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Religion and the American University

Eric Daeuber and Paul Shore

When I was young, it seemed that life was so wonderful, a miracle; oh it was beautiful, magical.

And all the birds in the trees, well, they'd be singing so happily, joyfully, playfully watching me.

But then they sent me away to teach me how to be sensible, logical, responsible, practical.

And they showed me a world where I could be so dependable, clinical, intellectual, cynical.

So the old song goes, more or less. And it is not a bad expression of the thinking of a good many students in higher education. While it may be hard to document, there remains a general agreement among students and educators alike that higher education fails to address many of the concerns students regularly express, at least as education occurs in the public university and, to one extent or another, in private colleges. Even when efforts are made in that direction, many students simply do not believe what they are taught. Luther argued that higher education ought to be "a foundation and ground of pure religion; therefore she ought to be preserved and maintained with lectures and with stipends against the raging and swelling of Satan."¹

The modern university has as its predecessor the university of the high middle ages. However, while the modern American university can claim some paternal connection with the university of those times, it can claim virtually no philosophical kinship. Without a doubt, the most obvious departure has happened in the role that religion plays in the structure, philosophy, and curriculum of universities. Today it has virtually no role. Then it was everything. It is that simple.

The prime difference between the orientation of the medieval university and its American counterpart lies in the question of why knowledge is pursued. The medieval university had as its focus a cluster of spiritual concerns which offered direction to all the disciplines taught within its precincts. This focus on the spiritual was strengthened by the use of a common language of scholarship (Latin) and the fact that the university faculty were products of other universities sharing this

focus. By contrast, the modern American university is, with very few exceptions, without such an agreed upon focus. Although specific departments within universities frequently direct their efforts along a specific line, the larger entity of the university has become, if it is large, the diverse "multiversity" described by Clark Kerr over a quarter of a century ago. Smaller universities and colleges have become blandly noncommittal institutions that avoid a central focus. In particular, the modern American university or college does not typically foster a respect and appreciation for the life of reflection, thought, and growth, as opposed to the life of production and promotion. For both students and faculty, success and acceptance hinge frequently upon production: papers, articles, books, grants, and the like. This tendency to avoid the *vita contemplativa* was noted as long ago as 1908, when Harvard professor Irving Babbitt noted ruefully that the time was gone when a scholar was respected more for what he was than for what he produced.²

The shift has been explained in various ways. Most argue that religion is no longer needed. Almost everything can be explained, explored, and otherwise dealt with without appealing to the supernatural. It is generally accepted that people in the middle ages were forced to view the world through God-coloured glasses for lack of a clear scientific vision and for that reason they established an educational system designed exclusively to perpetuate whatever creed was accepted at the time.³ That understanding of the origin of the marriage of religion and education resurfaces again and again and is often referred to when justifying the establishment of parochial systems of education. Of course, it is natural that society would want to instill its own perception of the world in its children, and education as a system seems a likely vehicle for the task. But education as a propaganda tool was not what caused the medieval university to develop in the way it did.

The collapse of the Carolingian Empire left an enormous hole in the cultural landscape of Europe.⁴ During the period between the late ninth century and the early eleventh century, civilization suffered a considerable setback in almost every area of its development, due largely to the political chaos that the fall of the empire caused. Organized education almost

disappeared and with it went any coherent and consistent method of addressing the questions that the human condition raised. The middle ages were spent largely in rebuilding a society out of the rubble of an earlier civilization.⁵ Were it not for the palace schools established by Charles the Great and the strides made during that time in the struggle to structure learning in a manner that made some consistent use of a recognized and practical world view, intellectual development would have again been plunged into the sad state it experienced in the seventh and early eighth centuries. However, Christianity offered a framework around which the debate surrounding the meaning of existence could rage. Far from being a simple tool of indoctrination, education in the high middle ages provided an arena for vital and lively discourse based on an agreed upon understanding of human nature and natural processes.

Insofar as modern American culture demonstrates conditions not altogether alien to the cultural climate of post-Carolingian Europe, perhaps an application of the same remedy deserves some serious consideration. When Charles the Great established palace schools he also planted seeds that would lie dormant for some centuries before they finally bloomed in the eleventh century. However, it was not the structure of his schools or the curriculum that survived the fall of the Carolingian Empire and the dark ages that followed, but his fondness for learning. He was, after all, a barbarian and was rather too busy on weekends to lend much time to the creation of schools that could properly be called *universitas*. However, as Rashdall notes, "thanks to Charles the Great and the little group of learned ecclesiastics promoted by him, Europe was never again plunged into intellectual darkness quite as profound as that of the Merovingian epoch."⁶ What did come out of the Carolingian Renaissance was the establishment of Christianity as a legitimate premise for scholarship within the context of formal curricula. Western thought has seldom been kind to the intrusion of revealed religion into a system designed to explore reality using largely empirical methods. This is especially a problem for academics after the reintroduction of Aristotle. When a marriage was forced through the efforts of St. Augustine, the distinction between education for the active life and education for the contemplative life was born.

Thus when the pursuit of wisdom is considered (*versetur*) in terms of action and contemplation, one part may be called active (*activa*) and the other contemplative (*contemplativa*), of which the active refers to the prosecution of life (*ad agendam vitam*), that is, the establishment of behaviours, but the contemplative refers to the careful consideration (*ad conspiciendas*) of the causes of the nature of things and that truth which is most genuine (*sincerissimam veritatem*).⁷

Charles the Great formalized the legitimacy of the distinction between the active and the contemplative, and the impact that it was to have on the development of the university is hard to exaggerate.

The marriage has always been stormy and the question of the relative place of reason and faith in it has never been wholly resolved. But there can be no doubt that the debate itself served as a teething ring in the infancy of the *universitas*. Anselm converted a smoldering confusion into a full-fledged academic discipline when theology as the exploration of a revealed religion came under the scrutiny of philosophy as an empirical method. Of course, for Anselm there was no legitimate exploration of natural phenomena without God as a presupposition.

There is, therefore, a certain nature, or substance, or essence, which is through itself good and great, and through itself is what it is, and through which exists whatever is truly good, or great, or has any existence at all; and which is the supreme good being, the supreme great being, being or subsisting as supreme, that is, the highest of all existing beings.⁸

One could argue with his reasoning but what cannot be disputed is the centrality of a supreme essence in all his thinking. To follow Anselm further in his work is to discover the struggle to introduce faith as a legitimate element in scholarly pursuit.

... I long to understand in some degree Thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe, that unless I believe, I should not understand.⁹

This understanding of faith as a necessary component in thought comes so early in Anselm's writings that its importance can hardly be denied.

The same presupposition is carried into Peter Abelard's work and so becomes ingrained in the very nature and mission of higher education, at least insofar as it pretends to compare to its medieval childhood. The shipwreck of intellectual activity that came on the heels of the fall of the Carolingian Empire left only logic and grammar to wash up on the beach.¹⁰ Exactly how Abelard managed to build the method of study that gave rise to the system of universities that sprang up throughout Europe with so little to work with is difficult to say. What can be said is that he pioneered an approach that made possible a spirit of free inquiry. He encouraged frequent and constant questioning to arrive at truth¹¹ and accepted the conclusions that legitimate scholarship arrived at even if they contradicted the authority of the church.¹² Abelard's rather checkered career makes it clear that the university system as it existed in the eleventh century, contrary to most popular perceptions, did not hinder but perpetuated an atmosphere of dissent and debate, making the university of that time a much more vital and stimulating opportunity for scholarship than might have been expected.

Abelard also ushered in a "golden age of heresy," meaning that the inquiry that Abelard encouraged could not help but produce new expressions of Christian doctrine, many of which were branded by the church as false. What might seem peculiar is that Abelard continued to lecture and his students continued to listen even though he produced nothing of value as far as the established church was concerned. Free inquiry was made possible because scholars in the middle ages confined themselves to an agreed upon set of questions all of which helped them to understand their place in a divinely created universe. Diverse as these questions were, there remained a presupposed understanding of their importance. While a great many thinkers were accused of error, very few were accused of silliness. The academic community concerned itself almost entirely with how scholarship came about, not with what it produced. What mattered to the academic community of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was that efforts to address questions be accomplished within the context of faith and that

appropriate contemplation be a part of the process. This is not to say that empirical methods of determining truth were ignored but that academics were careful to apply the appropriate method of determining truth to the subject matter at hand. Nor is it suggested that any given set of questions could be explored using only a single method of inquiry. On the contrary, a great many models of investigation were applied to a great many questions, virtually all of which deserved the attention of the academic community.

The diversity of method in evidence in the high middle ages seems at times altogether missing from the intellectual landscape of the twentieth century. A shift toward a more narrowly defined spectrum of what are considered intellectually respectable methods has occurred. Consequently the modern American university turns a blind eye to the spiritual, or at least contemplative, perception of reality so much a part of the university of the middle ages. This shift away from the contemplative efforts of the university toward the current empirical focus can be explained by the following factors. First, there is the general secularization of American society as a whole. Although the level of religious involvement in the United States is arguably quite high in comparison to that of most other Western industrialized nations, the degree to which religious issues have formed a central part of the political, social, or economic life of the country has appeared to decline over the last two hundred years. This increase in the relative importance of secular concerns has been accompanied by a proliferation in the number of denominations, sects, and cults throughout the country, pulling the American university farther away from the idea of an institution which has a commonly agreed upon spiritual focus. Even many of the denominational colleges have, in the spirit of ecumenism and tolerance, relaxed both the formal framework and the less formal "atmosphere" that fostered this spiritual unity.

The American college of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries was an instrument of moral guidance and instruction. The president of Dickinson College, writing in 1792, spoke in this way:

...every good teacher ought to be satisfied when he is taking the best means for preserving the morals of [a parent's] child, as well as for improving his understanding.¹³

As long as American colleges (and later, to a lesser degree, universities) saw their role to foster the moral development of their charges *in loco parentis*, the *vita contemplativa* and the focus on the spiritual could be kept alive. The professors and, in particular, the president of the small American college of the 1700's or early 1800's were role models not merely of academically successful men but of searchers after a truth that could not be discovered through logical syllogisms or the chemistry laboratory.

All of these things changed with the rise of scientism in the later half of the nineteenth century. This belief in the superiority and invincibility of empiricism and the scientific method as a means of discovering truth entered American university life from several directions. The development of John Hopkins in the 1870's as a graduate-oriented institution on the German model encouraged the acceptance of rational inquiry as the appropriate means of arriving at truth. The theoretical work of Darwin, Mendel, and others also gave support to the scientist position. By the end of the nineteenth century, a scientifically oriented college curriculum was being hailed by many as the new order. John Brubacher and Willis Rudy, writing on the development of the modern collegiate curriculum, note that, to the "progressive" education of the late 1800's, "science training would give the mind real discipline. . . not the 'safe and elegant imbecility of classical learning.' It would replace the arid verbalisms and deductive analysis of an aristocratic, stratified society with the free, inductive inquiry and tangible observations of an advanced, progressive social order."¹⁴ The practical, activist culture of America had long been sceptical of "non-practical" learning of all kinds, and the emergence of a scientist ideology that promised practical results as well as a world view untinged by sectarian disputes was welcome to educational leaders from John Dewey to Charles Homer Haskins.

Many educators hoped that the combination of an empirical, scientific epistemology and a modified liberal arts curriculum would produce a common frame of reference and an intellectual focus for undergraduate education. In reality, the proliferation of and competition among departments and programs and the gradual decrease in emphasis on moral development as a goal of undergraduate training have prevented such a common

focus from developing and have kept the notion of a *vita contemplativa* from taking root in more than a few American colleges.

Finally, the rise of the state-run university has worked against the development of a focus on spirituality or of any single unifying principle in the undergraduate experience. The separation of church and state and the new emphasis on practical concerns partially explain the avoidance of a spiritual orientation on state-run university campuses. These focuses, along with the myriad of political pressures placed on publicly funded institutions, brought about the avoidance of any "ultimate concern other than a scientific or pseudo-scientific spirit of inquiry." The American state university, writes Frederick Rudolph, was defined "in the great Midwest and West, where frontier democracy and frontier materialism would help to support a practical-oriented popular institution."¹⁵

This pseudo-scientific approach often leads to a violent, but scarcely rigorous, reaction toward the empirical or, worse, a trivializing by social scientists of the entire realm of spirituality. Alan Bloom, criticizing this trivialization, writes thus:

Atheists [of past centuries] took religion seriously and recognized that it is a real force, costs something and requires difficult choices. These sociologists who talk so facilely about the sacred are like a man who keeps a toothless old circus lion around the house in order to experience the thrills of the jungle.¹⁶

Subject to fads, influenced by pressure groups, and largely cut off from its contemplative and spiritual heritage, the American university remains open to the charge that it is largely without a focus that goes beyond the often ill-defined and diluted commitment to scientific inquiry and "liberal" thought.

The consequences of this diffusion of focus in American universities are numerous and, in some cases, far from salutary. On a most basic level, there is a lack of common language among professors in different disciplines and, to a lesser degree, among their students. Also, the absence of a common set of concerns can foster a sense of *anomia* among students who come to the university seeking a direction for their academic and personal development. Some students

gravitate to fraternities or sororities or become involved in other campus organizations, but these affiliations do not always provide guidance in the development of a clear focus or set of values. A survey conducted by the Carnegie Foundation in 1984 revealed that sixty-three percent of undergraduates consider formulating values and goals for their lives an "essential" outcome of what college education should be.¹⁷ A diffuse, non-reflective college environment may make this formulation impossible, however. Another consequence of this diffusion of focus is that pre-professional education, which continues to be an important segment of undergraduate education, may not include adequate attention to the formulation of values and ethics. Future members of the legal, medical, and business professions need to be given the opportunity to develop coherent positions on ethics and values; without this opportunity their undergraduate pre-professional training is probably unsound.

Finally, social or political change emanating from universities is more effective when an educational experience containing common points of reference is possible. Obviously, a spiritual and contemplative orientation is not the only possible focus that could develop in a university. However, a focus on reflection and the non-material offers significant advantages. For students who have grown cynical regarding the political process, a social reform program containing a perspective with broader and more timeless elements could hold much appeal. Also such a focus could enable students to see more clearly the relationship between their own personal spiritual concerns and the larger world or social change and conflict. The politics of the far right and left offer ideologies that claim to possess answers to social questions, but ignore the inner life and the understanding that can come from self-examination. University-initiated social action grounded in the experience of the *vita contemplativa* offers an alternative approach of great promise.

The modern American university should therefore adopt a threefold program of reform to help bring about the refocusing of attention on the importance of the *vita contemplativa*. First, the university as a whole must be prepared to accept a wider variety of methods to be applied to the questions investigated by faculty and students. At the present time social science and

and education departments are dominated by empiricism. This situation is not surprising, since behavioristic interpretations of humans have been among the most potent forces in the social sciences. Yet there are other approaches besides empirical to the problems posed in, for example, an undergraduate course in educational psychology that legitimately can be included in the syllabus of that course. The theorizing of cognitive psychologies, although derived in part from empirical data, are also the product of introspection, creative rearranging of known components, and assumptions made about human abilities and potential. Humanistic psychology, another school of psychology widely used by therapists, has an empirical component but has as its foundation certain beliefs held regarding human beings. Together all these branches of psychology have made important contributions to the field. It is time to acknowledge the role non-rationally derived belief does play in the social sciences, the humanities, and, perhaps to a lesser degree, the natural sciences. To speak in this way is not to denigrate the significance of empirical study as a means of uncovering important knowledge about the universe, but only to call attention to the non-empirical elements of some of the sciences and the value of including non-empirical methods of study in the investigation of many questions concerning human life.

