlink. Zweite Auflage. Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Goettingen, 1985. Cloth, 825 pages.

Out of his interest in the ecumenical movement evolved the late Edmund Schlink's "Ecumenical Dogmatics." Professor Schlink attained his reputation at the University of Heidelberg and was highly regarded as a confessing Lutheran, as much as such was possible within the Lutheran-Reformed union of the established German church. Not unlike Barth, and perhaps Pieper too, Schlink understands the Gospel as the presupposition of dogmatics. Rather than seeing the dogmatic task arising from the understanding of the Gospel within one existing tradition, his focus is on what he sees as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of the first seven centuries. This does not mean that Schlink gravitates to an ecumenical minimalism, but sees dogmatics springing out of the wide spectrum of opinions as they are reflected within the various traditions. Testifying to the sincerity of this attempt are introductions provided by Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians. Thirty chapters are subdivided under six divisions: "The Gospel as Presupposition for the Church's Doctrine," "The Doctrine of Creation," "The Doctrine of Redemption," "The Doctrine of the New Creation," "The Doctrine of God," and a final section discussing grace, the eternal counsel of God, double predestination, election, damnation, the incompatability of divine election and damnation, and a warning to the church and invitation to the world. The section on redemption, which is a Christology, not only gives attention to what is traditionally called the person and work of Christ, but is expanded to include the activity of Christ in the world today through Law and Gospel, baptism and the eucharist. "Lo, I am with you unto the end of the world" clearly belongs to Christology. The doctrine of God comes after the section on redemption, and thus Schlink veers from the now more generally accepted order in which theology in the narrow sense precedes Christology. Calvinism begins with God and precedes to Christ, an approach now characteristic of Lutheran dogmatics as well. Schleiermacher only handled the doctrine of the Trinity at the end of his dogmatics simply because, in his opinion, it did not belong to the first level of corporate expression of the Christian consciousness. This is hardly Schlink's motivation.

The advantage to Schlink's approach is the deliberate and explicit incorporation of a wider range of Christian experience into dogmatics. Dogmatics is reflection on Christian faith. When the parameters of the experiences of Christian faith are enlarged, the basic foundational resources will expand. Such an approach is hardly foreign to the Lutheran dogmatic enterprise, since our confessional heritage saw itself as a continuation of the ancient church and not a separatistic movement divorced from historical roots. The disadvantage of an "ecumenical" approach is that it tends to rob dogmatics of its critical function. The locus on baptism (pp.479-489) is sufficiently brief to see how Schlink's method functions.

Baptism is seen as the command of the resurrected Lord who has been given universal authority by God. Presuppositional for Christian baptism are the Old Testament rites of purification, the baptism of John, Jesus' baptism by John, the completion of that baptism in His death and resurrection, and the sending of the

Spirit of God. Christian baptism, unlike its predecessors, is a one-time act accomplished in the name of Jesus. The trinitarian formula of Matthew 28 is an interpretation of the earliest church's formula of baptism simply in the name of Jesus. (Schlink offered this exegetically questionable opinion in his *Doctrine of Baptism*, published by Concordia Publishing House. He apparently did not change his opinion.) Then follow three sections: "Baptism in Christ," "Baptism through the Holy Spirit," and "Reception into the Church." Schlink properly points out that, since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit of Christ, it is impossible to have Christ and not the Spirit. At this point it would have been helpful if Schlink would have been specific in naming those groups who with their baptism in the Spirit make an impossible and illicit separation between Christ and the Spirit. On these topics a high level of agreement is possible among various Christian groups if the discussion is limited to biblical language. Dogmatics must breach the wall of biblical vocabulary in order to reveal basic differences of understanding on what that vocabulary really means. Here Schlink, perhaps because of his ecumenical purpose, is reluctant to venture.

The Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches have recognized the validity of the baptisms of the Reformation churches. The baptism of *infants* reveals ecumenical gaps less easily bridged, since, as Schlink points out, such baptisms are not universally recognized as valid and must be repeated. From an historical perspective, no specific references to infant baptism can be found before around 200, but the validity of infant baptism was not questioned. Since for Schlink the New Testament is also inconclusive on this question, he resorts to dogmatic arguments. The early post-apostolic church's practice of infant baptism, an historical argument, is combined with the dogmatic argument of God's work in children by Schlink to support infant baptism. (Luther used a similar line of reasoning in the Large Catechism when he pointed to the existence of the Christian Church as proof for the effectiveness of infant baptism. But how would one answer the objection that many baptized as infants live totally unregenerate lives?) Infant baptism also reflects the passive character of the Christian who is born from the church in baptism as from a mother. Baptizing infants brings them into the church where the Spirit can work a faith able to reflect upon itself. Schlink sidesteps the characteristic Lutheran teaching that infants can and do believe precisely because of their baptism and not because of an independent working of the Spirit in the congregation. He concludes his discussion on baptism by mentioning some Baptist scholars (e.g., George Beasley-Murray) who will not rebaptize those baptized as infants if they show lives of continuous regeneration and some paedobaptists who will not dispense infant baptism where the family and sponsors cannot guarantee a Christian upbringing.

On the positive side Schlink brings into his discussion on baptism a wider range of biblical materials that are often found in the traditional approach, which too often exhausts the topic by concentrating on the phrase, "the forgiveness of sins." On the negative side—and this is quite serious—the reader is not really sure that Schlink finds infant baptism all that necessary, even if he finds it to be a tenable dogmatic conclusion. Omitted from his discussion is the *oikos* controversy of whether children were included in the baptized New Testament households. What place do

the synoptic pericopes of Jesus and the children or John 3 have in the discussion? One appreciates the dogmatic discussion, but one is somewhat lost when it comes to an end. A similar disillusion is brought about by the discussion on the Lord's Supper.

