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An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38

Walter A. Maier

In chapters 12-14 of 1 Corinthians Paul treats the matter of special spiritual gifts granted the church, a subject about which the Corinthian Christians had inquired of him.[1] The apostle describes the nature and purpose of these gifts, points to the benefits which the loving use of the special spiritual gifts brings the congregation, and urges the exercise of various of these endowments in the course of the congregation's public worship. The greatest gift of all, he explains in chapter 14, is the gift of prophecy, which enables the possessor to "speak forth" the word of God for the edification of hearers, for the growth of God's people in their knowledge, faith, and life. Paul refers to another of the spiritual gifts, the gift of speaking in tongues, of which the addressees apparently are inordinately enamoured, and shows the inferiority of this gift to that of prophecy. The speaker in tongues, while receiving some personal benefit, does not edify the church. The gift of prophecy ought, therefore, the more eagerly be sought after and employed.

Toward the conclusion of the fourteenth chapter Paul provides certain instructions for the God-pleasing, orderly conduct of the congregational worship service during which some of those in attendance will use their special spiritual gifts. He writes in verses 26-33a:

> How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace.[2]

Then, as an appendix, the apostle adds a word about an aspect of the conduct of Christian women at worship, supplying the instruction that women are not to use gifts such as prophe-

sying or speaking in tongues, or to ask questions during the worship service. What he says on this subject, in verses 33b-38, is the teaching we wish to consider more carefully in this presentation. The instruction of this section pertains directly to the contemporary question of the permissibility of women to serve as pastors of Christian congregations. The present writer's translation of verses 33b-38 is as follows:

(33b.) As in all the worshipping assemblies of the saints,

(34.) let the women keep silent in your worshipping assemblies; for it is not turned over to [or allowed] them to speak; on the contrary, let them go on subordinating themselves, as also the law says.

(35.) Now if they desire to learn about something, let them inquire of their own menfolk at home; for it is shameful for a woman to speak in a worshipping assembly.

(36.) Or did the word of God go out from you, or did it reach you alone?

(37.) If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or a spiritual person, let him acknowledge that what I write to you is the Lord's commandment.

(38.) But if anyone disregards [this instruction], let him be disregarded.

Verse 33b

Paul begins the final admonitory portion of the fourteenth chapter with the words, *Hoos en pasais tais ekkleesiais toon hagioon*,[3] "As in all the worshipping assemblies of the saints."[4] He means, "As is the case, or practice, in all these assemblies." He wishes to indicate that in giving directives to the Corinthians with reference to the silence of women in their worshipping assemblies he is urging upon them the practice which obtains in the worship services of all the congregations of Christendom at that time. It is certainly the same instruction he would give any of the other congregations regarding this matter. The church at Corinth is not singled out alone as the one congregation which ought to observe the requirement concerning women at worship.

The translation given for *ekkleesiais* in verse 33b is "worshipping assemblies." Some versions render this word

"churches" here. *Ekkleesia* comes from the adjective *ekkleetos*, meaning "called out," and refers in ordinary Greek usage to a gathering of citizens in a town or city called out from their homes into some public place, a lawful assembly of citizens. Compare the use of *ekkleesia* in Acts 19:39 as designating an assembly convened for the sake of deliberating and deciding an issue. In the Septuagint *ekkleesia* is used often as an equivalent to the Hebrew *qahal*, the assembly of the Israelites, especially when gathered for sacred purposes. In the koine, the word can also designate a gathering or throng of persons assembled by chance or tumultuously, as in Acts 19:32 and 41. In a Christian sense, the word refers to a local congregation as in 1 Corinthians 14:23, which speaks of the whole (local) *ekkleesia* coming together in one place for worship; or to the worshipping assembly itself, as in 1 Corinthians 14:19 and 35, where the reference is to the speaking, respectively, of Paul and of a woman to the church at worship. The selection of the rendering "worshipping assemblies" for *ekkleesiais* in the verse at hand, 33b, was made simply to have this translation parallel that of the same word in verse 34, where the reference is obviously to the gathering of the Corinthians at congregational worship. If the rendering "churches" in verse 33 is preferred, however, this may indeed be employed.