Central to the reform of the university is the acceptance of contemplation as a recognized academic pursuit. Serious acceptance of the *vita contemplativa* as a legitimate part of American university life demands a radical reexamination of the basic function of the institution.¹⁸ The pressure and emphasis on finished products that dominate today's universities would need to be replaced or at least complemented by the ancient notion of *scholē*, which is only imperfectly translated by the English word "leisure." *Scholē*, which gives us the words "school" and "scholar," is used by Plato to describe not idleness or an escape from work, but the employment of free time to develop the mind and soul through discussion or reading.¹⁹ The concept of *scholē*, placed in the context of the modern university, could help foster the *vita contemplativa* on two levels.

First, university faculty members are currently staggering under committee and programmatic responsibilities, relentless

pressure to "publish or perish," and, most recently, demands to participate in applying for grants to support their institutions or programs. They have little, if any, time to reflect upon their responsibilities as teachers and mentors, their own professional development as scholars, researchers, and administrators, or personal growth as seekers of the truth. A university policy recognizing the legitimacy of *scholē* as a part of professors' lives would make such reflection possible, and the evaluation of scholarship would once again include the way one conducts one's life, not merely what one produces.

For students, the situation is similar in many ways. Like faculty members, students face considerable pressure to produce materials that can be given quantitative evaluation. Students perhaps have somewhat more free time to ponder the direction and development of their own lives or discuss these questions with others, but they too are not encouraged by the university to do so. Indeed, the pressures on students to produce a volume of written material may be greater than the pressure placed on faculty members. The former dean of a distinguished American school of education has remarked that, whereas professors are expected to produce three or four papers each year that represent their greatest efforts, students may be asked to produce ten or fifteen papers of the highest possible quality. American university students, drawn from greatly varying walks of life, often without guidance or focus, could make use of *scholē* to produce fewer but more complete finished products while having time and energy to discuss and reflect on their own personal development.

The third, and perhaps most profound, change that universities must bring about is the establishment of a new rationale for the pursuit of knowledge either within or beyond the university. This new understanding of education would supplement or even replace the current understanding of education as a tool in acquiring skills for an active life. The "new" rationale for the pursuit of knowledge would be, in fact, an ancient one. Education, it can be argued, has value as a means to the end of developing not merely the active life, but the contemplative as well. This distinction between preparation for active life and preparation for contemplative life is not the same as the often emphasized difference between specific task-related skills and the more basic skills of critical thinking

and communication. While the latter skills are of undoubted importance, they are not enough. In addition, mature, self-reliant students need a deeper understanding of themselves and the universe. Discussing the founding of a new university, John Henry Newman wrote that "a cultivated intellect, because it is a good in itself, brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation which it undertakes, and enables us to be graceful..."²⁰ By a "cultivated intellect" Newman meant not simply a mind well trained in analysis, but a mind enriched and deepened by leisurely contemplation of wisdom and perhaps by growth of character as well. At early nineteenth-century Oxford, which Newman attended, a fourth year of study was an invitation to just such a maturing process. By contrast, writes Rudolph, taking a fourth year of study at the University of Chicago a century later "was evidence of some incapacity to serve, of an unwillingness to grasp power."²¹

The three-year bachelor's program has largely disappeared from American colleges and universities, but the notion that the university is not an appropriate setting for contemplation remains. Yet if individuals are not given an opportunity while at the university to reflect upon their goals, aspirations, and values, to grasp intuitive connections between concepts, and to develop wisdom and maturity, where else in our hectic society will they find opportunity to do so?²²

ENDNOTES

1. Thomas S. Kepler, ed., *The Table Talk of Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952), pp. 336-337.
2. Irving Babbitt, "Academic Leisure," in *Literature and the American College: Essays in Defense of the Humanities* (Boston, 1908).
3. For a general work that demonstrates this perspective see Edward J. Power, *Main Currents in the History of Education* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962).
4. Elizabeth Lawrence, *The Origins and Growth of Modern Education* (London, 1970), pp. 52-55.
5. Christopher J. Lucas, *Our Western Educational Heritage* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 200.

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6. Hastings Rashdall, Powicke, and Emden, eds., *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, I (London: Oxford, 1936), p. 30.
 7. Saint Augustine, *City of God*, VIII, VI (see also Lucas, *Our Western Educational Heritage*), p. 182.
 8. Saint Anselm, *Monologium*, chapter IV.
 9. Saint Anselm, *Proslogium*, chapter I.
 10. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, p. 39.
 11. Lucas, *Our Western Educational Heritage*, p. 224.
 12. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, V (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1907), p. 622.
 13. Quoted in Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Knopf, 1962), p. 103.
 14. John Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 117.
 15. Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History*, p. 276.
 16. Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 216.
 17. Quoted in Ernest Boyer, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 67.
 18. The term *vita contemplativa* has its origins in the late classical period. Seneca, the first Latin author to use the word, applies it to self-examination, especially of a theoretical or speculative nature (*Epistolae Morales* 95.10). During the fourth through tenth centuries, *vita contemplativa* came to mean a life characterized by solitude, prayer, and frequently mortification. In this article the emphasis is on reflection and spiritual growth, rather than isolation and denial, as a means of sustaining the *vita contemplativa*. For a definitive discussion of what kinds of understanding can derive from a contemplative life, see *St. Augustine: On Education*, ed. and trans. by George Howie (Chicago: Henry Regenery, 1969), pp. 199 ff.
 19. Plato, *Laws*, 820c.
 20. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University* (Garden City: Image Books, 1959), p. 183.
 21. Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History*, p. 453 (see also Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, p. 79).

22. For a discussion of how a contemplative approach in education can foster intuitive understanding of concepts, see Nel Noddings and Paul J. Shore, *Awakening the Inner Eye: Intuition in Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1984).

Paul Shore, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of education at Moorhead State University, Moorhead, Minnesota, having received his doctorate from Stanford University.

Rev. Eric Daeuber is campus pastor at Moorhead State University, Moorhead, Minnesota, having graduated from Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

Puritan Homiletics: A Caveat

William G. Houser

The thinking of our modern American civilization is greatly and swiftly affected by the mass-media—radio, television, and the newspapers. In the early years of our country's Puritan history, this situation was not possible. However, a means was available that took advantage of the historical-religious context of the colonies and became a major literary vehicle. The sermon arose as a significant and influential method of communication within the cities, and connected the metropolis to the rural areas by the frontier pulpit.

The pulpiteers from England brought a hybrid model of homiletics to America to delineate their religious system of beliefs. These Puritan sermons borrowed from the "stylistic methods of contemporary literary fashion"¹ inherited from the English sixteenth century, but the Elizabethan extravagances were severely modified by the Puritan plain style of speech. Some Anglican preachers sought a "metaphysical" style which was characterized by both its verbal voluptuousness and its abstruseness. The Puritan plain style sermon was a reaction to this homiletical model, for the pastor made certain "that he may be understood by the lowest capacities"² by avoiding the abstract and presenting the biblical content in simplicity and relevance. The homiletician utilized figurative language, but was aware of its potential to complicate rather than to clarify the interpretation of Scripture. As a result, the sermons were pertinent theological presentations undergirded by an eloquence of rich expressiveness.

The art of sermonizing for the Puritans had its roots in the three rules of Roman oratory of the classical age—*placere*, *docere*, and *movere*—to please, in the sense of gripping the hearers' minds and keeping interest alert; to teach and instruct, as distinct from mere exhortation and uplift and the recital of pious platitudes; to move the heart and sting the will into action. New England preachers were acquainted with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*³ and depended upon its two forms of proof essential to argumentation—the syllogism and enthymeme. Regarding the passions, the Puritans, like Aristotle, placed the affections in a secondary position as a means to support reasoning: "The power of emotions to influence should be

released only after the listener has been persuaded through rational means.”⁴

Puritan preaching flourished over the years, but “by the late 1660’s and early 1670’s the discontent with the ministers had grown. . .”⁵ Sociological changes caused some restlessness among the congregations, but “the sermons themselves offer the best evidence that all was not rapt attention to and reverent acceptance of the rendering of the Bible being presented by the ministers.”⁶ Several factors were blamed for the decline of the Sunday sermon. Chief among them were the protacted length of the sermon, the reading of the manuscripts, and the emotionless mechanical delivery. Each contributed heavily to the collapse of the Puritan pulpit but, if there was a *causa causans*, it had to be the monotonous method of sermon outlining which was not to be challenged or changed.

The Pilgrims and Puritans brought a sermon configuration from England which, for the most part, was authored by William Perkins, the renowned Cambridge preacher and theologian:

His works were translated into many languages and circulated in all Reformed communities; he was one of the outstanding pulpit orators of the day, and the seventeenth century, Catholic as well as Protestant, ranked him with Calvin.⁷

The pragmatic and time-honored outline was composed of four parts: text, doctrine, reasons, and uses (applications). The sermon began with the reading of the text, and brief comments were made by the “opening of the words and sentences of the Scripture, that one entire and natural sense may appear.”⁸ The second part, “doctrine,” was “to collect a few and profitable points of doctrine out of the natural sense”⁹ of the Bible verse or verses. The third part, “reasons,” was “to demonstrate the truth of the doctrine, thereby guiding the listener to a rational conviction.”¹⁰ Finally, the “uses” or “applications” were to apply “the doctrines rightly collected to the life and manners of men.”¹¹ Perry Miller, Distinguished Powell M. Capot Professor of American Literature at Harvard, describes the sermon format: “The Puritan work is mechanically and rigidly divided into sections and subheads, and appears on the printed page more like a lawyer’s brief than a work of art.”¹²

The unbending rules of the Puritan sermon configuration were drilled into the theological students as the only legitimate means for the sermonic pattern. This specialized compartmental mode was unswervingly followed in every Sunday sermon and it also appeared in every preaching occasion. No other method was acceptable but text, doctrine, reasons, and uses. It was slavishly respected as infallible by all Puritan pulpiteers, and it became the homiletical badge of their orthodoxy. Perry Miller aptly describes the veneration of this design:

For Puritans characteristically did not recognize that any of their precepts were derived from other men, but ascribed all of them, including. . .preaching in doctrine, reasons, and uses, to the universal and eternal wisdom of God.¹³

During the early 1700's (before the Great Awakening) the congregational response to the Puritan sermon was so disapproving that it was a common sight in Puritan churches to see the usher standing in the back with a large pole. A feather was attached to one end and a hard knob to the other. The feather was for tickling and keeping the children awake, and the knob was for tapping the heads and arousing the sleeping adults. The Sunday morning sermon had become ineffective to the "visible saints," who nestled under a blanket of apathy, unresponsive to the pulpit's anachronistic whine: text, doctrine, reasons, uses. But the New England laity was soon to be revived from its long spiritual sleep by a major preaching revolution which occurred during the First Great Awakening of 1730-1760.

The Great Awakening was that historical event whose theological strife rocked the colonies for thirty years. During that time it is estimated that there were "40,000 converts. . .at a time when there were only 250,000 inhabitants in the entire region."¹⁴ The four leading ministers of the Awakening were George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, Charles Chauncy, and Jonathan Edwards. More than any other figure, it was George Whitefield, an Anglican minister from England, who was responsible for the spiritual awakening in New England. He barnstormed and disseminated the word on both sides of the Atlantic: the American Colonies, England, Wales, Scotland,

Ireland, and Holland. Whitefield preached "something like a thousand times a year for some thirty years. . . he was regularly heard by congregations of 10,000 and sometimes 20,000 and 30,000."¹⁵ Relatively modest figures concur that he "preached eighteen thousand times to more than one hundred million persons"¹⁶ in his lifetime.

There were several factors which brought such amazing results. Chief among these were Whitefield's magnificent voice, an extemporaneous delivery, the emphasis upon experimental religion, and his unique sermon configurations. Eugene White, in *Puritan Rhetoric*, rightly asserts: "the preaching of George Whitefield in the Great Awakening introduced a new sermonology."¹⁷ Joseph Tracy, the acknowledged authority on the Great Awakening, comments on Whitefield's break from the past sermon forms:

Moved in his utmost soul by the sight of his fellow-men ready to perish and yet ignorant of their danger, he could not better himself with the rules by which ordinary men were taught to construct dull sermons; he must pour forth the desires of his heart and the convictions of his mind. And he did pour them forth, in a style natural and clear.¹⁸

Whitefield dared to break the "tradition of the elders" by refusing to be shackled to the institutional mind-set of the one and only acceptable method for sermon outlining: text, doctrine, reasons, and uses. He employed several non-traditional sermon constructions.

George Whitefield was not an iconoclast who sought to upset the historical Puritan homiletical rules, but he refused to conform to their homiletic legislation because his various styles of sermon building best suited his temperament, his background, and his individual uniqueness. Is not this lesson from our nation's early religious history a caveat to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod?

The immigrant Lutheran clergymen from Saxony (Germany) received their rhetorical and homiletical training from their classical German university education and from the traditions of the Lutheran fathers. Like the Pilgrims and Puritans in their single-mindedness, they carried only one acceptable sermon configuration—the textual—across the ocean to Perry County (1839). The textual method is con-

structured in three diverse but essentially similar configurations: the textual (narrow sense) analytic (direct) sermon; the textual (narrow sense) synthetic (indirect) sermon; and the textual (wider sense) synthetic (indirect) or subject sermon.

Much confusion exists in homiletic terminology attributable to the homileticians using similar names while allowing different meanings for the same expressions. We will endeavor to establish a common understanding of homiletic definitions regarding sermon configurations. (1) In the textual (narrow sense) analytic (direct) sermon “textual” indicates that a portion of Scripture is the basis for the sermon; “analytic” means that one finds the central thought of the verse or verses and separates the text into its component parts, with the divisions and subdivisions giving the solution to the theme (proposition). It is called the “direct” method because it arranges the word as it is directly expressed and the exposition is natural as it proceeds in the order of the logical division of the text. (2) The textual (narrow sense) synthetic (indirect) sermon does not seek the central (outstanding) thought of the text as the analytic sermon, but ascertains an inferred or implied topic (indirect). Therefore, unlike the analytic sermon, the exposition does not follow the natural order of the logical division of the text but the logical division of the topic. It synthesizes the text into a coherent whole, divisions and subdivisions giving the solution to the theme. To better differentiate between the two configurations compare these two examples:

Textual (Narrow Sense) Analytic (Direct) Sermon

Matthew 28:18-20

What Great Encouragement Does the Lord Give His
Church for Its Work Here upon Earth?

1. He gives us His commission to Christianize all nations, v. 19.
2. He gives us the promise of His power and His presence, vv. 18, 20.¹⁹

Textual (Narrow Sense) Synthetic (Indirect) Sermon

Matthew 28:18-20

What May Be the Cause Why Our Church-Work
at Home and Abroad Does Not Show Greater Results?

1. It may be that we are not doing to the full extent of our ability what the Lord asks us to do (Christianize all nations), v. 19.
2. It may be that we are not, as we ought to do, using the means which He has given us, vv. 19, 20. (We perhaps depend too much on other means of increasing our membership rather than upon the Word alone).
3. It may be that we are failing to put full confidence in the Lord's promise of His power and presence, vv. 18, 20. (Let us not lose faith in the power of the Gospel and in the Lord's present help.)²⁰

(3) In the textual (wider sense) synthetic (indirect) or subject sermon the topic is deduced from a text (indirect) or from the preacher's thoughts. The sermon is written independently of the text (though it may included) and constructed from other Bible verses, Bible materials, theology, hymns, religious literature, and the like. The exposition is not naturally drawn from the logical division of the text, as in the textual (narrow sense) analytic (direct) sermon; but is taken in the order of the logical division of the topic, as in the textual (narrow sense) synthetic (indirect) sermon. The subject sermon like the other two textual methods is constructed with the parts (divisions and subdivisions) giving the solution to the theme. An example provided by Dr. C. F. W. Walther (1811-1887) is a subject sermon found in an early homiletic textbook of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis:

Subject Sermon:

Textual (Wider Sense) Synthetic (Indirect)

Proposition: Shall a Man Marry?