Only when an English translation is made available will Schlink's influence in theology have its full impact in America. His depth of understanding of early church sources and his breadth of experience show what is ecumenically achievable and what can and should serve as a backdrop for current dogmatic discussions. Dogmatics falter when they are obviously too *dogmatic*, but on some issues they should be a bit more decisive.

David P. Scaer

THE GREAT REFORMATION. By R. Tudor Jones. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985.

R. Tudor Jones, professor of church history and principal at the University School of Theology, Bangor, Wales, has written a little introduction to the Protestant Reformation aimed at laypeople or perhaps advanced high school students. Writing simply and concisely, Jones covers all the bases from Wyclif and Hus to the Council of Trent and even finds space for brief chapters on the reformation in Ireland and Wales. Of necessity, of course, his treatment is superficial, but it is not unscholarly. Although he does not clutter the text with footnotes, neither does he leave his readers entirely unaware of some of the major points of difference among historians regarding the period, e.g., the dating of Luther's tower experience. Jones also includes a list of almost 200 titles for supplemental reading arranged by topic.

However, in one respect Jones' book is rather old-fashioned, viz., in its Protestant partisanship. This attitude does not mean that he twists the facts or misconstrues them, but it does mean that he interprets them in such a way as to make it clear that "the Spirit of God was at work powerfully and creatively in the lives of sixteenth-century people" (p.7), especially Protestants. For example, Jones concludes his account of William Tyndale by calling him "a heroic figure" and remarking upon his "martyr's death" (pp.114-15), whereas Tyndale's Roman Catholic opponent, Thomas More, is simply a distinguished "protester" and *his* death an "execution" (p.120).

In a similar fashion, Jones dismisses Trent as a "failure" and a "disaster" (p.247) for those desiring a biblical or truly catholic church but hails the Protestant Reformation as a "momentous revival of Christianity, the greatest since the age of the apostles" (p.261). Although appreciative of Luther's insight, faith, and courage, Jones is unsympathetic toward those characteristics of the reformer that ultimately differentiated the Lutheran church from mainstream Protestantism. Thus, Jones charges Luther with maintaining an "ungenerous attitude" (p.63) toward Zwingli, with hesitancy (p. 255) in effecting liturgical change, and with "differentiating too sharply" (p. 258) between the two kingdoms in contrast to Calvin, who maintained the unity of all human endeavor under the sovereignty of God.

In an age of minimalist ecumenism R. Tudor Jones is refreshing on account of his confident assertion of the essential correctness of the Protestant movement. Although aware of wide variety among sixteenth century Protestants, Jones finds valuable insights in them all. For confessional Lutherans, however, being included within a Protestant mishmash is not much better than being mixed into the usual ecumenical stew; and from this point of view Jones' work is a disappointment.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

LUTHER'S LAST BATTLES: POLITICS AND POLEMICS, 1531-1546. Mark U. Edwards, Jr. Cornell University Press, 1983. Paperback, $9.95.

Readers familiar with either Roland Bainton's or E.G. Schwiebert's biography of Luther will recall that neither work pays very much attention to the course of Luther's life after the Diet or Augsburg (1530) since, as Bainton put it, "the last quarter of Luther's life was neither determinative for his ideas nor crucial for his achievements." Recently, however, historians have begun to pay more attention to the older Luther. Thus, for example, the most recent convention of the American Historical Association devoted an entire subsection to "Old Man Luther," and James Kittelson's new biography devotes as much space to Luther after 1521 as it does to the years before. An important catalyst in generating this new emphasis in Luther studies has been Mark Edwards' *Luther's Last Battles*, first published in 1983 but now available in paperback.

Although by no means a complete biography of Luther's life from 1531 to 1546, Edwards' book goes far toward rescuing these years from biographical oblivion by fixing attention on a central motif of the reformer's career—his writings in defense of the faith against foes of that faith, namely, papists, Turks, and Jews. Even though these works contain some of Luther's harshest and most vulgar language (illustrated no less by Cranach woodcuts!), Edwards seeks neither to apologize for Luther nor to discredit him but to explain him by carefully describing the political-polemical context in which he wrote. Briefly, Edwards' theme is that Luther's last writings arose from the changed circumstances of the Reformation itself and not from Luther's old age or ill health, for by the 1530's the Reformation had entered its consolidation phase, so that increasingly Luther wrote to defend the decisions of its leadership and to reassure the hearts of its followers. Thus, Luther used his rhetorical skills not to *persuade* his opponents but to *discredit* them as the mouthpieces of Satan, now let loose in the world's last days.

Although Edwards appreciates the central importance of theology for understanding Luther, he disappoints his readers if they are looking for an extensive theological analysis of the older Luther. However, for an introduction to Luther's later and still controversial writing (e.g., *On the Jews and Their Lies* and *Against the Papacy at Rome, Founded by the Devil*), as well as for a description of the historical situation that provoked them, Edwards' book is one that students of Luther ought not to ignore.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

GENESIS 37-50: A COMMENTARY. By Claus Westermann. Translated by John J. Scullion. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1986. 269 pages.