Paul calls the assemblies in question the worshipping assemblies *toon hagioon*, "of the saints." According to the apostle, saints are gathered for worship in the various Christian churches then extant in the eastern Mediterranean world. A saint is a holy person; the English word comes from the Latin *sanctus*, "holy one." A Christian is holy in these ways: Firstly, he is holy by God's imputation to him of Christ's righteousness and holiness, as soon as faith is created, and as long as it remains in the believer's heart. A Christian is holy, secondly, because of the new man, or self, created in him the moment he comes to faith and is baptized, the new man who "was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). A Christian is holy, thirdly, because of the life of good works with which the believer serves the Lord after having come to faith. In the Christian worshipping assemblies of our day, too, God's saints are gathered together to hear His word and sing His praises.

Verse 34

In verse 34 Paul proceeds to give his directives with regard to women at worship. Whether his remarks dealing with this subject were prompted by a general question regarding the matter raised by the Corinthians or whether there were women who attempted to speak in worship services we cannot determine from Paul's short discussion toward the end of chapter 14. He writes: *hai gunaikes en tais ekkleesiais sigatoosan; ou gar epitrepetai autais lalein, alla hupotassesthoosan, kathoos kai ho nomos legei*, "let the women keep silent in your worshipping assemblies; for it is not turned over to [or allowed] them to speak; on the contrary, let them go on subordinating themselves, as also the law says."

Hai[5] *gunaikes en tais ekkleesiais sigatoosan*, "let the women keep silent in your worshipping assemblies." This rendering has translated the article *tais* as "your" and is permissible inasmuch as the article is frequently used as a possessive pronoun in Greek literature.[6] Thus a note of contrast is introduced. The thought is: as is the case in the worshipping assemblies of all other churches (verse 33b), so let the women keep silent in *your* Corinthian worshipping assemblies.

Hai gunaikes signifies women of any age, especially adult females, whether unmarried, married, or widowed.[7] *Gunee* may also be translated "wife" in certain contexts (compare the plural *gunaikes* signifying "wives" in Ephesians 5:22) but not here, there being no preparation for this restriction in Paul's discourse up to this point. That women in general and not wives only are referred to here can also be seen by consulting 1 Timothy 2:11-12. There Paul offers instruction similar to what he says here, and *gunee*, which appears with *aneer*, signifies any woman while *aneer* signifies any man; the reference is not to wife and husband.

As for women at worship, Paul directs: *sigatoosan*, let them "keep silent" in the church services. What precisely does this command mean? Is it to be taken in an absolute sense, so as to signify that women may not join vocally in liturgical response, confession of faith, prayer, and song during worship? Or, if not, in what way should this command be understood? The first thing that may be pointed out is that in various other New Testament texts in which a form of the verb *sigaoo* or of the noun *sigee* appears total silence is not implied.[8]

Then it may be observed that, when these Greek words signify cessation from talking, in numerous contexts Jesus or an apostle or another Christian is communicating the word of God to a company of persons, and hearers become silent in order to apprehend what is said, or remain silent because of what has been said.[9] Nothing is implied as to hearers' total silence throughout the period of their contact with the one who communicates the divine word on a given occasion. Thus also persons in attendance at church services in Paul's day kept silence when the word of God was read or preached, but they (women included) surely could and did participate in the worship responses, hymn singing, and offering of prayers vocally during congregational worship. The same thing is true of worshippers in our day. Paul writes in a passage parallel to the present one, 1 Timothy 2:11, *gunee en heesuchia manthanetoo*, "let a women learn in silence," that is, in the worshipping assembly. Here *heesuchia* is a synonym for *sigee*.

The exact significance of women keeping silent at worship according to Paul's thought may be found by considering the Scripture section at hand in relation to the prior context. Keeping silent in the worship assembly is considered as the contrast to speaking in the assembly. Paul writes in verse 34: *ou gar epitrepetai autais lalein*, "it is not turned over to [or allowed] them to speak." In the previous paragraph verse 27 uses *lalein*. Paul states, *eite gloossee tis lalei*, "if anyone speaks in a tongue," and indicates that the tongue-speaker may do so in an orderly manner at public worship, providing that an interpreter is present to translate what the tongue-speaker has said, so that the congregation may receive benefit. Otherwise, according to verse 28, the tongue-speaker is to remain silent *(sigatoo)* in the assembly and speak *(laleitoo)* to himself and to God. Verse 29 begins: *propheetai de duo ee treis laleitoosan*, "let two or three prophets speak" in the course of the worship service, and let others possessed of the gifts of prophecy and discernment attest the truth of what each prophet sequentially utters. Paul adds in verse 30 that, if one prophet is speaking and something is revealed to another, *ho prootos sigatoo*, "let the first one keep silent." In this way the prophets can declare their messages in turn, and each edify the church. We see in these passages that the verb *laleoo* surely signifies special types of speaking in the worship service—in tongues or in prophecy—and that these kinds of speaking are placed in