1. The answer in Eden (Genesis 2:20-25).
2. The answer in Cana (John 2:1-11).

3. The answer of the apostles (1 Corinthians 9:5).
4. The answer of Rome (1 Timothy 4:1-3).
5. The answer of the true confessions (confessional writings).²¹

Henceforth, to avoid confusion concerning the various configurations, references will only be made to two configurations as both are generally recognized by most homileticians: the "textual" and the "topical." The "textual" category includes the textual (narrow sense) analytic (direct) and the textual (narrow sense) synthetic (indirect). The term "topical" designates the subject sermon: textual (wider sense) synthetic(indirect).

Although the textual and topical configurations were brought to America by the Saxon Lutheran pastors, the one responsible for the entrenchment of the three configurations was Dr. C. F. W. Walther. Walther's homiletic impact was imparted through a triad of eminent positions in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He was its first president (1854), a founder and first president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (1854), and one of its earliest theological professors (1850). He also explicated his precepts as editor of *Der Lutheraner* (1844), our first religious paper, and *Lehre und Wehre* (1855), a professional theological journal. Throughout his career Walther promulgated the textual and the topical methods as the only acceptable configurations for the exposition of Scripture. The topical format became very cherished among the pastors and laity in Synod. Walther usually delivered his topical sermons for congregational events or festive occasions, and it was his habit to deliver a topical sermon every Christmas Day. However, there were some objections to Walther's conceptualizing of the topical sermon; and over the years sporadic oral debates and "paper-wars" erupted. The advocates of the textual sermon upheld its superiority against the "less-than-acceptable" topical form. The arguments centered upon the construction of the topical sermon from several texts, plus additional biblical materials; whereas the textual approach insisted upon the exposition of only one text.

Dr. Theodore Graebner (1876-1950) joined the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1913 and, with Walther as

his exemplar, retained the traditional policy of teaching both the textual and the topical methods. His configurations are featured in detail in a homiletic book published in 1918: *Inductive Homiletics—A Manual for Classroom and Preacher's Desk*.²² However, later on the textual format gained a supremacy in the seminary lecture halls and official publications of the Missouri Synod. Undoubtedly, the man most responsible was Dr. John H. C. Fritz (1874-1953), who came to the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1920 and published *The Preacher's Manual* in 1941. It contains his absolutism concerning sermon designs:

It takes a long time to be emancipated from the tyranny of the topical, or theme, sermon, which has dominated over our pulpits.²³

Eliminating, as we must, the "topical method," which does not preach the text and is not conducive to promote Biblical preaching, we have in the final analysis, two sermon methods, the "textual" and the "inferential."²⁴

Fritz's militant stand cast a dominant and intimidating image over the synod's seminaries and pulpits. The topical advocates, however, did not succumb and were resuscitated by the efforts of Dr. Richard Caemmerer (1904-1984), who was called to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1940. He reintroduced and reinforced the topical sermon. Caemmerer comments on the still unsettled homiletic conflict:

The alternative to textual preaching is usually termed topical.²⁵

Initial training and denominational customs as well as later experience and habit help to make preachers quite partisan on the subject of "textual" versus "topical." Their arguments will often employ inferior samples of the one sort pitted against superior products of the other. Actually the two methods have much to learn from each other, and the wise preacher will keep his skills fresh in both directions. . .²⁶

Dr. Gerhard Aho (1923-1987), professor of homiletics at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, and Fort Wayne, Indiana, supported the historical textual method. In his homiletical manual, *The Lively Skeleton*, he is skeptical

of the topical method but, nevertheless, does give his approval: "It would be a mistake to think, however, that topical sermons cannot be developed into worthwhile sermons."²⁷ Additional suggestions for constructing sermons come from Francis Rossow (born 1925), professor of homiletics at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. In his *Preaching the Creative Gospel Creatively*²⁸ he offers many different creative approaches including the extended analogy, the fairy story, the fable, the legend, the dialogue, role-playing, and the like. Though extremely innovative, none of his recommendations are bizarre, and Professor Rossow is to be credited for his novel ideas which assist pastors caught in a monotonous and mechanical "grinding out" of sermons. His contents, with but a few exceptions, are placed into the traditional textual and topical configurations. Rossow emphatically states: "these suggestions are intended to be supplementary rather than substitutionary, to build rather than replace what you already learn from courses—writing and homiletics."²⁹ He also repeatedly counsels that these forms should be used only "sparingly" and "occasionally."

This brief scan of the history of the sermon configurations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod confirms that our pulpiteers have been officially trained in the historical textual configurations, but have conflicting opinions concerning the topical method. It is a rare occurrence when a denomination holds to the same method of sermon outlining throughout its history. The Puritans almost succeeded, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is still on track after a hundred and fifty years. (See the available homiletical materials in *The Concordia Theological Quarterly*,³⁰ *The Concordia Journal*,³¹ *The Concordia Pulpit*,³² and *The Lectionary Preaching Resources*.)³³

Why is Walther's rigid homiletical mandate concerning the textual sermon and the still debated topical sermon so exclusively accepted, in like fashion as the Puritans espoused Perkins' text, doctrine, reasons, and uses? Is it because of Walther's distinguished influence and strategic leadership in every aspect of the synod: its founding, its presidency, its educational institutions, its doctrines, its publications, its seminaries, and its homiletics? To find the complete answer one must go to Walther's sermons. Walther's homiletic

greatness is readily perceived. He was an exceptional preacher by any homiletic standard. Clearly, the illuminating impact of his sermons on the mind and emotions is created by his uncompromising declaration of God's Word, cradled in eloquence and coupled to the textual and topical methods of preaching. Walther was the preacher *par excellence* and his students willingly accepted not only his lectures on confessional truths, but also his teachings on persuasive rhetoric and his instructions on sermon configuration. However, after a thorough study of his many sermons, my judgment is that his homiletic expertise does not result from placing his content within the textual (analytic and synthetic) and topical (synthetic) configurations, with the parts, divisions, and subdivisions giving the solution to the theme. Rather, Walther's impressive gift of preaching is the result of his eloquent articulating of God's Word—his ingenious communicating of Scripture by means of his diction, syntax, and masterful usage of tropes. I further propose that he could have placed his contents into other suitable forms, but that his genius was in placing the content into the textual (analytic and synthetic) and topical (synthetic) configurations, which were the most natural for his logical mind.

Some time ago A. R. Broemel (1815-1885) wrote an illuminating essay called "Walther the Preacher." He discusses the content, form, and rhetoric of Walther's sermons. Regarding the content he states:

What he preaches is nothing but Lutheran orthodoxy. He never adds to it nor subtracts from it. He stands exactly where old Lutheran preachers and theologians stand. . .³⁴

Next, Broemel assesses Walther's form:

From the Lutheran fathers, Walther has taken on form, organization, and clear outlining. . . In Walther the form is everywhere preserved in the most correct way. Every detail is easily distinguished. Everything is in its place. Everything is divided and organized from beginning to end. From the form one sees how Walther works on his sermon, how he thinks in an orderly way to present everything neatly. The full content rests in the form of the sermon as in a safe container. He fills the form to the brim, but the firm container holds everything together.³⁵

Broemel compliments the sublimity of Walther's rhetoric:

Walther moves freely within the form. He prays fervently. He brings in the sweetest verses and sayings. He knows how to speak powerfully from heart to heart. He knows from rich experience to put the main subject, the Gospel, the comfort of the forgiveness of sins, right into the center, the heart. One listens from beginning to end with greatest joy. . . [There is a] fervency that permeates Walther's sermons. . . Walther's language is lively. . . [A] poetic vein is clear in Walther. . . He can pick on the seemingly most insignificant words and from them reveal the greatest riches of the faith.³⁶

Having assessed the content, form, and rhetoric, Broemel makes this assertion:

The penetrating effect of Walther's preaching is due not to the form but to the content. . . His confession is free and joyful. He confesses his faith as a bird sings her song. He rejoices as one of the redeemed.³⁷

It is most reassuring to discover that a contemporary of Walther undergirds my hypothesis that Walther's homiletic expertise is due not to his form, but primarily to his content—the eloquent articulation of the word. But Broemel clearly points out how Walther's content is best served by placing it inside a “container” most natural to his analytic mind. It is, I think, appropriate to draw two insights from this premise. (1) Each homiletic student and pastor must develop his rhetorical skills—syntax, diction, and tropes—to convey the truth. (2) Likewise, each must find that form (container, configuration) which is most natural to his way of thinking. I hope that our seminaries have carried out the duty of communicating our confessional beliefs through the development of rhetorical skills. It is my conviction, however, that we have neglected the second point by making a hard and fast rule that Walther's archetypal textual and topical configurations must be imitated by every preacher.

To be sure, there are those who are comfortable with the textual and topical forms, by which they produce relevant sermons. I should surmise that these individuals are much like Walther, coming from Germanic stock or possessing similar natural talents or having a classical rhetorical education. But

what of the many others of diverse nationalities and divergent abilities who come from varying social backgrounds? As a homiletic professor, I empathize with the many students whom I observe struggling to compose sermons in the exactness of Walther's forms. It is frustrating for them to be taught to become a clone of a past great homiletician when we are driven by our own unique styles which were received from our heredity, environment, and education. I find it even more unacceptable to see them taught that there is only one proper method to communicate scriptural theology, when there are several "tried" and "tested" configurations which are worthy and advantageous to each individual's distinctiveness.

It goes without saying that every sermon must possess four characteristics: (1.) It must be scriptural. It does not matter if the preacher uses a verse or two, or a chapter, or even an entire book of the Bible, as long as the text is from the Bible. (2.) It must properly divide the Law from the Gospel. The Law points out the eternally damning consequences of sin, while the Gospel proclaims Christ's sacrifice upon the cross and justification through faith. (3.) It must give a proper interpretation (exegesis) of the text which includes the teaching of pure doctrine, "refuting false doctrine, correcting an ungodly life, and encouraging a godly life."³⁸ (4.) The sermon must be relevant and not expounded in abstract and confusing terminology. Though we strive to embody properly these four mandatory precepts in our sermons, are we obliged to continue in a dogmatism that insists that these characteristics occur only in the textual and topical configurations?

I have often wondered about the wisdom of training every theological student solely in the textual and topical molds, particularly when remembering the disastrous Puritan experience, which cast a pall over the New England congregations until the arrival of Whitefield and the Great Awakening. In thirty-nine years in the ministry (twenty-four as a parish pastor, fifteen as a seminary professor) I have had the opportunity to attend Sunday morning worship services in almost every district of the synod. Regarding sermon configurations, my notes reveal that each preacher can be placed into one of five classifications: (1.) Many follow the textual and topical patterns according to the prescribed traditional rules (purebred). (2.) Numerous men adopt or adapt

homiletical outlines from other denominations. (3.) A great number "blend" and "mix" the previous formats (hybrid). (4.) Some drift into whatever will work for them. In these instances, a discernible form is usually not evident. (5.) A final group flounders.

Why are there diverse and non-uniform results when each minister has been trained in the traditional textual style and usually the topical style as well? I believe that, by the acceptance or abandonment of the textual and topical structures, each pastor is asserting his right to accept or to reject that which is compatible or alien to his personal temperament, abilities, background, and individual style. To continue in Walther's methodology is good and necessary for those who are inherently comfortable with analytic and synthetic outlines, but for others it is an unnatural obligation and an unnecessary burden which can produce ineffective preaching. They rightly seek "containers" in which they can innately and wholeheartedly place their rhetorical handling of Scripture. Should we not allow a flexibility that directs students to seek formats which are as natural to them as were Walther's designs for himself? Should we not readily assist those who are frustrated in their sermon-writing by offering additional materials which will provide other viable configurations for their exposition of the text? Should we not consider the preacher's inherent sensibilities, rather than demanding a conformity to Walther or a professor or another pastor's sermon structure? Should we not recognize the wisdom of David's refusal to wear Saul's armor?

Heedful of the results from the collapse of Puritan preaching and aware of the dangers likely in the present exclusive devotion to the textual and topical sermon methods, I respectfully offer a new homiletic premise which embraces the following tenets:

- (1.) The textual (analytic and synthetic) and topical (synthetic) configurations are not superior methods of outlining for every pastor.
- (2.) Excluding bizarre, outlandish, and fanciful forms, there are several "tried" and "tested" optional formats in the world of homiletics which are competent and worthy to convey biblical doctrines and confessional beliefs.

- (3.) Sermon configurations are “containers” for scriptural truths and, among the proven but diverse designs, there is an equality, depending upon each homiletician’s discovery of that configuration or those configurations which are best suited to his personality, social background, sensibilities, and individual uniqueness.

A new textbook now in preparation will present textual but non-analytic and non-synthetic approaches, emphasizing the reintroduction of the textual (narrow sense) narrative homily and the textual (narrow sense) expository homily. Dr. Caemmerer defines the homily as “restating the meaning of the text and appending the observations and lessons”³⁹ as it interprets, exhorts, comforts, admonishes, divides Law and Gospel, and so on. Whereas the analytic and synthetic designs unify the sermon by the parts giving solution to the theme, the homily offers an entirely different design. The story is the natural organic order of the narrative, while the verse by verse flow of the expository homily is its natural line of direction.

The narrative is rooted in the Old Testament, Yiddish folktales, and, most significantly, the parables of Jesus. Martin Luther and John Calvin were two of the more prominent expository preachers. It is safe to assume that, if the founders of the Missouri Synod had drawn their homiletic models from Christ, we should all be narrative preachers. Similarly, if they had followed Luther as homiletician, we should be using expository configurations. However, we are all textual-analytic and textual-synthetic pulpiteers because our forefathers were influenced by their German backgrounds and specifically by Dr. C. F. W. Walther.

The new textbook in preparation will contain, firstly, a literary analysis of Walther’s eloquent syntax and masterful usage of tropes. Secondly, definitions, explanations, outlines, and fully-written examples will be given of the following non-analytic and non-synthetic sermons:

- (1.) The textual (narrow sense) narrative homily (three models).
- (2.) The textual (narrow sense) expository homily (three examples).

- (3.) Several "blended" or "mixed" homilies.
- (4.) Several creative homilies featuring the modern parable.

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Homiletical Studies

Epistle Series A

THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 20, 1990

1 Peter 3:15-22

In verse 15, as previously in 14, Paul borrows phraseology from Isaiah 8 (vv. 12-13). Thus, the injunction to “sanctify the Lord Christ” clearly equates Christ with Isaiah’s “Lord of Hosts,” *Yhwh-Tzebhā’ōth*, a divine title emphasizing the all-powerful majesty of the One True God. To “sanctify” Christ in one’s heart is to set one’s heart apart to Him—apart, that is, from this sinful world (cf. Luther’s explanation of the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer).

Verses 13-22 provide a beautiful correlation between twin aspects of the *theologia crucis*—the cross of the Christian and the cross of Christ. The value of tribulation in the Christian life is, indeed, a recurring theme in this epistle (2:19-20; 4:14-19). It finds expression here in verse 17 but more pointedly in verse 14: Christian suffering is, in actuality, divine blessing. The purpose of verses 18-22, then, as shown by the introductory *hoti kai* (“because also”), is to assure suffering Christians of the truth asserted in verses 14 and 17. The worth of the Christian cross rests squarely on the worth of the cross of Christ, which, in turn, receives its authentication from the exaltation of Christ. His exaltation, in other words, places a divine seal of approval on His suffering unto death—as sufficing to assuage the wrath of God aroused by the sin of mankind (v. 18a, ending with “flesh”). More specifically, verses 18b-22 distinguish five stages in the glorification of Jesus: (1) the revivification of the body (v. 18b); (2) the descent into hell (v. 19); (3) the resurrection in the narrow sense (leaving the tomb to make His reappearance in this world; v. 21); (4) the ascension (v. 22a); and (5) the session at the right hand of God.