Claus Westermann, professor emeritus at the University of Heidelberg, brings twenty-five years of study in Genesis to completion with this volume, providing an in-depth study of the text, all the major viewpoints concerning the material (with extensive bibliographies), and suggestions for proclamation. He provides a rich mine of information about theological uses of such words as "blessing," "peace," and "comfort." Customs of the day are explained, helping the reader to stop and meditate on a very familiar story. By way of example, Joseph's dreams are a threat to tribal family order, as even Jacob recognizes. The brothers falsely try to "comfort" their father by getting him to "forget" Joseph. Continuing as shepherds in Egypt means the brothers will pose no political threat. Through Joseph and the Pharaoh Yahweh shows care even for pagan kingdoms and not just the family of Jacob. Judah is really the first biblical example of one suffering vicariously, being willing to die to spare his father's life, since Jacob would die if Benjamin did not return. The question addressed in Genesis 37-50 of how Jacob's family will turn out is answered as the tribal structure is preserved in a new political system.

Westermann doubts whether "the Joseph story" is an apt designation, arguing convincingly that this is really a continuation of "the Jacob story." He rejects von Rad's notion that it is a wisdom story about the type of young man found in Proverbs. Rather, the question is this: Who will lead Jacob's family and how will they survive in a world where the tribe of Jacob could not provide for itself? Would Pharaoh enslave Jacob's family? The answer is found in God's use of Joseph's misfortune. Operating with the historical-critical methodology in dating the text, Westermann rejects the notion of some that the story was first written at the time of Esther, opting instead for the Solomonic era. Only Solomon of all the Israelite and Judean kings had dreams, a common motif in the ancient world. Only in his era was there a good relationship between Israel and Egypt. In his era the Joseph story would show that God could lead His people through kings as well as tribal leaders. Westermann does provide an opportunity to see how historical narrative can be used to teach theological truths about God as Lord of all.

Thomas H. Trapp
St. Paul, Minnesota

WIDENING THE HORIZONS: PASTORAL RESPONSES TO A FRAGMENTED SOCIETY. By Charles Gerkin. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1986. 192 pages. Paperback, $11.95.

This book seeks to offer a new model for pastoral practice. The author is concerned that the discipline today is too enamored with psychological models: "Pastoral care in its modern period has been in significant ways captive to the psychological mindedness that had helped bring upon American culture the age of preoccupation

with the self" (p.12). The reviewer appreciates this appraisal of pastoral practice in modern American churches; it is a matter that should be of concern to the church. The author wants the discipline returned to its theological roots: "Pastoral care theorists increasingly are searching for theological roots, probing for the primary sources of the discipline's identity. This book is best seen as one such effort to relocate pastoral care practice within the tradition from whence it sprang" (p.12).

Generally the author does well in defining the areas of concern for the church in a fragmented society. He is less than convincing with his new model for soul care. His model advocates the use of biblical stories and events as settings into which the counselee is placed. He terms this approach "narrative theology." The counselee, by identifying with the biblical persons and events, should be able to discover new perspectives in his experience and find help in restructuring his life.

Surely this "narrative" approach to counseling can be helpful. However, the crucified Christ and the atonement are a missing factor in the book. Evidently the atonement is not considered relevant since it is noteworthy by its absence. This reviewer does not see how a Christian pastor can counsel souls without the doctrine of atonement. The author also fails to present the Scriptures as the standard of all life and faith. The book deals much with technique but lacks deep theological substance.

George Kraus

JUSTIFICATION: The Chief Doctrine of Christian Doctrine as Expounded in *Loci Theologici*. By Martin Chemnitz. Translated by J.A.O. Preus. Edited by Delpha Holleque Preus. Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 1985. Cloth, 192 pages.

The earliest Lutheran dogmatic tradition is now being made accessible in English through translations published by Concordia Publishing House. J.A.O. Preus, the former president of the LCMS and Concordia Theological Seminary, has with the help of his capable wife prepared a translation of that part of Martin Chemnitz's *Loci* handling justification. The first Lutheran dogmatics was the *Loci Communes* of Melanchthon. These *Loci* provided Chemnitz with the outline and structure for his dogmatics, which were called *Loci Theologici*. The section on justification forms only a small part of the second volume. Dr. Preus explains how in translating he has had to condense Chemnitz's material through the elimination of extensive quotations from the church fathers and substituting citations for the longer biblical quotes. Melanchthon's material is placed in italics to distinguish it from Chemnitz's.

This volume could easily be entitled "The Gospel and Justification," since the first forty pages or so revolve around the Gospel, its preaching, the need for it, its promise, and its service as the foundation for saints in all ages. Controversies concerning justification are subdivided into the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the post-apostolic period, from Ebion up to a certain Marcionite in the time of Eusebius by the name of Apelles.

A chapter on the vocabulary of justification covers these phrases and terms: justify, be justified, righteous act, acquittal, and the righteousness of God and of faith. Chemnitz shows that "justify" means in the ancient world and in the Bible to absolve an accused person or to accept a person as righteous. Other discussions are devoted to faith and grace. A final chapter on the biblical support for the doctrine of justification will make this volume particularly useful to those pastors who intend to make justification a central theme in their preaching and teaching. Dr. Preus intends that this volume will be a window into the thought of Chemnitz, but also that it may serve as devotional guide for pastors and laity alike. A fine binding complements this definitive exposition of Lutheranism's central teaching and helps to assure its position in our generation. The translator and the editor have earned our gratitude.