contrast to the opposite of each, namely, to keep silent, a form of the verb *sigaoo* being employed. The significance, then, of Paul's directive that women keep silent in the worship services, is, according to the immediate and decisive context, that they not do a particular kind of speaking, that is, in tongues or prophecy; that they not, one after another, each be a separate tongue-speaker or be a separate prophetess who herself communicates the word of God to the others present at worship and serves as a teacher of the truth to men.[10] Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:12: *didaskein de gunaiki ouk epitrepoo*, "I do not turn it over to a woman to teach," that is, in the worshipping assembly. The point is Paul does not turn this activity over to women, because "it is not turned over to them" (1 Corinthians 14:34), namely, by God who has expressed His will in this matter through Paul and other proclaimers of His truth.

With the next words in verse 34, *alla hupotassesthoosan*, "on the contrary, let them [the women] go on subordinating themselves," the apostle reveals what is involved in women voluntarily refraining from speaking in tongues or proclaiming the word in worshipping assemblies. This restraint represents and publicly exhibits on their part a subordinating of themselves to the men present at the church service, a subordination which, observes Paul, the law also says they should assume. *Hupotassesthoosan* is taken here as a present middle imperative, third person plural. In the parallel passage 1 Timothy 2:11-12 the apostle uses the noun *hupotagee*, as he directs: *gunee en heesuchia manthanetoo en pasee hupotagee*, "let a woman learn in silence, in all subordination"; and he adds, *didaskein de gunaiki ouk epitrepoo oude authentein andros, all' einai en heesuchia*, "I do not turn it over to [or allow] a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man." Here the *authentein* (a *hapax legomenon*) is to be regarded as explanatory of what the teaching of the word on the part of a woman involves or represents, namely, that in the process she exercises authority over a man. It is the opposite of her subordinating herself to men, here those gathered at worship.

This charge to women to be silent at worship and not publicly speak or teach the word of God during a church service, as a reflection of their subordinating themselves to men present at worship, is not simply a Pauline mandate but is in harmony also with the instruction of *ho nomos*, "the law," says Paul.

The term *ho nomos* the New Testament at times, as here, applies synecdochically to the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. What may be found in the law which is harmonious with the teaching of Paul? Paul is careful to write *kathoos kai ho nomos legei*, "*as* also the law states," so that one need not search the Pentateuch for the record of the precise words employed by Paul in this verse 34. *Kathoos* allows for similarity of teaching. And what is this teaching and where is it to be found?

Paul's instruction to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, parallel to what he says in 1 Corinthians 14:34, provides us with the clue. In 1 Timothy Paul gives two reasons, or points to two biblical bases, for his directive that a woman demonstrate a willing subordination of herself to men at worship by learning in silence and not teaching or exercising authority over the men. The first is the fact, revealed in the narrative of Genesis 2, that in the creation of the first human pair Adam was created first and then Eve; and the second is the fact, revealed in Genesis 3, that Eve fell into sin first as one utterly deceived by Satan and, in giving her husband to eat of the forbidden fruit, also set aside her divinely appointed subordination to man, whereas Adam fell thereafter as one undeceived by Satan and disregarding his superordination over Eve, when he took the fatal step into transgression.