Verses 18b-19, indeed, constitute the *sedes doctrinae* of the *descensus ad infernum* which we constantly confess in the Apostolic Creed: “He descended into hell.” The best approach to the contrasting *sarki* and *pneumati* closing verse 18 is to take both as datives of sphere: “in the flesh” and “in the spirit.” (Thus the Authorized Version is wrong to translate “by the Spirit.”) At least four considerations urge this interpretation upon us: (1) It treats the two clearly corresponding datives in the same way (as opposed to the King James Version and most other interpretations). (2) It takes the two datives closing verse 18 in the same way as the *en hō* (“in which”) opening verse 19. (3) It treats the *sarki* here in the same way as the

three occurrences of *sarki* in verses 1-2 of the ensuing chapter: "Christ, then, suffered in the flesh. . ." (4) It likewise treats the *sarki* and *pneumati* in the same way as the same pair of words in 4:6. The sequence of thought, indeed, in both 3:18-22 and 4:1-6 confirms Luther's interpretation of *sarki* and *pneumati* as meaning fleshly (earthly) life and spiritual (heavenly) life respectively. (Thus, 4:2 speaks of one's "remaining time in the flesh.") In the case of Christ, then, as in 3:18, these modes of life equal the state of humiliation and the state of exaltation respectively. (Analogous uses of *sarx* and *pneuma* can be found in Hebrews 5:7, which speaks of "the days of His flesh," and in 1 Corinthians 15:44-45.) Thus, the *en hō* beginning verse 19 means that the descent into hell, like the revivification, belongs to the state of glorification. The *descensus* is not equivalent to death, nor does it involve any suffering of Christ. Rather, the Lord's soul returned to His body in the tomb (on Easter morn) and He then appeared in glory to the denizens of hell (the spiritual "prison" of verse 19). The message which He proclaimed (*ekēruxen*) there was not, of course, the Gospel, since there is no more opportunity of repentance in hell (cf. Hebrews 9:27; as to *kērussō* with law as its object, cf. Romans 2:21; Galatians 5:11). Contrariwise Christ there proclaimed His victory assured—which is not Gospel, but Law, to the devils and the damned. His message was the crushing of the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15), the rout and, indeed, the eternal condemnation of Satan and all his allies. In this way, indeed, Christ "conquered the devil, destroyed hell's power, and took from the devil all his might" (FC-SD, IX, 2). (In Article IX of the Formula of Concord the Lutheran Church confesses the *descensus* more forthrightly than any other communion; on the rejection of this article in modern "Lutheranism," on the other hand, see Gotthilf Doehler, "The Descent into Hell," *The Springfielder*, XXXIX:1 [June 1975], pp. 2-19.)

Christ proclaimed defeat, of course, to all the spirits (*pneumasin*) of hell—the fallen angels (v. 22b) and all men who had died without faith (v. 19). Verse 20 provides but one example of these rebels now condemned to hear the Lord's shout of triumph. (No article joins the participle commencing verse 20 with *pneumasin* in verse 19; the idea is not "which. . . were disobedient" [King James Version], but "such as were disobedient.") The example chosen, however, is particularly significant, since the deluge was, of course, the most dramatic single condemnation of unbelievers in history (Genesis 6:5-7, 11-13, 17; 7:4, 21-23; 8:21-22; 9:11, 15). For the Great Flood swept into hell the souls of all then alive save eight when they hardened themselves against the prophetic preaching of Noah. Verse 20 refers to the period of a hundred and twenty years which God conceded the world between announcing the flood and effecting it (Genesis 6:3), mercifully allowing men plenteous opportunity to heed the call to repentance

sounded by Noah in word and deed—*id est*, his preaching and the construction of the ark respectively (cf. 2 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 11:7). Consequently, Jesus Himself uses the prediluvian generation as an example of cynical impenitence, making it typical, indeed, of the final generation of world history (Matthew 24:37-39; cf. 2 Peter 3:3-10).

The last clause of verse 20 is subject to recurring mistranslation. As usual, the word *diasōzō* means, not "save" (as *sōzō* does), but "bring through safely" (cf. Acts 23:24). In this connection the preposition *dia* is clearly used, not instrumentally, but rather, as in the prefix to *diasōzō*, locally. Thus, the Authorized Version errs in saying Noah and family "were saved by the water"; the NASB is correct except for the addition of the article: "they were brought safely through the water." Anyway, Noah's family were obviously saved from the waters of the flood, not *by* them (Genesis 6:17-21; 7:1-3, 7, 13, 23).

The first clause of verse 21 has likewise fallen prey to considerable misinterpretation. It begins with a neuter relative pronoun (*ho*), which (in the absence of any contextual requirement to the contrary) refers to the immediately preceding word, "water" (the neuter *hudōr*). The *kai* which follows, when used as here with a relative pronoun, serves simply to give more independence to the relative clause (cf. Acts 10:39; Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, p. 394, *kai*, II, 6). The word *antitupon* is syntactically separate from both *ho* and *baptisma*; actually, *antitupon* immediately follows and modifies *humas* ("you"). (E.G. Selwyn, following John Lightfoot, construes verse 21 correctly in this regard in his well-known *First Epistle of Peter* [1947], pp. 201-205, 298-299). Anyway, Peter's use simply of "water," rather than "flood," rules out the common idea of baptism as counterpart to the flood (e.g., as its antitype). Baptism can scarcely correspond to water; it partially consists in water. Peter, in any case, clearly uses *antitupon* in its general sense of something "corresponding to something that has gone before" (BAG, p. 75). Obviously inappropriate here is the technical sense employed in Hebrews 9:24, namely, a "copy, antitype, representation. . . , according to Platonic doctrine, with reference to the world of things about us, as opposed to the true heavenly originals, or ideas (the *authentikon*)." And it would be an anachronism to invest the word with the technical significance which "antitype" assumed in post-biblical times, namely, the "fulfilment" of a "type" in historical terms (i.e., an entity or occurrence ordained by God to predict some future entity or occurrence in some respect). There is, therefore, no justification here to speak of the flood as a type of baptism.

Thus, the idea of 20b-21a is this: in the ark eight people were brought safely through water, which now as (in the form of) baptism saves

you who compose a corresponding entity. In actuality, then, we have not correspondence, but contrast here between the flood and baptism, while the correspondence comes between the eight souls in the ark of verse 20 and the *humas* ("you") of verse 21 (or *hēmas*, "us," depending on the textual variant chosen)—in other words, between the church of Noah's day and church of the New Testament. The point of correspondence appears in the word *oligoi*—the fewness of believers (then and now) in the midst of a hostile world (an idea easy to relate to the *theologia crucis* central to this pericope and epistle, as explained previously).

Verses 21b-22 (wherein *apothesis* and *eperōtēma* stand in apposition to *baptisma*) base the saving efficacy of baptism squarely on the exaltation of Christ (especially the resurrection). Verse 21b, more specifically, connects this efficacy, not with the physical results of baptism, but with the spiritual. The place of *sarkos* and *suneideseōs agathēs* (at the beginning of the negative and positive explications respectively of the saving nature of baptism) evidently indicates genitives of sphere: "not [in the sphere] of flesh as a removal of dirt but rather [in the sphere] of a good conscience as an appeal to God." In other words, baptism saves us by establishing a satisfactory relationship between us sinners and the Holy God on the basis of the work of Christ (cf. v. 18a). For the biblical (and prebiblical) meaning of *eperōtēma* is "appeal," not "answer" (BAG, p. 285); and Peter describes baptism as actually effecting, not merely symbolizing, a "good conscience" (*pace* the comments of Reformed theologians).

A sermon on this pericope could well have the goal of enduring suffering with patience. The problem is that we instinctively resist suffering, especially if it be undeserved. The means to achieving the aforesaid goal is the blessing which God has attached to the crosses of Christians on the basis of the cross of Christ Himself.

Introduction: It is one of the most frequent questions in human experience: "What did I do to deserve this?" The occasion may be some inconvenience—an unexpected visitor or a lost key. The occasion may be embarrassment, insult, or injury. The occasion may be suffering much more severe—a painful sickness or the death of loved ones. Yes, all sorts of suffering tend to raise this question in the minds of each of us:

WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?

- I. Actually, we deserve much more suffering.
 - A. We are all "by nature sinful" and "unjust" (*Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 6; v. 18).

- B. We have all, therefore, "justly deserved. . .temporal and eternal punishment" (*Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 16; v. 20)
- II. Actually, we receive much more than suffering.
 - A. We receive blessings from the sufferings of Christ.
 - 1. Accomplished for us in the state of humiliation (v. 18).
 - 2. Imparted to us in the state of exaltation (vv. 21-22).
 - B. We receive blessings from sufferings as Christians (vv. 14-17).

Douglas MacCallum Lindsay Judisch

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 27, 1990

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

The First Epistle of Peter has rightly been called a "Letter of Christian Hope." It is not simply an apostolic optimism that leads to this designation but a realism that out of intense Christian struggle will graciously come deliverance and even glory. Peter needs no instruction about suffering. He is not surprised when it comes (4:2), how it comes (4:4), and even why it comes (5:8). His concern, however, is that his readers perceive both the nature of struggling and its purpose for them, in order that they might react in the God-directed way that will lead to their eventual triumph. In effect the apostle is affirming to every Christian, "Suffering should not be shocking, but it should be salutary."

The goal of the sermon is to build on the reality of the believer's struggle with a humble and sure hope that the Lord of grace will provide both direction and deliverance—to emphasize the eternal value of a faith that endures. The problem is that suffering is both easily misunderstood and often completely mishandled because sin can blind even believers as to its nature and purpose. The means to the goal is to uphold the "mighty hand of God" (5:6) as the only hope in guiding the believer through the unavoidable perils that litter the pathway of life.

Introduction: Physicians sometimes have to tell patients that they have a condition for which there is no immediate cure and that only time will eventually be their healer. This is not usually welcome news, since few enjoy living with suffering. Yet living with suffering is a spiritual reality for every Christian. In some measure all believers

have hardships. Understanding their nature, purpose, and outcome is part of faith, even as Peter reminds us in the text:

WHEN SUFFERING LOOMS

- I. Consider its nature.
 - A. Suffering that results from personal wickedness is explainable.
 - 1. It is a consequence of sin.
 - 2. It should not be seen among Christian believers (4:15).
 - B. Hardship that comes because of commitment to Christ is unavoidable.
 - 1. It should not surprise us (4:12).
 - 2. It should energize us to know that we share in what our Savior endured (4:13).
- II. Determine its purpose.
 - A. Trials can remind us that our Lord also suffered.
 - B. Struggles can show us that upholding the name of Christ, no matter how difficult, gives evidence of God's presence with us.
 - C. Judgment can convince us that our Lord cares deeply about our commitment to Him and looks for leadership from His "household" (4:17).

Transition: Although suffering can take many forms, some of which are understandable but others of which cannot be explained completely, Christians know that all hardship can have purpose and value, especially if the results of it can be identified and taken to heart.

- III. Contemplate its outcome.
 - A. Our helplessness will humble us (5:6).
 - 1. We have no power by ourselves to endure.
 - 2. We have a God whose helpfulness is complete (5:7).
 - B. Our predicament will awaken us.
 - 1. We cannot afford to become careless.
 - a. The devil is seeking us (5:8).
 - b. The "lion" is a formidable foe.
 - 2. We stand with "the fellow faithful" in knowing that our mutual trials are an inevitable part of our way to life.
 - C. Our future will enliven us.
 - 1. We know that our suffering will not last (5:10).
 - 2. We know that the God who has saved us will lead us through all trials and give us the gift of grace for which we dared to hope, His "eternal glory in Christ" (5:10).

Conclusion: Christians know it is not valuable to debate the existence of hardship. What has value, however, is a realization that suffering can lead by grace to a humble walk through even the most difficult life under the care of a mighty and loving Lord. Satan will "roar." Vigilance under grace is needed. But the gift of eternal glory in Christ endures as our unsurpassed and certain goal.

David E. Seybold
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

June 3, 1990

Acts 2:1-21

How is it that God's great salvation, accomplished so long ago and so far away, can find and apply itself to our lives today? How can hearts turned from God and hardened by sin become receptive and change completely so that God now uses them as His agents of change for others? It all has to do with the mysterious, behind-the-scenes working of the Holy Spirit.

Christians today need to remember that Pentecost was not just a one-time event. The Holy Spirit continues to work in the world following Pentecost and He continues to work in our lives following baptism. The challenge is that we keep ourselves open to His working. Only then can God's gracious change be effected in our hearts and lives.

Introduction: It is acceptable and even desirable today to be spirited, that is, to have a vibrant and enthusiastic attitude toward life. We are encouraged to "catch the spirit" in everything from our support of the local athletic team to the way we choose which brand of gasoline to buy. Why it is easier for some more than others to "catch the spirit" is a secret that teachers, coaches, and anyone in the motivation business would pay dearly to find out. But it is really no secret when it comes to catching the most desirable spirit of all, the Holy Spirit. As we hear the story of Pentecost today, we twentieth-century believers are challenged:

CATCH THE SPIRIT

- I. God has made it easy for His Spirit to be caught.
 - A. The Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost.

1. His presence was obvious to all in great signs and wonders.
2. Peter's sermon testified of God's desire to come close to us through His Holy Spirit.
- B. This special coming of the Holy Spirit was promised by God.
 1. His coming was spoken of in the Old Testament (vv. 17-21).
 2. Jesus Himself had promised His coming (John 14:16,26; 15:26).
- C. This outpouring was only the beginning.
 1. God generously pours His Spirit on all people.
 - a. Israel was not to be God's exclusive people.
 - b. We see a cosmopolitan involvement in the Pentecost experience (vv. 8-11).
 - c. All, regardless of age, sex, social status, or race, are the Holy Spirit's target (vv. 17-18).
 2. Since we continue to live "in the last days" (v. 17a), God's saving activity is still accomplished among us through the Holy Spirit.

Transition: God desires the salvation of all people. He wants to bring us that salvation by coming close to us; indeed, He wants to live in us. To that end, He pours out His Spirit on us so that He can be "caught" by faith and internalized.

- II. Once caught, the Holy Spirit changes people.
 - A. He convicts us of our sin and shows us our need to have the guilt of that sin removed.
 1. Convicted of their sin through Peter's sermon, the Pentecost people were "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37).
 2. This sorrow over sin and desire for change is at the heart of the word "repent" ("*metanoes*," v. 38).
 - B. He works in us the desire to "call on the name of the Lord" so that we can "be saved" (v. 21).
 1. God's mercy and salvation are forced on no one.
 2. The Holy Spirit alone can enable us to say "Jesus is Lord" with all that statement implies for our forgiveness and salvation.
 3. Baptism is one means He uses to produce that change (Acts 2:38,41).
 4. The change of repentance and faith is a daily process which the Holy Spirit works in us.
- III. Once changed, we catch God's vision of a world in need.
 - A. Like the disciples on Pentecost, we become agents of change as we witness to God's change in us.
 - B. Pentecost goes on as others "catch the Spirit."

Conclusion: In this age of the Holy Spirit, may we continually catch that Spirit as He is poured out to us in Word and Sacrament. And may He make us spirited enough to join Him boldly in His work, "that all may call on the name of the Lord and be saved."

Paul E. Cloeter
Bessemer, Michigan

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY

June 10, 1990

2 Corinthians 13:11-14

Paul was concerned about the spiritual welfare of the Corinthian Christians because they tolerated gross immorality within their community. Their Christian life was not in harmony with their Christian faith. Paul had written them about the immoral person and he had visited them concerning this matter. This letter was the third time he approached them about the toleration of sin (13:1-2). Paul urged them to examine themselves, to test themselves to determine whether or not they were holding the faith (13:5). His hope was that they would improve (13:9). This is the reason for his words of farewell in verse 11, "Mend you ways." In effect Paul was telling them that without repentance the Corinthians could not receive God's blessing. "Mend your ways. . .and God will be with you."

Introduction: A young man was about to leave a lengthy church meeting in the dark of night in a neighborhood with a high crime rate. As he was about to leave, the minister said to him, after calling his name, "The Lord be with you." On his way home the young man thought, "How many times I have heard those words in church, but they never touched me, until I heard them tonight." The doctrine of the trinity can become a mere formula to describe our God. But it must be more. It must be a personal experience to each of us who believe.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TRINITY

- I. The formula without the experience will not bring a blessing.
 - A. This was the problem "Old Israel" experienced.
 1. The people believed that God was with them to protect them because they had the temple (Jeremiah 7:4).
 2. The people believed mistakenly that God was with them, but their lives were not in harmony with God (Amos 5:14).