David P. Scaer

AGAINST ALL HOPE: The Prison Memoirs of Armando Valladares. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1986. Cloth, 380 pages.

Armando Valladares was first imprisoned in Cuba as a result of his refusal to recant his objections to communism. His imprisonment came about shortly after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959. Valladares was held prisoner in various locations for twenty-two years. *Against All Hope* documents the brutal and unprovoked abuse of political prisoners by the communist regime in Cuba which still go on to this day, although unreported by our media. Valladares in a very resourceful way managed to get word to the outside concerning conditions in Cuban prisons through letters and poems, so that Amnesty International and other organizations finally brought pressure to bear on Fidel Castro. Although nearly at the point of death from beatings and malnutrition, Cuban authorities nursed Valladares back to health and vigor. When he was released, the brutality perpetrated on Valladares was not evident to the casual observer.

Such books as *Against All Hope* should be read by Christians in free nations throughout the world. The content reminds us how conditions can become under godless and repressive governments. Valladares often notes how faith in God sustained him while undergoing treatment designed to be as inhumane as possible without actually taking his life. In fact, the final words of his book are, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Don Johnson
Ortonville, Minnesota

LUTHER'S WORKS. VOLUME 55: INDEX. Edited by Joel W. Lundeen. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1986. 462 pages.

"Here at last!" is, no doubt, how many Luther scholars (both professional and amateur) will greet the publication of the final volume of the American Edition

of *Luther's Works*. Gone are the days of endless paging through the index of each individual volume. This comprehensive index is not a collation of fifty-four separate indices, but a new compilation based upon the editor's reading of the entire *Works*. The subject index contains over 9,000 names, subjects, and titles. A scripture index is also included. The format is well done, allowing for easy access to the information. The editor's preface is most helpful and will aid the researcher in his use of this valuable tool. One can only look forward to yet another resurgence in Luther studies.

Paul J. Grime

MATTHEW AS STORY. By Jack Dean Kingsbury. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1986. Paperback, 149 pages.

Jack Kingsbury, a 1959 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and now a professor at Union Seminary (Virginia), has earned international recognition as one of the leading scholars in gospel studies. In *Matthew As Story* Kingsbury applies to the first gospel the technique of literary criticism, as it was developed by Seymour Chatman in *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978). Unlike other forms of criticism (e.g., historical-biographical, form-critical, and redaction-critical), Kingsbury explains, literary criticism accepts the text at its surface meaning without asking questions of historicity, sources, and the author's theological intentions. A literary critic may be committed to these forms of criticism, but they play no part in literary criticism itself. In a preliminary way this point may suggest that conservative theologians who feel these earlier forms of criticism to be at variance with what may be termed a high view of Scripture may possibly with impunity use the method. The reader will have to judge for himself.

Kingsbury distinguishes between "story," which is Matthew's life of Jesus, and "discourse," how that story is told. The story is broken down into three elements: events, incidents creating the plot; characters, persons appearing in the narrative (e.g., the disciples, Jesus, the crowds, the Jewish leaders, and single individuals, such as Pontius Pilate); and settings, the place or the situation in which the characters act. Next a distinction is made between "the real author," "the implied author," and the "narrator," even though in the case of the first evangelist these could very well be the same person. Matthew, as the real author, is an historical person who created the narrative. In telling the story, he assumes the role of the implied author. The narrator is the invisible speaker to whom the reader listens as he goes through the story. Literary criticism pays attention to Matthew, the narrator of the story, who in regard to the story he is telling is omnipresent and omniscient. He is with Jesus from His conception to His resurrection. As he tells the story, he provides his commentary, in some cases rendering a value judgment on the characters or injecting himself into the narrative to provide an explanation which the reader may not understand (cf. 24:15, "let the reader understand"). As the implied story-teller

Matthew serves as narrator in the place of God and Jesus. Though Kingsbury does not use this terminology, Matthew presents the divine view of the life of Jesus. While in some cases Matthew looks back upon the life of Jesus as history, in other cases he is the contemporary of Jesus (e.g., in the giving of the great commission in chapter 28). Other distinctions are made between "the real reader," the person who actually hears or reads the story; "the implied reader," the one who reacts to every point in the story; and the "narratee," the one to whom Matthew as narrator addresses his story. But for Kingsbury the distinction between the narratee and the implied reader is not all that important. This method is applied to Matthew according to an outline Kingsbury has offered in previous publications: (1) the figure of Jesus, 1:1-4:16; (2) the ministry to Israel, 4:17-16:20; and (3) the journey to Jerusalem, death, and resurrection, 16:21-28:20. The actual use of the method results in a commentary in which various parts of Matthew as story are related to each other. For example, in the third part, the story of Jesus revolves around the journey to Jerusalem and the events which take place there.

The one advantage to Kingsbury's approach is that, even if the reader does not fully grasp his explanation of literary criticism with its three distinctions for both the story-teller and the reader, he is able to relate to the *res* itself. When Kingsbury characterizes the crowds as uncommitted, the disciples as both lacking and possessing understanding, the Jewish leaders as scheming, and the journey to Jerusalem as leading to the death of Jesus, the reader may not only be familiar with this approach, but may, in fact, have used it. This familiarity could be expected since preachers are in a sense story-tellers, and story-telling is virtually a part of the human psyche. Thus Kingsbury is not creating a *novum*, but developing a technique to scrutinize what many have done. One wonders whether the concept of a story might be substituted by that of a play in which a narrator comes from behind the curtains occasionally to inform the audience of the meaning of the script.

The real question, as posed above, is whether this approach is compatible with a high view of the gospels. I think so, simply because literary criticism, as presented by Kingsbury, does not necessarily presuppose certain other methods. Kingsbury is, however, committed to other procedures by which he attempts to reconstruct the historical circumstances of the writer, who may have been a disciple of the original Matthew, and his community, which is Greek-speaking in northern Galilee or Syria, perhaps Antioch. These conclusions do not belong *per se* to literary criticism and are themselves open to criticism. Granted Kingsbury's assumption that the ministry of Jesus in Galilee may suggest that the gospel's audience was also there, the way in which the evangelist speaks about the field of blood in Jerusalem may suggest an origin in that city before its destruction. Kingsbury, in trying to show a community divorced from the synagogue, points to Matthew's lack of a friendly scribe such as Mark has in 12:34, but he does not mention the first evangelist's friendly use of the scribe who becomes a disciple in the kingdom (13:51). As with most scholars, Kingsbury sees the priority of Mark as a necessary guide in interpreting Matthew, though he hedges a bit by using "if."

Regardless of what the reader thinks of Kingsbury's conclusions about Matthew's historical origins, he has provided a great service in setting forth the gospel as a literary unit. As much as is possible, he has permitted the reader to place himself in Matthew's shoes as he addressed his gospel to his hearers and readers. In what sense does the officiant of the liturgy become the narrator in the place and stead of the original evangelist? That question can be addressed another time.

David P. Scaer

THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THEOLOGY. By J.A. Quenstedt. Abridged, edited, and translated by Luther Poellot. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1986.

I have often thought that John Andrew Quenstedt in his theological output bears a striking resemblance in a formal sense to Thomas Aquinas—not because they employed similar scholastic approaches in their theological labors, or because almost nothing of their own life and character is revealed in their writings, or even because each lived and wrote at the end of a long and rich era of theological activity and productivity. They resemble each other in their works because they both recapitulate and summarize, defend and explain, clarify and popularize a great theological tradition and position. They resemble each other also because they terminated—one might almost say killed—the possibility of future theological output of the form and genre they employed, and that by the excellence of their own theological work—almost like Michelangelo, who killed Renaissance sculpure by the excellence of his work. No subsequent scholastic *opus* ever compared with the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas; no subsequent orthodox Lutheran dogmatics book ever surpassed the *Theologia Didactico-Polemica* of Quenstedt, not in respect to clarity, form, organization, comprehensiveness, or biblical basis for the *loci* presented. Quenstedt brought about the end of an era.

Unlike Aquinas, Quenstedt has never been translated before. Now Luther Poellot has served us all by introducing us to this great scholastic theologian of the period of Lutheran orthodoxy. And he has served us well by translating and editing the very first section of Quenstedt's work in dogmatics, the section of theological prolegomena, which offer topics of heated and significant debate today, but which also offer insight into the whole of Quenstedt's dogmatics. Quenstedt's prolegomena discuss issues such as these: What is theology? Is revealed theology possible? Is theology a practical aptitude? In doing so he touches upon many burning theological issues today, issues raised by existentialism, linguistic analysis, neo-orthodoxy, process theology, and many other theological trends and movements which address and threaten the very foundation of the theological enterprise, questioning such basic Christian assumptions as the following: Is pure doctrine a possibility? Can God make Himself known to man? Can man even talk about God? And what is the

place of theology within the broad scope of knowledge? Quenstedt's answers to these questions and others are the very same answers which we must give today as confessional Lutherans. They are the right answers. Therefore, this little book, while scholastic in form and prolix at times (although always clear), is well worth our patient reading.

Robert Preus

THE PEOPLE CALLED: THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITY IN THE BIBLE. By Paul D. Hanson. Harper and Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1986. 564 pages. $31.95.

Hanson is one of the rising young stars at Harvard University, where he is "Bussey Professor of Divinity and of Old Testament." He also calls himself a Lutheran. On both counts, one wishes, it were possible to say a few kind words. Unfortunately, on neither count is it very easy to do so. Anyone acquainted with Hanson's previous major publications will find virtually nothing new here, at least not in principle. The essence of his approach is already apparent in his academically pacemaking work (an outgrowth of his own Harvard doctoral dissertation), *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (1975; 1979²). Its basic conclusions (intense sectarian strife in post-exilic Judah between Zadokite hierocrats, who eventually triumphed, and the losers, the apocalypticists and other visionaries) are repeated in this work, especially in chapter eight. In 1978 Hanson published his more programmatic, theoretical, or hermeneutical study, *Dynamic Transcendence*. Not surprisingly, those words appear repeatedly in the present study, and, if analyzed, pretty well summarize its entire flow and thesis. Finally, in 1982 came *The Diversity of Scripture*, stating what has virtually become dogma in contemporary "establishment" biblical studies—and which, to a large extent, represents a simple antithesis to the traditional understanding of the "unity of Scripture."

In the preface to the work before us Hanson applies the "notions" (one of his own favorite words) to the entire Bible—also the New Testament. In fact, he hopes to be able to move the largely stalled discussion of "biblical theology" beyond where it was left by the two giants, Eichrodt and von Rad, although limiting himself in this work essentially to the theme of "community." He hopes to "transcend" earlier limitations in two ways. First, although accenting "diversity," he wants to pay more positive attention to "traditions" often neglected, e.g., Ezekiel 40-48 and the "so-called priestly stratum of the Pentateuch." Secondly, he wishes to overcome the "artificial" restriction of sources to those usually considered canonical in Protestantism. As a result, considerable space is devoted also to Maccabees, Sirach, Enoch, and later to 1 Clement and the Didache.