- B. This was the problem the Corinthians experienced.
 - 1. The Corinthians did not accept Paul's admonition (13:1-2).
 - 2. Paul implies that God's blessing will not be with them if they do not change (13:11).
- C. This is often our problem.
 - 1. We accept the truth of our God as a formula, but we live unrepentant lives.
 - 2. We assume because we are baptized and are "church members" that we are saved.
 - 3. As a result, we do not experience the saving grace of Jesus and the transforming love of the Father or the securing fellowship of the Spirit.
- II. The formula is experienced personally when we do these things:
 - A. We repent of our sins.
 - 1. We heed the appeal of Paul to turn from our sins.
 - 2. We heed the appeal of Paul to mend our ways.
 - B. We hold on to the faith.
 - 1. We trust God's forgiveness.
 - 2. We realize Jesus is in us.
 - C. We live as brothers and sisters.
 - 1. We agree with each other.
 - 2. We live in peace.
- III. The experience of the trinity is a blessing.
 - A. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is our experience.
 - 1. It is real.
 - 2. It is personal.
 - B. The love of God is our experience.
 - 1. It is warm.
 - 2. It is all-embracing.
 - C. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is our experience.
 - 1. It gives security.
 - 2. It gives company.

Conclusion: The Triune God wants to be more than a formula to us. He wants us to experience Him personally. For this reason His Son lived among us and His Spirit lives in us. May you experience the Holy Trinity in rich measure.

David Schlie
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 17, 1990

Romans 3:21-25a, 27-28

This theologically wealthy pericope may likely cause the preacher to ask, "How shall I preach thee? Let me count the ways." Indeed, there are many possible approaches to the rich theological heritage offered here. Ironically, this same text poses a potential problem. Its familiarity may give rise to the preacher's lament, "They have heard it all before. It will make no real difference, anyway." The text, however, does make a difference, all the difference in the world. As its message is proclaimed faith is implanted and strengthened by the Gospel it conveys. The message of redemption through Christ Jesus meets the malady of mankind's unrighteousness. Through the means of the Gospel the unrighteousness of sin (malady) is conquered anew by the righteousness from God (goal). One possible handle to the text is the word "difference." The introduction to the sermon could discuss the obvious differences between people.

Introduction: People are *different* from one another. People *differ* in such ways as age, height, weight, hobbies, and backgrounds. Each child is unique. Each adult is unique. Differences are apparent.

THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST MAKES

- I. In one sense there is *no* difference (v. 22). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. This fact is evident in the Old Testament and the New. That same fact is evident in our own times and in our own lives. There is *no difference*. There is no exception among men, women, or children. The consequences of that fact touch each life with guilt, death, and damnation.
- II. But there *was* a difference. There was one who did not fall short. He was the One, Jesus Christ. That difference was evident in His perfect life. He kept the law perfectly. And that difference was evident in His suffering and damnation. He alone was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- III. And *what* a difference He makes. The difference He makes is presented in the text itself: righteousness apart from the law (v. 21); righteousness by His grace (v. 24); righteousness through faith (v. 22).
- IV. As His people we *celebrate* that difference. We gather around His Word and sacraments. We commemorate our redemption. We receive true joy.

- V. As His people we *communicate* that difference. We do so in word and deed. We do so to those who are within the family of God. We do so to those who are outside the family. We do so without distinction. Through our witness God works to convey the differences Christ makes to all nations.

Conclusion: The condemning message of God's law applies to all. There is no difference. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. However, there was a difference. There was one who was an exception to that rule. That difference was evident in His active and passive obedience. And what a difference He makes! God's condemning law applies to all, without distinction. By His grace that truth also applies to you and to me. As God's people we celebrate the difference Christ makes. As God's people we are empowered by the Gospel to communicate that good news to all people.

Jan Case

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 24, 1990

Romans 4:18-25

Introduction: Have you ever felt a sense of complete hopelessness? It may be at a time of severe illness or a business that went bankrupt. Perhaps a relative was on a plane that was hijacked by a terrorist. The situation can be anything and any place. But you are absolutely helpless and therefore hopeless. Furthermore, your friends gave no help with their well-meaning comments: "Don't worry, things will come out all right." If someone wants to say, "Don't worry," he better have some solution to the problem. Hope is based on the ability and promise of aid in time of need. This text speaks to that point.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

- I. Man's hope.
 - A. The world's foundation for hope.
 - 1. Based on a dying and decaying world.
 - 2. Based on weak and dying man himself.
 - 3. Based on dreams and promises without the ability to deliver.
 - B. Man's hope in action (vv. 19-20).
 - 1. Man's hope is based on an impossibility. Who can have hope in this hopeless situation?

2. Man's hope is wish, not promise. Man cannot deliver on his hope; he can only wish for luck.
 3. Man's hope turns to bitterness and cynicism. Disappointment arises because there is no surety in the future.
- II. God's hope.
- A. God as foundation of hope.
 1. The person of Jesus Christ is the foundation for all hope (v. 24).
 2. The sacrifice of Christ as atonement (v. 25) is the cause of God's promise of help and friendship.
 3. The victory in the resurrection of Christ (v. 24) is a guarantee of God's victory in all of life.
 - B. Hope in the life of the Christian.
 1. The Christian faces reality with confidence in Christ and His promises (v. 29).
 2. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior is the requirement for hope. Trust in all God's promises builds hope (v. 21).
 3. The Christian lives confidently in both faith and hope. They are two sides of a coin (v. 23).

George Kraus

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 1, 1990

Romans 5:6-11

Paul has asserted the power of the Gospel against the reality of human sin, which places us under the wrath of God. God justifies us by faith, not by the deeds of the law, a truth which Abraham learned. This justification by faith brings us peace with God, which enables us to glory in tribulation. The text gives us a new perspective on glory. Admitting the total failure of any self-glorification, we glory only in God's love through the death of Christ for us.

The goal of the sermon outlined below is that the hearer glory rightly in salvation through Christ's atoning blood. The malady is that we glory wrongly in ourselves and stand without strength under the wrath of God as ungodly sinners and enemies of God. The means to attaining the goal is the Gospel: Out of undeserved love, God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for us with the result that He justified us, saved us, and reconciled us to Himself. He fills us with praise to glory in Him for daily living.

Introduction: Glory is a popular word in today's world and points to human achievement. Olympic athletes train and compete to win a gold medal. Candidates for political office hit the campaign trail to win a major election. Young business executives work long, hard hours to gain promotions and more prestigious jobs. We likewise walk the road to glory by personal achievements. In the text Paul starts with tribulation as a leveler of human achievement. By pointing us to God's love in Christ he gives us a new perspective:

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON GLORY

- I. We wrongly view glory as human achievement.
 - A. We often deny God's glory and seek our own (Romans 1:21-23). We give God token glory, knowing He made the world, coming to church occasionally for worship, going to Him for help in a pinch; *but* practically we seek our own glory through a comfortable, secure home environment, successful careers with advancement and salary raises, and enjoyable social activities and leisure.
 - B. In reality we are ungodly sinners and enemies of God (Romans 5:6,8,10). God exposes our self-glory.
 1. In the home we experience illness, marital strife, parent-child confrontations. We blame others but are exposed as ungodly sinners and enemies of God.
 2. In the business world we experience loss of employment, power struggles, or unbridled success without satisfaction. We blame others but are exposed as ungodly sinners and enemies of God.
 3. In the social arena we experience relocation, quarrels with friends, or weariness with unbridled pleasure. We blame others but are exposed as ungodly sinners and enemies of God.
 - C. Under God's wrath (5:9) we admit that we are without strength. At home, in business, in the social arena we admit our sinfulness. Tribulation brings us to a new perspective on glory. Human achievement totally fails.
- II. God leads us to glory only in Him through the death of His Son.
 - A. God loves us in our weakness (5:6-7).
 - B. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (5:8). He "justified" us and "reconciled" us to God (5:9-10).
 - C. Therefore, we glory only in God through Christ's atonement (v. 11).

Conclusion: God fills us with praise to glorify Him in our daily lives at home, at work, and in the community (*Lutheran Worship*, 210, stanza 1):

All glory be to God alone,
Forevermore the Highest One.
He is our sinful race's friend;
His grace and peace to us extend.
May humankind see his goodwill,
May hearts with deep thanksgiving fill.

Stephen J. Carter
St. Louis, Missouri

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 8, 1990

Romans 5:12-15

Many may be surprised at this location for this text, some perhaps viewing it as an irksome intrusion in Roman 5. On closer examination, we find it beautifully portrays the whole objective focus of our joyous Christian freedom—the unmatched grace of the Second Adam. The likeness and importance of Adam and Christ are not found in the idea that they are either the first or representative of two groups or eras. The key is that both usher in new eras, each distinct from the other. The consequences are staggering and of eternal dimensions. The context—especially that which follows the text—is crucial to its proper understanding and application.

The goal of the sermon outlined below is that the hearer would accept as his the gift of grace and life of the Second Adam, Christ. The problem is that we tend to see sin as little more than a series of bad mistakes, rather than a deadly disease infecting all people and bringing death. The solution is found only in the Second Adam, Christ, who ushered in an era filled with God's gracious love—not for Himself, but for all humanity.

Introduction: We frequently run into people and things which look or even act alike. My wife is a twin and is often mistaken for her sister. People observe a young man and comment: "Like father, like son!" Parents, proud of their family history and eager to pass their heritage on, often give a number to their offspring—like Jacob Smith IV. The text takes the lives of two people as they lived on earth—one from the Old Testament and one from the New—and compares them. Both are properly called "Adam." The question which you must answer today is this:

WHICH ADAM IS FOR YOU?

- I. Consider the person.
 - A. Adam I
 - 1. He was specially created by God on the sixth day.
 - 2. He was created in harmony with God.
 - 3. He shattered that harmony through sin, distancing himself from God (vv. 12a,19a).
 - B. Adam II
 - 1. He was given to the world as a special gift of the Father (John 3:16).
 - 2. He came in perfect harmony with His Father (John 1).
 - 3. He maintained that harmony through perfect obedience (Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 4:15).
- II. Consider the product.
 - A. Adam
 - 1. He derails life with God (3:9-18,19a).
 - 2. He destroys life with God (vv. 12,14,16b,17a,18a).
 - B. Christ
 - 1. He restores life (vv. 15,17b,18b,19b,21).
 - 2. He renews life (5:1-4,11; 6:4c).
- III Consider the present.
 - A. Danger
 - 1. We could underestimate sin as a series of bad but relatively harmless independent acts in life.
 - 2. We could underestimate Christ as one who merely points us to a new way in life.
 - B. Delight
 - 1. Jesus' grace outshines Adam's sin and its results today.
 - 2. Jesus' grace overflows to me!

Conclusion: The Los Angeles basin is notorious for its smog, which can hide the nearby mountains from view, burn the eyes, and harm the health. Then come the mighty Santa Ana winds off the desert and they blow out the smog, returning the air to its pristine purity. Jesus came that you might have more than a breath of fresh air. He came to give you life!

Lloyd Strelow
Tustin, California

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 15, 1990

Romans 6:1b-11

This Sunday's pericope is from the third part of Paul's great theological letter to the Romans. Part I comprises chapters 1:14-3:20 and emphasizes universal sinfulness and guilt. Part II (chapters 3:21-5:21) has as its central thought the righteousness (justification) which God provides through the redemption of Christ, a righteousness obtained by us not through works but through faith. Part III (chapters 6:1-8:39) sets forth the Christian life. In 3:21-5:21 the doctrine of justification is central, while in 6:1-8:39 it is the doctrine of sanctification.

The doctrine of justification by faith has always been subject to misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and abuse. Therefore, as Paul has completed his exposition of the doctrine, it is natural that he should state and answer three of the most familiar objections offered by its opponents. The first is that such a method of declaring men just encourages sin (6:1-14); the second, that it allows sin (6:15-7:6); and the third, that it makes law a sinful or an evil thing (7:7-25). In connection with refuting the objection that justification by faith encourages sin, Paul also discusses the place of baptism in the Christian life.

Introduction: In August 1988 an elderly matron living in St. Clemens, Michigan, sent to 7800 Lutheran clergymen a letter-tract in which she implored them to ask God to show them the error of which they were guilty by teaching their flocks that through baptism they were born again. She sincerely believed that the Lutheran doctrine of baptism endangered the salvation of members who were taught baptismal regeneration. She once was a confirmed Lutheran but subsequently departed from the Lutheran church.

This woman is not the only person who has not or who at present does not understand the meaning and significance of biblical baptism. Many Christian churches in our day consider baptism a mere ceremony, which may be left undone according to one's pleasure. Many oppose infant baptism and claim that only adults are to be baptized. Even many who support infant baptism do not attach much importance to it.

Luther's Small Catechism treats baptism as one of the chief parts of Christian doctrine. The Wittenberg Reformer held and taught that baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil,

and gives eternal salvation to all who believe in Christ. He held baptism to be "the washing of regeneration and renewing in the Holy Spirit." Christ commanded His church to make disciples of all nations by baptizing people in the name of the trinity and to follow up by teaching all that Christ has commanded. Infants belong to all nations. That infants should be baptized is shown by the fact that Christ's instruction was to bring little children to Him, "for of such is the kingdom of God." Babies and small children can have faith; otherwise Jesus could not have warned against causing the little ones who believe in Him to stumble. Clearly the Savior taught: "Except a person is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The truth is that holy baptism is a sacrament which is of great importance and is to be remembered and utilized as long as the properly baptized person lives. In today's pericope members of the Christian congregation can again be instructed and reminded of the value of baptism.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

- I. When a person is baptized into Christ something remarkable and wonderful occurs.
 - A. Baptism is no mere occasion to bestow a name on a child or rite of dedication of a child to God.
 - B. In baptism God accomplishes a great miracle; a person born dead in trespasses and sins and by nature an enemy of God is spiritually born again.
 - C. In baptism God does something which is not only valid for babyhood but for childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Yes, its effects extend into eternity.
- II. When a person is properly baptized into Christ, he is immersed into Christ's death.
 - A. No less than three times Paul stresses this truth, that the Christian is baptized into Christ's death.
 - B. This "being baptized into Christ's death" involves being set free from sin.
 1. By His death on the cross Christ became the condemned sinner's substitute.
 2. In baptism what Christ did for us, paying the punishment we deserved, is applied to the baptized person by the application of water and pronouncement of the baptismal formula.
 3. The blessings Jesus earned are credited to the account of the person baptized. The sinner is declared righteous by faith in Christ.

4. The baptized person becomes united with Christ in a personal union. This union is called "the mystical union."
- III. When a person is baptized into Christ, he becomes a partaker of Christ's life.
 - A. Christ died for our sins but was raised for our justification.
 - B. Through baptism a person enters into a intimate relationship with the Triune God. By virtue of the fact that Jesus rose again, who once was dead, so we arise to a new life, namely, eternal life.
 - C. Because of what Christ is and what He has done through baptism His life becomes our life. This is one of the great truths God has revealed through Paul (Ephesians 5:30,39;1 Corinthians 6:17; Philippians 1:21; Colossians 3:4).
- IV. When a person is baptized into Christ, he joins with Christ in the fight against sin.
 - A. One of Paul's major concerns in this pericope appears in the assertions in verses 4, 6, and 13.
 - B. Every Christian is obligated to overcome indwelling sin and develop a God-pleasing life.
 - C. Paul found in his own experience that a man's sinful nature had to be subdued and that the fight of faith was a daily one in which the Christian's baptism would be utilized. (See Luther's Small Catechism, Part IV, "What does such baptizing with water signify?")