We can react first to Hanson's second novelty. If one's primary approach, even to biblical theology, is quite rigidly historical of "diachronic," canonical boundaries will inevitably appear artificial. Of course, virtually no one, whatever his hermeneutical

presuppositions, proposes to ignore historical context entirely. From that perspective, aspects of Hanson's study are undeniably helpful. At the same time, it is not clear that he is evading the nemesis of the academic study of "biblical theology" from "day one," namely, its collapse backwards into the "history of biblical religion." And it is obvious that his real norm is not an inspired Holy Scripture (which he as much as explicitly labels "mythological," cf. p. 297), but some historical contruct, partially based on it. His actual method is a sort of "theology of traditions in the biblical period." That was, of course, essentially the method of von Rad and of many *Heilsgeschichter.* As writers' agendas in recent years have moved more in the "liberation theology" direction, as Hanson's clearly (and often explicitly) does, it is noteworthy how malleable and adaptable that method has proved to be.

As to Hanson's second alleged contribution, it can be conceded (and, up to a point, even welcomed) that he is able to give a somewhat more positive valuation of "P," of the monarchy, of Chronicles, and of other "losers" in earlier critical reconstructions. But that valuation is all very relative, and many of Hanson's more positive assessments seem to come rather reluctantly, even grudgingly. In fact, it is remarkable to what an extent the basic lineaments of Wellhausen's reconstruction are still intact here. Occasional reports of its demise are obviously greatly exaggerated. More specifically, we find here a fairly accurate reproduction of that brand of biblico-historico-theological fiction which we may call the "Harvard School" (with major input also from Cross, Koester, even Stendahl, and others). All the buzz words abound too—besides "dynamic" and "transcendence," also "infer," "experience," "relational," "vision," "heritage," "oppression," "encounter," "response," etc. If we do a little "demythologizing" ourselves, we readily perceive another child of the sixties, still urgently searching for a rationale.

Hanson's basic "notion" is that Israel early on forged out of its experience a "triadic notion of community," consisting of an interaction of (1) worship, (2) righteousness, and (3) compassion. By a sort of dialectical process, this basic "model" was tested, adapted, strengthened, etc., all through the biblical period until the rise of Catholic Christianity in the late first and early second century A.D. After a brief introduction ("The Nature of This Study," pp. 1-9), Hanson suggests that the reader turn to the appendix ("Underlying Presuppositions and Method," pp. 519-546). And, indeed, except possibly for the final chapter ("Contemporary Implications"), any knowledgeable reader would miss only another replay of a fairly standard scenario of how all the biblical "paradigms taken together ... plot a trajectory through the entire biblical period ..." (p. 9). The work is prolix in the extreme and largely unrewarding. As I ploughed through the book because I was supposed to review it, I could hardly help but think: "All things considered, why not read John Updike instead?" After all, he "dynamically transcends" the Bible in his own way too!

Horace D. Hummel
St. Louis, Missouri

PHILOSOPHY FOR UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGY. By Diogenes Allen. John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1985. 287 pages. $14.95.

The study of philosophy has never enjoyed a high reputation in our circles. No doubt, some of this negative attitude is due to Luther's strictures against "the great whore" Reason. Experience with such philosphers of Lutheran background as Hegel, who claimed that philosophy and Christianity coincide, and Nietzsche (the son of a Lutheran pastor), who called himself "Antichrist," have no doubt also contributed to this distrust of philosophy. Yet the fact remains that philosophy has often influenced theology; and if philosophy is the "handmaid" of theology, there are still domestic chores to be done. Diogenes Allen, professor of philosophy at Princeton Seminary, has written a helpful introduction to the relationship of the two disciplines.

The work is organized historically, beginning with Plato and concluding with a discussion of contemporary existentialism, phenomenology, analytic philosophy, and hermeneutics. Allen neatly summarizes the view of various philosophers as they relate to theology and offers critical comments. For example, after discussing the influence of Plotinus on Christian theology Allen notes (p. 83):

> ... sin and the absolute necessity of God's grace mark an unbridgeable chasm between Christianity and Plotinus, and indeed all hellenic philosophies and religions which view human nature as essentially divine and merely caught or trapped somehow in the sensible world.

At various points in the text Allen suggests resources for further study of various topics. He also has a list of suggested readings at the end of the text. No previous knowledge of philosophy is necessary for reading this book, but a high level of concentration and time for reflection is important. This book is clearly not recreational reading.

Several areas of concern may be noted. First, his mention of creation-evolution (p. 167), biblical inerrancy (p. 193), and miracles of history (pp. 194-195) reveals attitudes toward these issues which differ from those in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. For example, he sees no contradiction between creation and evolution (p. 167):

> The difference between a believer and a nonbeliever is that the nonbeliever thinks that natural processes are "just the way things are," whereas a believer claims they are the way they are because of God's wisdom and benevolence.

Likewise, he gives too much weight to Hume's critique of miracles when he calls it "a sound principle for the writing of history" (p. 194). He traces the defense of Biblical inerrancy to Common Sense Realism.

He seems to subscribe to the "finitum non est capax infiniti" principle, which leads to problems in discussing the incarnation. On page 148 he says:

> ... we need to recognize that God, who is full and complete, has the power to become LESS in at least some respects; that is, God has the capacity to condescend to the position of being like a creature, acted upon and in need.