Conclusion: All things that we need for our eternal welfare have been given to us in baptism. It is, however, just as true that we can lose everything. Let us hold fast to the grace of God which He has extended to us in baptism. Let us show by leading a godly life that we have not fallen from baptismal grace; let us hold fast to that which we have, that we may not lose the crown of life.

Raymond Surburg

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 22, 1990

Romans 7:15-25a

Introduction: We follow God as Christians. We do His will. Why should we go against Him? He has chosen and justified us and claimed us. Now we can live holy lives. We can experience victory.

We shall have no struggles, no problems. "The strife is o'er, the battle done."

VICTORIOUS LIVING

- I. Life does not seem victorious.
 - A. I am doing something strange (v. 15).
 - B. I do not like it (v. 16).
 - C. I am a prisoner (v. 23).
 - D. I am miserable (v. 24).
- II. I cannot seem to live like a Christian.
 - A. Some say Paul is talking about two stages of faith.
 - 1. The first stage is carnal Christianity.
 - 2. The second stage is Spirit-filled Christianity.
 - 3. I must change from one stage to the other.
 - 4. Then I shall have victory.
 - B. Some say Paul is talking about a non-real, hypothetical situation.
 - 1. We should and can avoid such a situation.
 - 2. Only "backsliders" experience such a situation.
 - 3. We can go on to victory if we try.
 - C. The grammar will not allow these views (A and B).
 - 1. Paul uses the present tense; he is not speaking of a future stage.
 - 2. Paul never hints that we bring ourselves back.
 - 3. Other scriptures say the same (Galatians 5:16-18).
 - 4. My experience is the same—I am wretched.
 - D. These views are false hopes (A and B).
- III. But there is true and good news in Romans 7.
 - A. We must ask basic questions.
 - 1. How much must we change to be saved?
 - 2. When do we become acceptable?
 - 3. Is "acceptable" something we become?
 - 4. Can we escape Romans 7?
 - B. We must ask questions of Romans 7.
 - 1. Is this passage prescriptive of Christians?
 - 2. Is this passage descriptive of a process of salvation?
 - 3. Does this passage describe only saved sinners? (This is the solution to the puzzle. All other questions in III. A and B must answered negatively.)
- IV. It is wonderful to be described so accurately.
 - A. God knows, understands, and still loves.
 - B. Salvation does not depend on change but on Jesus.
 - C. Even the great Paul was weak and struggling.

- D. We can view ourselves in the present.
 - 1. Lost and found.
 - 2. Dead and alive.
 - 3. Sinner and saint.
- E. Jesus will deliver.
- V. So we celebrate the struggle of Romans 7.
 - A. It will always be present in this life.
 - B. God has accepted us.
 - C. We will win.

Klemet Preus
Woodland, California

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 29, 1990

Romans 8:15-25

In Romans 8 Paul speaks of the Christian life in the Spirit. If we live according to the Spirit who lives in us, we can know we are God's children and as God's children we will share in His glory. Yet if we share in His glory, we must also share in the pain He suffered. The text deals with this present life of suffering on our way to glory. "I reckon" (v. 18) implies reasoning, calculation. We may consider an accountant balancing a ledger. The "suffering" side of the ledger is no comparison to the "glory" side. The glory that shall be revealed in us is the glory of the Lord (Colossians 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:10). Our present sufferings are mirrored in the upheaval and bondage of all creation. All suffering and upheaval is tied to the fall into sin. "Creation," in verses 19-22, is best thought of as the non-rational creation, animate or inanimate, equivalent to all nature. "Earnest expectation" (v. 19) suggests an outstretched head or neck. Homiletically we might think of a craned neck at a parade, eagerly waiting for the spectacle to come. The "inward groaning" of verse 23 should be tied to the eager waiting which is a predominant thought of the verse and the text. It is not simply a groaning from pain, but a longing for final deliverance. The "first fruits" of verse 23 (i.e., the indwelling of the Spirit and the blessings He brings to our lives now) are like a "down-payment" or "first installment" of the eternal heritage of glory that awaits us (Ephesians 1:14 and 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). The Christian "hope" of verse 24 is more than the wishful thinking of this age. It is a certain hope based on the death and resurrection of our Lord (1 Peter 1:3). It is this hope for final "glory" (v. 18), "glorious

liberty" (v. 21), and "final redemption" (v. 23) that saves us from our troubles.

HOW DO CHRISTIANS DEAL WITH TROUBLE?

- I. We accept it as a fact of life this side of heaven.
 - A. Paul does not question the reality of suffering for Christians.
 - B. All of creation suffers and reflects our human condition.
- II. We endure it, measuring it against the glory that awaits us.
 - A. There is no comparison in duration ("present" suffering).
 - B. There is no comparison in degree.
- III. We groan under it.
 - A. We are not stoics, but feel the pain.
 - B. This Christian groaning has the aspect of longing for what lies ahead, our final redemption.
- IV. We give thanks for it inasmuch as it lifts our sights heavenward.
 - A. Ease of life makes us complacent and earthbound.
 - B. Our sufferings move us to consider the "glorious freedom" that awaits us.

Dennis S. Perryman
Acton, Massachusetts

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 5, 1990

Romans 8:26-27

Those who are using the Series A Epistles in the course of this year will already have been preaching from Romans for the past seven Sundays (eight if one includes Pentecost). Accordingly it is scarcely necessary to orient the preacher to the content of Romans. Yet a word about the larger picture of the context, about the form of this section and its sublime content is always in order.

Certainly the poetic quality of the verses forming 8:17-30, from which three successive texts are taken, is felt by everyone. St. Paul's words are not poetry in an outward sense, but the inner essence, the vision, the imaginative conception of the passage is artistic. We name just two examples to illustrate the glorious object of the Christian hope.

Note first how Paul's meditation on present conditions and future glory clusters about the Holy Trinity. The creation (sub-human

creation) is groaning in travail while it is awaiting the revealing of the children of God; thereby the material nature of creation will be renovated to its original status and become a habitat for the believers (God the Father, 8:19-22). The believers too groan while they await full release from the bondage to sin and the final expression of their adoption, the redemption of their bodies (God the Son, 8:23). At the same time there dwells within the believers (8:9) the Holy Spirit—what this chapter emphasizes—who is the seal of the believers' sonship (vv. 15,18), the assurance of the full blessings of God in the future under the picture of the first fruits (v. 23). Thus creation redemption, and sanctification merge in the apostle's mind.

Another picture that flashes through Paul's description is that of the rebirth, *palingenesis*, as it is called in Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. Nature will be renewed and transformed, thus making it a suitable abode for God's creatures. Believing mankind will be transformed so that they might capably rule over the new age (Matthew 24:45 ff.). Now already they have the "first fruit of the Spirit," which portends not only their full and final worship, but also the full harvest of the redemption of their bodies. Baptism, of course, is always the initial stage in this cycle.

The preacher ought always to remember that the completed work of Jesus Christ was for our justification (3:21-31). It is given to us in the Gospel (5:18-19), applied in baptism (6:2-11), and established in us by the Holy Spirit. So it is that 8:2 tells us: "For the law of the Spirit of life has in Christ Jesus set you free from the law of sin and of death." The Holy Spirit's indwelling is the installation and establishment of the "law of life" or the Gospel in the believer (see 7:22-23 and the four "laws"; 3:31). Calling the Gospel the "law of the Spirit of life" is another way of saying that the work of Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to the believer; the end of the law is fulfilled in us by the Holy Spirit.

Introduction: We are not alone. The Holy Paraclete is our inward companion (John 14:17). He goes with us to guide, teach, remind, and comfort us (John 14:25-26; 15:26-27). To this picture of the sustaining companionship of the Holy Spirit St. Paul adds that the Spirit is our intercessor. Jesus, of course, is our intercessor (John 17:20-26), but the Holy Spirit also intercedes for us. This is the "help" we need and have.

MORE HELP FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

- I. The Spirit helps in our weakness in prayer (v. 26).
 - A. The significance of prayer.

1. We need prayer. In the weakness that Paul experienced from the "thorn" prayer "released" God's grace (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
2. Prayer "in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18) is a "help."
3. The "help" of the Spirit in prayer is essential. The Greek word *synantilambanein* is used also in Luke 10:40 in Martha's prayer: "Tell her to help me by taking hold of her end of the task." The Spirit does the praying on our behalf and "for the saints."
- B. The content of prayer ("what we should pray" is the main emphasis).
 1. Only God knows our real needs and the Spirit helps us see them.
 2. Only God knows the real needs of others and the Spirit helps.
 3. We do not know the "will of God" for us except in the cross.
- II. The Spirit helps us understand the mind of God (v. 27).
 - A. The Spirit searches our hearts.
 1. He finds the "inexpressible (ineffable) groanings" and delivers these longings to God's throne (this is not glossolalia or ecstatic speech.)
 2. The Spirit interprets these pre-prayer thoughts to God.
 - B. The Spirit explains God's will for the saints.
 1. He intercedes for us as our advocate (cf. 1 John 2:1-2 where Jesus is our advocate).
 2. He makes God's will known to us by and through the Word of God.

Conclusion: The cycle of communication is completed by the Holy Spirit's help. We have noted the cycle of the Holy Trinity in creation, redemption, and sanctification. Now we see how in our weakness the Spirit helps us understand our needs, interprets these to God the Father through Jesus, and then explains God's will in our lives.

Waldemar Degner

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 12, 1990

Romans 8:28-30

The understanding of the much-loved first verse of the text (Romans 8:28) has to do with the inclusion of the thoughts of verses 29 and

30. The final emphasis is eschatological. Any good things that happen here (or bad for that matter) will pale in comparison to the full glory of God that will be ours at the resurrection. The goal of this sermon is that the hearer may be yet more certain of the blessings God has in store for him or her. The malady is that we too often lose sight of God's promises and blessings because of the cares and burdens of this world. The means to the goal stated is the great faithfulness of God to bring us to glory in Christ Jesus.

Introduction: How often the troubles and tangles of life here on this earth plague us so that we even lose heart and doubt the promises of God! Would it not be wonderful if we could live with a certain confidence and trust in God that would not be stopped by even the gravest of this life's terrors? Today let us listen and learn.

HOW TO BE CERTAIN OF GOD'S BLESSINGS FOR YOU

- I. Look beyond your circumstances.
 - A. Not everything that happens is good.
 1. God never says that all things are good.
 2. Christianity is not the religion of the ostrich; we are not called upon by God to stick our heads in the sand and ignore the bad things that do happen in the world. Rather we are to look to God in the face of the bad things.
 - B. God is able, however, to bring good out of bad.
 1. Athletes say that there is no gain without pain.
 2. God promises that there will never be pain without gain.
 - C. God is, moreover, working behind the scenes to bring His own to the fullness of His eternal blessings.
 1. God's ways may not always be discernible.
 2. He is, nevertheless, at work in our world to bring us His blessings in Christ.
- II. Love God above all.
 - A. God works all things together for good for those who love Him.
 1. This is a conditional promise. We do well to remember that fact.
 2. To those who do love God there is a great promise: He works things out for our good (cf. Joseph in Egypt).
 - B. Loving God has to do with a proper understanding of the First Commandment.
 1. A "god" is that to which we look for the highest good.
 2. Fearing, loving, and trusting God really depends on remembering and understanding what God has done for us in Christ.

3. We love because He first loved us. We must consider God's love in the same way as Paul does here in the text, for this is the ultimate condition upon which all of God's promises are based.
- III. Rely on the faithfulness of God to His word and promises.
- A. Four key thoughts show how God brings us blessings.
1. Predestined. Our predestination in Scripture is always in view of Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12) and always intended for our encouragement (cf. Jeremiah 29:11; Genesis 50:20). We do not have the mind of God; so we must view our predestination in the light of God's desire that all be saved through Jesus Christ who died for the sins of the whole world.
 2. Called. We need not wait anxiously for the call to be part of God's kingdom. He has called us to come to Him and trust Him. Jesus has said, "Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Trust in God, trust also in me" (John 14:1). His call brings us to a full and perfect relationship with Him because we are justified.
 3. Justified. In spite of our sin, God has loved us. He sent Jesus Christ to be our righteousness, forgive our sins, and give us His perfection by faith. So we now look forward to being glorified.
 4. Glorified. There will be a day of resurrection. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. We will be raised from death and given new glorious and eternal bodies. Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee of this promise.
- B. The one key to full enjoyment of His blessings is faith.
1. God will do what He has determined to do.
 2. We can have faith as we hear, meditate upon, and immerse ourselves in God's word.

David L. Bahn
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 19, 1990

Romans 8:35-39

The goal of this sermon is to instill confidence that we will conquer every trouble through God's love for us in Christ. The malady is our doubting fear that something, someone, or some time in our existence

will leave us without God's love and salvation. St. Paul asks a question about some possible maladies which could cause such fear. The sermon must answer Paul's question. The means to doing so is to discuss each of these maladies (in groups). First we admit that each is a problem which by ourselves we cannot handle. Then, however, we assert, with promises of God and biblical examples of God's solutions, that in each possible problem we more than conquer the problem through God, who showed His love for us most clearly in the death and resurrection of Christ.

The form of the sermon is that of a musical rondo, of many verses with a refrain. In each "verse" a problem is introduced by means of a question. Then we show a biblical example of God's solution to a similar problem or we recall a promise from Scripture that God will conquer this problem for us. This leads to the refrain: also in this problem "we more than conquer through Him who loved us." Before the climax of the sermon the preacher generalizes from the specific maladies Paul mentions to show that nothing in life can separate us believers from the love of God. At this point the refrain changes (see outline). Because God in love conquers all possible problems for the Christian and because nothing can separate us from God's love (because of our justification in Christ), we come to the same conclusion as St. Paul (v. 37).

Introduction: You think you have problems? You do! Being a Christian does not make problems go away. But it does help conquer problems. Because Jesus suffered the penalties of sin in our place, God loves us. He also calls us to believe that nothing can separate us from His love. No matter what your problems might be, God's Word wants to convince you today that through Christ we can conquer all our problems.

IN ALL THINGS WE MORE THAN CONQUER THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US

- I. In tribulation or distress we more than conquer through Him who loved us ("in tight spots," 1 Corinthians 10:13 or Luke 4:28-30).
- II. In persecution we more than conquer through Him who loved us (Matthew 5:10).
- III. In famine or nakedness we more than conquer through Him who loved us (Matthew 14:19-21; 6:28-30).
- IV. In danger we more than conquer through Him who loved us (v. 36; Isaiah 53:7-8).
- V. In death we more than conquer through Him who loved us (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

- VI. In life we more than conquer through Him who loved us.
- A. No event can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (“neither death nor life. . . nor things present nor things to come”; v. 28).
 - B. No created thing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (vv. 38-39; Ephesians 1:20-22).
 - C. No sin can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (vv. 33-34).

Conclusion: Believe these promises of God! God loved us when He had Christ die, rise, and sit at His right hand. Christ sits as conqueror over all creation. Therefore God will always love us, and we are convinced that nothing can separate us from His love (vv. 38-39). That is why we are also convinced that, despite all our problems, “in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us” (v. 37).

Mark Eddy
Shumway, Illinois

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 26, 1990

Romans 9:1-5

In the text Paul expresses sorrow and Christlike love for his kinsmen who cut themselves off from God in spite of their many advantages. The sermon's goal is that the hearers reach out to unbelievers with the Gospel. The problem is our failure, in our unbelief, to care about such people. The means to the goal is to proclaim Christ's love for us in its many dimensions.

Introduction: Fighting apathy is crucial in the Jerry Lewis telethon, getting out the vote, and television advertisements for the SPCA. Christians fight a more insidious apathy:

HAVE A CARE FOR THE UNBELIEVER

- I. In many ways we do not care.
 - A. We find it easy to dislike unbelievers.
 - 1. Maybe they flagrantly worship a repugnant idol. Or success, money, or knowledge are their idols. Or they regard our Lord as a joke.

-
2. They often see us as irrational, unintelligent, unable to cope. We get disgusted with them and their hostility (see 1 Kings 19:9 ff.)
 3. They can be so shallow. For example, even “good prospects” might easily go to another church if the nursery at ours is located downstairs.
 - B. We do not want to talk about such a “loaded” subject as the Gospel, for we fear that evangelism efforts will cost us respect and affection.
- II. Paul’s concern puts our lack of concern to shame.
- A. Paul felt sorry for people who had tried to kill him; we should have a care for our unbelieving neighbors. (The depth of Paul’s sorrow in verses 2-3 is unexplainable if he expected a general conversion of the Jews.)
 - B. Paul was moved with compassion for those who had more advantages (vv. 4-5) than most people we meet. Their need should move us!
 - C. Paul’s conscience bore him witness in the Holy Spirit (v. 1). Faith reacts in grief when it encounters unbelief. Our lack of concern with unbelievers around us shows our own unbelief—also a cause of grief.
- III. Caring concern for unbelievers grows from the ground of Christ’s love.
- A. Strong love. Such love moved Paul to yearn to undertake (v. 3) and moved Christ Himself actually to perform the noblest of all acts.
 - B. Self-sacrificing love. Paul uses an emphatic “I” (v. 3); Christ set Himself up to perish, that is, to be cut off from God, on the cross.
 - C. Substitutionary love. Paul uses the preposition *hyper*; Christ bore our sin (Psalm 40:12; 41:4; and 69:5). (See *Lutheran Worship*, 26, 276-91. “Unless He had taken upon Himself my sins. . .the Law would have no right over Him” [234].)
 - D. Saving love. Christ loved us in spite of our undeserving unbelief (see Matthew 14:30-31).
 - E. Successful love. Christ could die for us and the whole world, then rise to life (while Paul could not), because He is the man who is also God (v. 5, on which see Cranfield, Philippi, Stöckhardt), come for us.
 - F. Secure love. The contrast between the Jews’ plight and privileges raised the prospect that God’s Word had failed. But it had not failed (v. 6 ff.). The Gospel remains God’s definite word to us that He is not angry.
 - G. Shaping love. Of course, it is not that Christ was patterned on Paul; rather Christ’s love had such a profound effect on

Paul that it molded his love after the fashion of the cross. In fact, Christ's own love reached out through Paul, who had become a "little Christ"; it does the same with us.

Conclusion: Like Paul, we are moved to speak the Gospel out of love for our neighbors, but still more because we ourselves have been caught up into Jesus' saving work for the world. Now our Lord and Brother carries it out through our flesh and blood. How can we lack caring concern for unbelievers?

Ken Schurb
Berne, Indiana

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 2, 1990

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

The abundance of material in Romans tempts the preacher to stray from the text at hand. Chapter eleven tempts us to deliver a lecture on tree surgery. The pericope is chosen to help us focus rather on God's amazing grace. A second trap in preaching on Romans is to invest so much time in speaking to the situation of Paul's audience that we forget to make application to the people in the pews before us.

In verse 15 we note that "reconciliation" for Paul goes beyond a change of attitude on God's part. When the world is reconciled to God, both directions of the relationship are changed from death to life. While verse 28 is not part of the assigned text, it is germane that, where some translations use "election," *God's Word to the Nations* uses "from the viewpoint of God's choice."

Introduction: If I want to make a friend, do I begin by wooing someone else? No! If I want to make someone wealthy, do I begin by making him bankrupt? No! Yet Paul and the Holy Spirit tell us:

GOD'S BACKWARD ECONOMY MEANS AMAZING GRACE

- I. The Lord often has to use backward economy.
 - A. The majority of the Jews rejected Paul and Jesus.
 1. Jesus told the Canaanite woman in today's gospel reading (Matthew 15:21-28) that He came first to the lost sheep of Israel. But they killed Him.

2. Paul, Apostle to Gentiles, consistently went first to the synagogues. But the people there stoned and imprisoned him.
- B. Too many in the "established church" today have no zeal.
 1. Too many born and raised in the church have only the smoldering embers of spiritual fire.
 2. The situation is all too clear from these things:
 - a. Small offerings.
 - b. Lack of participation in worship and Bible study.
 - c. Indifference to the Sacrament of the Altar.
 3. If you were charged with being a Christian in your everyday behavior, would there be enough evidence to convict?
- II. Amazing grace often comes in a roundabout way.
 - A. God wanted to save the Jews at all costs.
 1. Even if His Son had to die for them.
 2. Even if it meant first saving those to whom the Jews felt themselves superior.
 - B. God wants to save you at all costs.
 1. Even if His Son had to die for you.
 2. Even if it means sending Koreans or Chinese as missionaries to us.
 3. Even if the preacher has to offend us sometimes.

Conclusion: God does not care if you are a Gentile or a Jew. He wants you in His family. He has done everything to save you. Paul said he was willing to be all things to all people that a few might be saved. How many will be brought to faith because you have been saved?

Warren E. Messmann
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 9, 1990

Romans 11:33-36

Our stated intention when we come to church is to worship God. We might even call our activity "Divine Service" and present an "Order of Worship" to those joining us. And yet, how difficult it is to truly worship God! We are so full of ourselves and our problems and the concerns of the world around us that we fail to get beyond

asking help or understanding or guidance or forgiveness. Paul concludes the difficult theological section of his letter to the church at Rome with a great doxology of pure praise of God.

It does not really matter what the subject at hand might be, the question of the conversion of the Jews as it was for Paul, or the quest for world peace, a safe environment, or financial security as it might be for us—we finally come to the end of our insights, energy, resources, and wisdom. At that point we are ready to look again at God as God and not just as an extension of ourselves. His power, wisdom, and knowledge are without limits! His judgments, decisions, and methods are beyond our understanding and yet are wonderful. We are humbled by the reminder that we neither know God fully nor are we His advisors. We who are so very limited praise God as the center and ground of all being. What is left to us but to join Paul in giving God praise?

Introduction: Let us do a hard thing this morning—let us really worship! Worship is not as easy or obvious as it sounds! We are so concerned about ourselves and the needs and questions and fears and habits that bring us here. It is too easy to focus on ourselves rather on God. We are like children who see the parent only as a way of finding satisfaction of their needs and take only a rare look beyond them. May God help us to worship Him this hour!

GIVE GLORY TO GOD!

- I. We begin to worship when we come to an end of ourselves.
 - A. Paul struggled with the unanswerable questions.
 - B. We are limited in our insights and knowledge.
 - C. We are confronted with our arrogance—we want to judge God's ways and to tell Him what He needs to do.
- II. Worship happens when we are able to glimpse the wonder of God in Jesus Christ.
 - A. God is not limited in power, wisdom, or insight!
 - B. God's ways and judgments are beyond us.
 - C. God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ as a Father who loves, accepts, forgives, and saves His children.
 - D. Our only response is to offer thanks and praise.

Conclusion: Can we do it? Are we able to empty ourselves and to be filled with God? The final mystery is that God Himself enables us to worship and accepts our feeble efforts! All the more reason to praise the Lord and to worship Him with our lives!

Richard P. Brewer
Pleasant Hill, California

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 16, 1990

Romans 12:1-8

Many theologians divide Paul's letter into two sections, doctrinal (chapters 1-11) and practical (chapters 12-16). This pericope opens the practical section.

How practical are sacrifices in this Christian era? Believers sacrificed animals and birds to the true God from Abel through Mary and Joseph. Unbelievers have sacrificed these and humans to pagan gods down to the present. Christ on Calvary sacrificed Himself once and for all in atonement for the sins of the whole world. Now we need no longer burn up animal sacrifices to the Lord, our God. Paul, by inspiration of God, calls on us to give our bodies—our selves—as living sacrifices to God, which is our spiritual worship.

Introduction: Living and burning sacrifices are pleasing to God. Dead and burned out sacrifices do nothing for God. Living and burning sacrifices are for the one who sacrificed Himself for us. Dead and burned out sacrifices are meaningful only to the sacrificer. Living and burning sacrifices continue to serve the Living God. Dead and burned out sacrifices have never served the True God. Living and burning sacrifices are part of the Holy Christian Church. Dead and burned out sacrifices are separate from the communion of saints.

**YOUR SACRIFICE—LIVING AND BURNING
OR DEAD AND BURNED OUT**

- I. Sacrifices given without faith in Christ produce dead and burned out people.
 - A. Sacrifices given without faith in Christ produce dead people.
 - 1. God is not pleased with such sacrifices (Hebrews 11:6).
 - 2. Both the sacrifices and the people are dead.
 - B. Sacrifices of works without faith in Christ produce burned out people.
 - 1. Salvation by works, not faith, is the goal.
 - 2. The glory is intended for oneself, not for God (v. 3).
 - 3. Christians burn out because they are wrongly motivated.
- II. By virtue of God's mercy the Christian's sacrifice is living and burning.
 - A. God's mercy in Jesus Christ is our true motivation.
 - 1. Christ's sacrifice for us on Calvary atones for our sins.

2. Faith in Christ motivates us to be living and burning sacrifices for God.
- B. These living and burning sacrifices are holy and pleasing to God.
 1. Our bodies are given to the Lord as living sacrifices (v. 1).
 2. Our minds are transformed into godly minds (v. 2).
 3. Our gifts are used in the Savior's service (vv. 4-8).

Russell H. Howen
Martinez, California

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 23, 1990

Romans 13:1-10

St. Paul in a straightforward way is instructing Roman Christians in the capital city of the empire to submit themselves (*hypotassestho*) to the governing authorities (v. 1). His argument follows an easily tracked, logical sequence.

There are several interesting exegetical features in the text. One is Paul's frequent use, with a variety of prepositions, of the verbal root *tasso* (literally, to place or station a person or thing in a fixed spot). The words translated "submit," "established," "instituted" (NIV) are all related to that verbal root. There is also the surprising reference to (pagan) government officials as "God's servants." But there are similar kinds of pictures in Isaiah 10:5-6; 47:6; and Jeremiah 27:6-8. Finally, it is instructive to note that Paul sandwiches his words about how a Christian relates to the political powers (Romans 13:1-7) between chapter 12, particularly verses 1-2 and 9-21, and chapter 13:8-10. That structure begins to give a redemptive Christian context to what he says about the Christian and governing authorities. In view of God's mercies to us through Jesus Christ, one altar where we transformed Christians offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, is the civic arena where we live.

The preacher may look at this text and wonder what Paul is doing. Why does he insert such a seemingly mundane topic into the midst of truly noble Christian themes? Are these simply the words of one who capitalized any number of times on his Roman citizenship and was several times pulled out of the fire by Roman officials? Are they the apologetic of one who wants to draw a clear distinction between

a law-abiding Christian movement and a more zealous, revolutionary Jewish community? Has Paul forgotten that mean-minded Nero sits on the throne and will soon unsheath his anti-Christian sword, even against Paul himself? And what about unjust laws and corrupt, persecuting governments, and biblical words like Revelation 13 and 17?

In the midst of these perplexing problems there are several considerations of importance. First, we must recognize that Paul is expounding the Fourth Commandment. God implements His providential care and love for us through intermediaries: parents, teachers, pastors, and government officials—from the Oval Office and halls of Congress to the local mayor's desk and the police officer in the patrol car. Our response of submission, respect, and honor to them is a measure of our submission, respect, and honor to God Himself.

Secondly, Paul's words in the text can be seen as a polemic against any idea which suggests that, since our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), we can view earthly authorities with indifference or contempt, as though we are above that sort of thing. Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (Jeremiah 29) and Jesus' words about taxes (Matthew 22:15-22) are a good commentary on this point.

Thirdly, Paul is not deifying any form of government here. He is not dealing with the problem of a government misusing or abusing its divinely instituted authority. He is not covering the question of what to do when the demands of government are contrary to the will of God—although there are other Bible passages that do.

Fourthly, Paul is calling us to step out into the marketplace of the world, where the structures of government operate, and to recognize it as God's realm where ruling powers are His servants for our good.

The goal of the sermon, then, could be to encourage the hearers in their Christian callings to give obedience, respect, and honor to God's servants in the structures of government He has instituted. The malady is that in the world we neatly divide between sacred and secular. We spiritual people can treat that suspect secular realm with benign neglect or indifference or contempt. We fail to view the marketplace as an altar where we can offer ourselves as living sacrifices. The means to the goal is that our gracious God has instituted the authorities of government for our good as one facet of His providential care for us. And God's greatest servant, His Son, transforms us by His merciful love, so that we might have power to do good in this realm of the left hand where God also rules.

Introduction: We have been born and bred on the doctrine of the separation of church and state. For some it means that the government cannot tell us how to teach and practice our faith. For others it means that we have no business telling the government how to do its business; our business is to save souls. Then comes St. Paul with a text that seems to transcend the separation of those two realms as he speaks to us about Christians and governing authorities.

CHRISTIANS AND GOVERNING AUTHORITIES

- I. We live in a world of governing authorities.
 - A. This fact is clear from daily life.
 1. We live under a whole system of laws.
 2. We vote for leaders nationally and locally to make and execute the law.
 3. Law officers patrol our street and highways.
 4. We pay income tax and accept social security checks.

In short, we live and move and have our being every day in a world structured by law.

- B. It is equally clear that often this world is not congenial to us.
 1. We have our complaints: speed limits are too slow; some laws and policies are too confining; taxes are too high; etc.
 2. Because of scandals we have seen or warts we see, politics and politicians are suspect; it is a tainted world.
 3. In so many ways the government appears to be the adversary.
 - II. But Paul's words ask us to look at this world in quite a different way.
 - A. A world structured with governing authorities has been established by God.
 1. The ways in which we think about and respond to the governing authorities are a measure of our relationship with God.
 2. Paul says Christians are to submit themselves to the governing authorities.
 - B. Paul's words are a real challenge to us!
 1. Submission is not a congenial concept to us.
 2. Some governing authorities hardly seem worthy of obedience, honor, and respect.
 3. As Christians we are concerned about "spiritual things"; we are wary of the "secular world."
 - III. Now Paul puts this "secular world" into a sacred perspective for us.

-
- A. Governing authorities are one way our God cares for us.
 - 1. He loves us and the whole world.
 - 2. One way He implements His loving, providential care for us is through governing authorities.
 - 3. They are His servants for our good when we do what is right.
 - B. In view of God's mercies we offer ourselves as living sacrifices in every arena of life (Romans 12:1-8).
 - 1. God's greatest servant, Jesus Christ, has transformed us by His death and resurrection for us.
 - 2. The civil world is also the altar where we offer ourselves to Him (cf. Romans 12:9 ff.).
 - 3. The civil realm desperately needs the witness of Christians living by the mercies of God.
 - 4. Having been loved, our love will fulfill the law in this arena of the world.

Conclusion: There is validity to the concept of the separation of church and state. But we cannot separate ourselves from living as Christians within the structures of the world God has established.

Sergei S. Koberg
Dublin, California

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 30, 1990

Romans 14:5-9

The focus of this Sunday's pericope is the kind of people we are because we are the Lord's. In the Old Testament lesson (Genesis 50:15-21) we find Joseph forgiving and providing for his brothers. In the Gospel (Matthew 18: 21-35) we are told that, because the Father (Master) has forgiven us, we need to forgive others. The psalmody (Psalm 103:1-13) speaks the praise of the Lord "who forgives all your iniquities" . . . and "who redeems your life from destruction" . . . "who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

In the epistle, then, Paul puts all the focus on ritual aside and gets to the core of the matter: "whether you live or die you are the Lord's." The focus on Christ's resurrection should unite us in spite of varying rituals and observances. Because we are His, we can live life as His forgiven and forgiving people.

Introduction: "Who am I?" is a constant question in our world. Identity is important, but it can be perverted and turned inward. It is more important to know "whose we are" and what that makes of us.