As defined by the fathers and councils, the incarnation does not involve any lessening of deity; it involves the taking up of a human nature by God the Son. The state of humiliation begins, not in the "incarnatus est," but in the "homo factus est." A Christian philosophy would do better to view creation in the light of Christology rather than the reverse.

Having made these criticisms, I still feel the book is worth buying. With the challenges which face the church of today, we need to understand the philosophical underpinnings of our contemporaries and be prepared to offer "a reason for the hope that is in us." A biblical positivism involving mere proof-texting will not stand under the cultural forces opposing us. In the light of the present world situation and for the defense of the Gospel, we need to "be wise as serpents," while being "as harmless as doves." Allen's book is helpful in seeing the relationship between philosophy and theology.

Charles R. Hogg, Jr.
Bloomington, Indiana

Q: THE SAYINGS OF JESUS. By Ivan Havener. With a Reconstruction of Q by Athanasius Polag. Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1987. 176 pages. Paperback, $8.95.

The nearly universally held theory, until the most recent times, was that behind the synoptic gospels stood the mysterious Q document, "Q" standing for the German word *Quelle*, "source." Q "mixed" with Mark together with a few birth and resurrection stories produced Matthew and Luke. So engrained is the Q-and-Mark theory that in the summer of 1986 Concordia Publishing House provided Sunday bulletin inserts explaining that Mark's Gospel was first. Any one holding to Marcan priority must also hold to Q or something like it. Q is obtained in this way: remove anything which is unique to either Matthew or Luke and subtract Mark. Mathematically, the equation would look like this: (MT - mt) and (LK - lk) - Mk = Q. Of course, this result is negated when Mark has passages parallel to Q. How then do we find Q?

For those wondering what Q looks like, Polag has reconstructed the document. Havener introduces us to the theology of Q. It has valid pre-Easter traditions and comes from Galilee from pre-Easter communities. The God of Q was the God of the Jews who revealed Himself in Jesus. (This theology almost sounds like Ebionitism.) Jesus is the revealer of divine wisdom but is not identified as wisdom. Then there is the problem of distinguishing the authentic Jesus from the prophets. The matter becomes increasingly more complex. Then there is the theological problem. Q has no atonement theology or resurrection.

Just how long Q will rule the day in New Testament studies? C.S. Mann has authored a commentary of Mark in the *Anchor* series giving Matthew back his traditional honor as the first of the evangelists. William R. Farmer of Southern Methodist University circulated at the 1986 Atlanta meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature a printed list with the names of approximately a hundred scholars who were unsatisified with Q. This reviewer was proud to be listed among them. As more and more scholars question the priority of Q and Mark as the foundation of the synoptic gospels, the mourning cries from those around Q's dying bed should grow louder. Havener and Polag have given us a well-constructed picture of the corpse.

David P. Scaer

A READER'S HEBREW-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, VOLUME III: ISAIAH-MALACHI. By Terry Armstrong, Douglas Busby, and Cyril Carr. Regency-Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1986. 220 pages.

This third volume in a series of four covers Isaiah-Malachi (the series follows the Hebrew canonical order). Developed with the student and pastor in mind, the *Lexicon* has as its goal to eliminate most of the time-consuming lexical work needed for basic translation. Definitions have been taken from *The Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* of Brown, Driver, and Briggs. An appendix lists and defines all words occurring more than fifty times in the Old Testament, with the number of the page in BDB where a word is defined. Words occurring fifty or fewer times are listed for each book, verse by verse, in the order of their appearance (this lexicon does not include numerals or proper nouns). Each entry, after the definition (checked against the text for meaning in context), includes the number of times the word appears in the given book and in the Old Testament as a whole, and the page number in BDB where the definition may be found. Verbs are listed in the perfect third person masculine singular form of the stem used at that point in the text, allowing the reader to identify both the root and the stem. Aside from a rare mistake in giving verse numbers (e.g., p. 65, the number 13 should be 14), this lexicon is a valuable tool for students and ministers studying the Old Testament, making possible rapid reading of the Hebrew text.

Walter A. Maier III
River Forest, Illinois

VINTAGE YEARS. By William E. Hulme. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1986. Paperback, 120 pages.

There is a basic commonness to self-help books for the aging. After an articulation of the problems encountered by the aging and a fairly predictable description of agism in our society, words of admonition and exortation are given which are calculated to improve the life of the aging person. By virture of its coming from William Hulme, well known for his contributions to the literature concerning emotional and spiritual well-being, we expect something above the ordinary from this book. These expectations are not frustrated. Hulme brings a strong spiritual dimension into the picture by focusing on the spiritual resources of aging. However, it seems to this reviewer that Hulme's examples of quality in aging lie beyond the capability and experience of all but a very few. It would have been helpful if he would have made application of his ideas about quality in aging by giving examples within the reach of the common person. This is a good book to place in the hands of the aging person.

Norbert H. Mueller

LUTHER THE REFORMER. THE STORY OF THE MAN AND HIS CAREER. By James M. Kittelson. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1986. 334 pages. $24.95.

With a skillful use of anecdote, a winsome way of telling the story, and a sensitivity to the balance of idea and action necessary for a popular biography, James M. Kittelson has given us a new tool to use in presenting Luther's career as significant to our generation. It has been more than thirty-five years since the last major North American biographies have been written, reflecting (as they had to do) the research and scholarship of the Lutheran renaissance of the early part of the century, with all its idealistic and romantic impetus and presuppositions. Kittelson focuses on the Luther we have come to know as the result of more recent research not only into Luther's life and thought but also into his social context. He knows well the various streams of recent scholarship and digests them well for use in this volume, aimed as it is at college students and laypeople. And, in the midst of all the research into the world around Luther, Kittelson does not forget to focus on the "mighty oak" in the midst of the forest of early modern developments.

The entire story is here: Luther's early years, his early career, the beginnings of reform, his confrontation with church and empire. But Kittelson happily adds detail to the latter years of Luther's life, the years in which he most decisively influenced the generation which followed. Kittelson demonstrates again and again the truth of his concluding line, "Luther was a whole man." Throughout the book he clarifies

Luther's theological concerns and teaching aptly for the consumption of laypeople, including those who have little or no background in the theology of the Reformation. He ably focuses on the pastoral and Christological themes which stand at the heart of Luther's evangelical breakthrough without reproducing all the disputes of scholars which have sought to illumine the nature of Luther's thought. This is a volume to which pastors will frequently refer as they prepare presentations of their own and a volume which they will often place in the hands of their people when they ask about Luther.

Robert Kolb
Saint Paul, Minnesota

SERVANT THEOLOGY: A COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 40-55. By George A.F. Knight. International Theological Commentary. Handsel Press, Edinburgh, and Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1984. 204 pages.

Knight's commentary is a refreshing combination of both scholarly expertise and pastoral utility. After a brief introduction, Knight provides a verse-by-verse exposition of the text. This commentary remains true to the aims of the series to which it belongs—to develop the theological significance of the Old Testament for the Christian church. The preface clearly states that this series is written from faith to faith and is commentary intended for the believing community for whom the Bible is Scripture (p. vii). To this end, Knight repeatedly utilizes cross-references in the New Testament and even Christian hymnody. These embellishments are used to expound the meaning of the Isaianic text in a natural and unforced way without hindering or shading Isaiah's unique message.

Knight takes Isaiah 40-55 as a textual unit and attempts to unfold its theology from verse to verse. What results is often an uneven presentation. While Knight provides an in-depth discussion of certain points, he sometimes chooses to give little comment to what may be considered key issues. An example of this unevenness is Knight's treatment of the servant figure. There is no clear indication whom Knight considers the servant to be. Included in the abbreviated discussion is the idea of the servant as Israel as well as the idea of the servant as a figure in the future. Knight seems to suggest messianic overtones and leaves to the reader the task of theology and proclamation. This is, in itself, not an unfruitful methodology. At the same time this reader finds himself asking of Knight regarding the servant, "But who do *you* say that he is?" One of Knight's more tantalizing statements on this topic is this one: "Thus, the extraordinary inference can be made that it was 'God in Israel' who became the Suffering Servant that Israel was elected to be, for Israel could not fulfill her calling alone" (p. 172). The reader is hereby challenged by Knight to "pick up the ball and run" with this insight for purposes of Gospel proclamation. The book's title, therefore, seems somewhat misleading, for the theology of the servant is not an issue with which Knight deals extensively. This work does provide some excellent word studies which give new life to the text. These studies themselves are worth the price of the book. Examples of such studies may be found on pages

11 (preparing a way in the wilderness), 77-78 (the doctrine of the Trinity), 137-138 (the mother-love of God and the misplaced veneration of the Virgin Mary), and 179 (the "kenosis" concept enunciated in Philippians 2:7-8).

Now retired, Knight has had a distinguished career as a biblical scholar, author, professor, and pastor in Hungary, Scotland, New Zealand, the United States, and the Pacific Islands. In this commentary he writes in the style of a preacher-scholar. It is evident that Knight's book flees the dry, critical research and pastoral concern provided by Knight makes this commentary one which will not end up as a dust collector on anyone's shelves.

Steven E. Harold
Seattle, Washington

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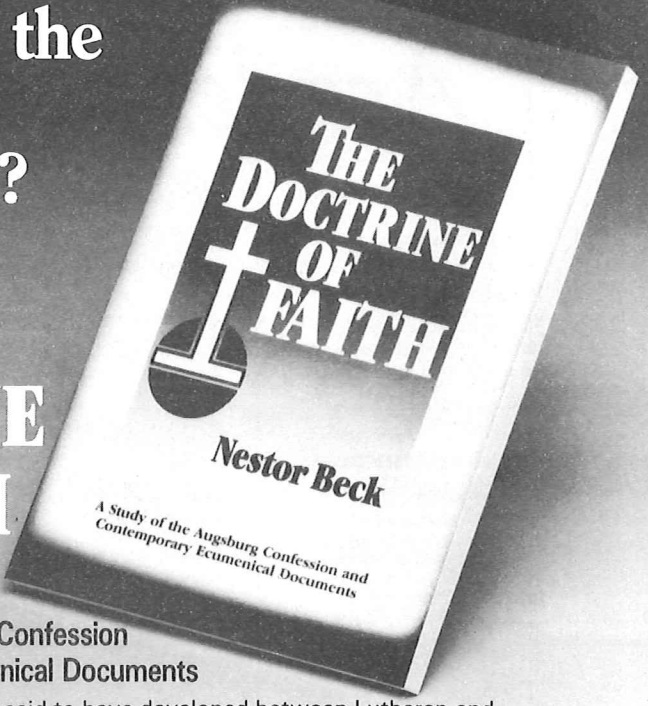

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