WE ARE THE LORD'S

- I. We are given our identity by the risen Lord.
 - A. He has created us. "I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). As Luther says, "I believe that God has made me and all creatures."
 - B. In baptism He has called us.
 - C. The devil, the world, and the flesh try to and do divert us.
 - 1. The narcissistic world tells us: "Do what feels good, do what is good for you."
 - 2. The flesh says, "I can do what I want with my body."
 - 3. Various groups lobby for "our way."
 - 4. In marriage, the family, and even the church we want to do "our own thing."
 - D. In His death and resurrection Christ reclaims us as His own (v. 9).
- II. We are given responsibility to live as the Lord's people.
 - A. To live as forgiven and forgiving people (cf. the Old Testament and gospel readings).
 - B. To live as servants.
 - C. To live with an eye to the responsibility which we have to others in the community of the church (vv. 5-6; Old Testament lesson).
 - D. To live as a called people in the community of the world (cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10).

Conclusion: What a comfort to know: "We are the Lord's"! What a way to live—as forgiven and forgiving people!

Robert F. Fickenscher
Stockton, California

Book Reviews

THE FIRST SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS (325-787): THEIR HISTORY AND THEOLOGY. By Leo Donald Davis, S.J. Theology and Life Series 21. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987. 342 pages, \$17.95.

There may be no better way to introduce oneself to the primary doctrinal and ecclesiastical development of the early church than through a study of the history and theology of the seven councils discussed in this book. As Davis himself notes, these seven councils are also of supreme ecumenical importance, since the Orthodox churches of the East and the principal Protestant churches of the West recognize only these councils as having given truly ecumenical expression to the Christian faith. The ecumenical dimension of these first seven councils is clearly on Davis' mind. In a short epilogue (pp. 323-325) Davis notes that the Roman Catholics recognize twenty councils as ecumenical, and he gives a very brief but interesting sketch of that development which hangs so closely together with development of the papal doctrine. But Davis concludes with an ecumenical appeal to his fellow Roman Catholics: "Perhaps in the interests of better relations with the Orthodox and Protestants, the time has come to reconsider the whole question and accept with them only the first seven great councils as the truly ecumenical pillars of the faith" (p. 325).

But quite apart from its ecumenical thrust, this book is very simply a great historical summary of the first seven ecumenical councils. Questions concerning the gospel quickly focused on the central issue of the identity of Jesus Christ. Against Arius, the first and second councils (Nicaea, 325 A.D., and Constantinople I, 381 A.D.) asserted that Christ was the fully divine Son or Word of the Father and gave voice to that conviction in terms of a strictly trinitarian creed. The other five councils (Ephesus I, 431 A.D.; Chalcedon, 451 A.D.; Constantinople II, 553 A.D.; Constantinople III, 680 A.D.; Ephesus II, 787 A.D.) dealt more specifically with issues regarding the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ. In addition to doctrinal questions, the councils discussed issues of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and practice as well. Some of these questions are of abiding interest; some are not.

While the political, doctrinal, and practical aspects of these councils have elicited many specialized studies, this volume by Davis provides the immense service of giving an historical panorama of all seven councils. After an initial chapter on the Roman world, which was the broad context for the conciliar Church, Davis devotes one chapter to each of the seven councils. He introduces the chief figures, describes the theological issues, traces the interplay between church figures and imperial ones, discusses the conciliar decisions, and summarizes the 'aftermath' of each council which set the stage for further conflict and

sometimes enduring schism. In addition, at the end of each chapter Davis provides a short chronology of major events and a brief bibliography for further reading.

Davis succeeds in reducing the bewildering mass of historical and theological detail which surrounds these councils to a coherent and readable narrative. By and large Davis adopts consensus positions in his presentation and interpretation. In such an overview this policy is judicious and guarantees that the book will be a useful and faithful guide for a long time to come. Yet clearly Davis is not a slavish follower of previous work. He knows his material and consistently makes temperate and even-handed judgments. I should note especially his discussion of Cyril and Nestorius (and supporting cast). Also very good is his discussion of the difficult and generally unfamiliar terrain of post-Chalcedonian developments. The telling is enhanced by outstanding choices in the quoting of primary material.

I should not usually recommend a paperback book for the designated price. This one is an exception, however. Specialist or student, this book deserves to be on one's shelf.

William C. Weinrich

WISDOM AND HUMANNES IN PSYCHOLOGY: PROSPECTS
FOR A CHRISTIAN APPROACH. By C. Stephen Evans. Grand
Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989.

Must "Christian Psychology" remain the "impossible dream"? Or can there develop a psychology that is "distinctively Christian, informed by basic Christian convictions"? In the face of much skepticism, the author of this text responds with a resounding yes. Evans' stated purpose is to show the possibility and the viability of a distinctively Christian psychology. He attempts to remove the chief barrier to such a resolution, namely, the empiricist picture of psychology as an objective, value-neutral affair modeled on the natural sciences. Psychology, he maintains, is nothing of the sort. It is not value-neutral. In that respect it is akin to Christian psychology. Once we realize that kinship we will discover the viability of Christian psychology, defined as "psychology which is done to further the kingdom of God, carried out by citizens of that kingdom whose character and convictions reflect their citizenship in that kingdom, and whose work as psychologists is informed and illuminated by Christian character, convictions and understanding" (p. 132).

Evans' critical evaluations of psychology and the principles of psychological research are thought-provoking. He exposes many of the false assumptions which have historically attempted to divorce facts from values. In so doing he hopes to pry open the door for "Christian psychology," whose wisdom is Christ, the wisdom of God incarnate. Christianity can help create wisdom. Christianity is grounded in revelation. Christianity has resources, including supernatural resources, for those who have ears to hear and a heart willing to obey.

Like other texts which have attempted to combine psychology and Christianity, this text too falls short of the mark. While Evans waxes eloquent about the "hermeneutics of psychology," one senses the author's failure to grasp the "hermeneutics of Scripture." While espousing the wisdom of God, does the author truly grasp the principles which underlie that wisdom? Does he recognize the significance of the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the like, or does he merely pay these things lip service? While he rejoices in ecumenism, has he perhaps forfeited his birthright for yet another bowl of theological mishmash in the process?

Wisdom and Humanness in Psychology is a provocative philosophical text. It is well-written. It is a succinct summary of the philosophy of psychology as it relates to the natural sciences. It presents several contributions of Christian learning. It even dabbles with the Word of God here and there. "Close, but no cigar" captures this reviewer's reaction.

Jan Case

THE PRAYER FOR ALL SEASONS: OUR LORD'S PRAYER. By Kenneth K. Miller. Kenneth K. Miller, 4014 Wenonah Lane, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46809. \$2.00

This volume is Pastor Kenneth Miller's second devotional booklet in as many years. The earlier work, *Bethlehem and Calvary*, is a translation of Luther's unpublished (in English) comments on Isaiah 9 and 53. This new devotional guide is Pastor Miller's own adaptation of the Lord's Prayer "amplified and applied for various sorts and conditions of men." Like the previous book, this one is another classic.

Thirty-six devotions proceed from praying the Lord's Prayer. The introduction, each petition, and the conclusion are expanded for either a particular season of the church year or for a particular occasion or circumstance. There is a devotion appropriate to old age, baptism, foundation of a church, sickness, approach of death, loss of a loved one,

evil times, scarcity of money, times of temptation, and many other occasions.

In this day when some want the Lord's Prayer to focus primarily upon the Holy Eucharist (following Augustine and other early church fathers), it is refreshing to see Pastor Miller expanding the application of the "Our Father" to many everyday situations. In teaching this prayer to the disciples Jesus must have intended a wide employment of the petitions. Kenneth Miller has recaptured its original intention.

This little devotional booklet promises to become a classic in Christian piety. I am preparing to give it to my family and best friends.

Waldemar Degner

JUDAISM: THE CLASSICAL STATEMENT. THE EVIDENCE OF BAVLI. By Jacob Neusner. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. 270 pages.

JUDAISM AND SCRIPTURE: THE EVIDENCE OF LEVITICUS RABBAH. By Jacob Neusner. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. 641 pages.

Jacob Neusner is University Professor and Ungerleider Distinguished Scholar of Judaic Studies at Brown University. Already some twenty years ago, he was framing fundamental questions concerning the traditional interpretation of the texts and figures of ancient Judaism. For example, his "In Quest of the Historical Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai" (*Harvard Theological Review*, 59 [1966], pp. 391-413) foreshadows the direction that his scholarly interests would take.

The intervening years have witnessed a prodigious production from his prolific pen. To understand his impact on the study of Judaism it is necessary to contrast the considerations and conclusions which he has advanced with those of the standard treatments prior to and contemporaneous with his own. The "classical" descriptions of Judaism, such as Max Kaddushin's *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York, 1952), G.F. Moore's *Judaism* (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1954), and more recently Ephraim Urbach's *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem, 1975), have all used what might be called a "systematic" approach for their descriptive task.

Neusner has probed these portraits with at least four pivotal methodological questions:

1. Why should a later synthesis (third century Mishnah and commentaries) be viewed as the predominant form of Judaism in first-century Palestine? Are not the "Judaisms" represented by Philo, by Josephus, by Qumran, by the various apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works equally worthy of consideration?
2. Why should the rabbinic strand of Judaism be conjugated by the categories of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophical and theological inquiry rather than the organizing topics of the Mishnah such as "seeds" or "women"?
3. Why should there be a non-critical acceptance of attestations?
4. Why should an unguided and undefined selectivity from the vast rabbinic corpus guide our study?

As these questions amply testify, it is simply wrong to dismiss Neusner as the "Bultmann of Judaica." He raises questions which are foundational and, furthermore, his fertile mind never shrinks from advancing new methodologies by which to address the questions which he has posed. As these two volumes attest, he then follows these methodologies and proposes fresh descriptions of the shape of Judaism in various epochs and locales.

As an entrance into the vast and suggestive Neusner corpus, this reviewer would suggest that the typical reader acquire *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Fortress, 1984). This slender volume not only provides a stimulating overview of the types of Judaism in first-century Palestine, it also illustrates the scholarly inquiry which Neusner so lucidly advances. The busy parish pastor, with even a modicum of interest in the Jewish context of Jesus' work, will find it hard to put this study down. If, as this reviewer hopes, the subject matter engages the reader with its countless implications for our understanding of antiquity, then the serious student of antiquity will want to think seriously about these two volumes.

Judaism and Scripture: The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah is a rich discussion of a major Jewish commentary on Leviticus which came to final editing around A.D. 400-425 in the land of Israel. The wealth of material which it provides on hermeneutical choices and the sorts of questions which the commentators ask of the text is immense. Perhaps Neusner own words are the best invitation to the student (p. xiv):

If we wish to know in detail how the framers of Judaism confronted the challenge of Scripture, we logically turn to the books they wrote in which they expressed their ideas by making use of verses of Scripture. As mentioned earlier, some of these are organized around the structure of the Mishnah, others around that

of Scripture. Clearly, the latter bring us closer to the answer, since in them the confrontation with Scripture proves immediate and ever present. The issue of the Tosefta and the Talmud is the Mishnah, however, to which Scripture forms a merely critical component, but it is not the definitive issue. The issue of Sifra, the two Sifres, Genesis Rabbah, and Leviticus Rabbah is Scripture, specifically, the rereading of Scripture in the light of the rabbis' established system. All of the texts at hand, both those formed around the Mishnah and those ordered in accord with the book of Scripture, find a place within, and point toward, a larger matrix of values and convictions, the rabbinic system as a whole.

It is this "matrix of values and convictions" which *Judaism: The Classical Statement* also describes. In this instance, *The Babylonian Talmud* or *Bavli* undergoes Neusner's analysis. Chapter after chapter (e.g., part two, "The Talmuds and the Canonical Truth of Judaism: Alike and not Alike") will beckon the reader into a world where new textual landscapes and suggestive vistas unfold.

There can be little question that the contours of that land have more in common with Christian antiquity than the sort of television-interpretation of texts that pop-evangelists promote. The profound respect and rich exposition which the rabbis display is a stark contrast with the shallow slapdash that rips text from context and supplants the quest for truth with mere technique.

Neusner has done a great service not only to Judaism, but also for those other "children of Abraham" who confess that the Christ was the Son of David and with Mary sing the Magnificat: "He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as He said to our fathers" (Luke 2:55).

Dean O. Wenthe

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. By Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. 880 pages. Hardcover, \$27.95.

This mammoth volume is the replacement for—not a revision of—the NICNT volume of 1953 on 1 Corinthians written by Dutch scholar F. W. Grosheide. In this replacement volume Gordon Fee, formerly of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and now at Regent College in Vancouver, dialogues with the vast amount of the scholarly scrutiny this letter has undergone in the past thirty-five years.

Fee's work is characterized by several helpful features. First, he has a refreshingly concise and insightful introduction (23 pages) in which he highlights relevant background on Corinth, the make-up of the Corinthian church, the unity of the letter, and the theological contributions it makes to the New Testament. Fee does not see division within the church as the basic problem that was calling Paul's authority into question and modifying the Gospel towards Hellenism. Rather, the problematic issue centered around what it means to be "spiritual": the Corinthian church was and Paul was not. A second feature of this volume is its exegetical thoroughness; the conciseness of the introduction gives way to 857 pages that demonstrate Fee's completeness. While his primary focus is the text, he exhibits an amazing command of extrabiblical and secondary literature. This latter feature can be a liability if one is seeking a commentary that is easy to digest. Thirdly, all the footnotes, which contain a majority of the detailed discussions of Greek grammar, manuscripts, and secondary literature are conveniently located on the bottom of each page. This allows the commentary to maintain both readability and depth. Lastly, Fee's high respect for the text as the Word of God is apparent throughout his analysis.

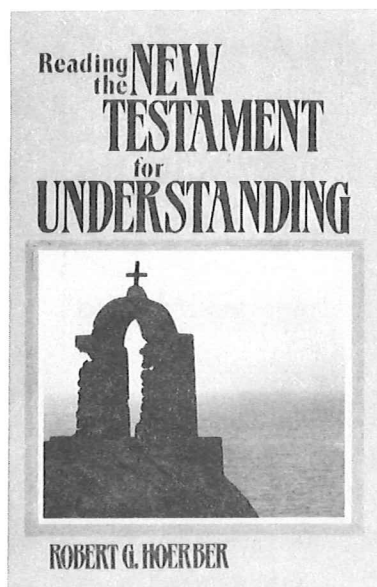
A few representative examples of Fee's treatment of the text give some sense of the tenor of this volume. In his discussion of "Women in Worship" (1 Cor. 11:2-16), Fee postulates that the problem with headcoverings was grounded in an "over-realized" or "spiritualized" eschatology; women were blurring the distinctions among sexes because they thought they had already "arrived" in the Spirit. It is also apparent that pagan cultic activities of the day sought to free individuals from the inhibitions of cultural customs (i.e., the way one wore her hair). Thus, Paul advocated the custom of a headcovering, says Fee, to encourage gender distinctions and also to discourage association with pagan cultic activities. In his analysis of the "Abuse of the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:17-34), the author notes that Paul's concern centers much more on individuals being excluded than on drunkenness at the table. While denominational bias does not characterize Fee's exegesis, his treatment of this pericope is sprinkled with the word "signifies" and is decidedly Reformed (that he writes out of a pentecostal-evangelical tradition is acknowledged in his preface, p. xi). In his examination of Paul's attention to spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14), Fee sees the apostle attempting to correct an abuse of the gift of tongues by putting this gift into the broader context of the diversity of gifts. Fee advocates that these chapters are not a diplomatic attempt by Paul to eliminate tongues, but show his desire to move tongues into the realm of private edification. Dr. Fee correctly elevates the importance of 12:1-3 (the Spirit's activity in the confession "Jesus is Lord") in Paul's understanding of spiritual gifts and writes (p. 582):

The presence of the Spirit in power and gifts makes it easy for God's people to think of the power and gifts as the real evidence of the Spirit's presence. Not so for Paul. The ultimate criterion of the Spirit's activity is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself.

This NICNT volume is sure to begin appearing on all bibliographies involving the study of 1 Corinthians. While it most certainly contains some problematic conclusions, it nonetheless merits the attention of scholars, students, and pastors.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

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