The apostle provides additional information as to the law's instruction pertaining to the relation of the sexes to each other in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9. After stating in verse 3, "I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God," he writes (in verses 8-9): "For man [and the reference here is to Adam] is not from woman [Eve], but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man." Summing up we may say: In creating the first man and the first woman God thought it would be wise and beneficial for their relationship (which happened also to be that of husband and wife) to have one of his human creatures be superordinate and head over the other, with the other subordinate to the first. God expressed His selection of the man, Adam, to be superordinate with respect to the woman, Eve, in these ways: (1.) Adam was created the first of the two; (2.) woman originally was derived from man, from his rib, and not *vice versa*; (3.) woman was

originally created for man, to provide help suited to him, and not *vice versa*; and (4.) God confirmed this relationship when Eve sinned first and then Adam. This superordinate-subordinate relationship of the sexes, we see then, was grounded in the creative purpose and acts of God when he brought the first human pair into being. This arrangement was also his permanent will concerning the relationship of all males and females living in future times and generations since creation; so we learn from the Scriptures. It is not a matter affected by societal differences in the course of history, by changing customs or human ways of thinking about the relationship between the sexes.

In the interpretation of Paul's teaching regarding the relationship of the sexes, use of superordination-subordination terminology—that is, the designation of man as superordinate with reference to woman and woman as subordinate to man—is significant and important. It most clearly communicates what the apostle means when he writes in 1 Corinthians, *kephalee. . .gunaikos ho aneer*, literally, "head of woman is the man" (11:2) and *hupotassesthoosan*, "let them [the women] go on subordinating themselves [to men]" (14:34). The idea is simply that of God's positioning the one sex in a certain relationship with reference to the other, according to His gracious will and for their common good. The superordination of man with reference to woman is in no way an intimation of a greater worth or importance or higher standing of man in the sight of God in comparison with woman, or of an inferiority of standing or worth or importance on the part of woman with reference to man. In the matter of spiritual standing or worth in the sight of God both (believing) man and woman are on an absolute par, as Paul makes clear, for example, in Galatians 3:26-28, when he writes: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In correspondence with this understanding, man in his superordinate position or headship is not to domineer woman or treat her as inferior; and woman is not to feel inferior to man in her subordinate position. Man is head of woman. The head, in the biblical conception, is that which determines, that which

begins, and that which leads, and thus that which exercises rule, as the physical head functions in relation to the physical body. A man functions as head over and superordinate with reference to a woman in the church when, for example, he (as the pastor) teaches the word at public worship and in the process exercises authority over the hearers, including women present; or when he takes the leadership in establishing or promoting the work program of the congregation. A married man provides similar leadership in the home, as "head" of wife and family. A woman's voluntary subordination to man as head includes her renunciation of such initiative and frequently of her own will, in favor of his volition and leadership.

The Lord Jesus Christ exercised His headship and superordinate position with reference to the church, not by dominating the church, but by lovingly serving it, giving Himself for it, through His instruction and the supply of the Holy Spirit guiding the church into the pathways of obedience to God's will and consequently to the reception of the divine blessing temporal and eternal which is attendant upon faith and godliness. In the same way men ought to exercise their headship with respect to women in the church generally, doing all in their power to promote the physical and spiritual welfare of female members of the body of Christ. Christian women ought gladly to live in a manner that evidences their subordinate relationship to men for the Lord's sake, honoring God's will in this matter just as they seek to carry out all other directions He gives them for His glorification and their well being.

Commenting on the concepts of superordination, headship, and subordination in the New Testament, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) made some helpful remarks in a report to the church entitled *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice:*

> The concept of headship is not only misunderstood, but it is also frequently abused. . . .The Scriptures teach that headship exists for the sake of serving others, of building up others. Christ taught that His followers are to be servants. Self-willed assertion over another for one's own personal advantage violates and perverts the headship principle of which the apostle speaks. . .

> All of the Scripture passages which speak of the subordination of the woman to the man, or of wives to their husbands, are addressed to the woman. The verbs enjoining subordination in these texts are in the middle voice in the Greek (reflexive). The woman is reminded, always in the context of an appeal to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ, that she has been subordinated to man by the Creator and that it is for this reason that she should willingly accept this divine arrangement. . . People can be subordinate by serving others, by cooperating with another's purposes, or by following another's teaching. The more love and commitment to the interest of others (Philippians 2:4) are present in the relationship of the man to the woman, the more this subordinate relationship conforms to the Scriptural ideal.

The report also notes that the biblical passages enjoining female subordination focus on the areas of marriage and the church.[11]

Paul informs his addressees in verse 35 of 1 Corinthians 14 that what is recorded in Genesis pertaining to the creation of Adam and Eve and the implications thereof for their relationship of superordination and subordination have, according to God's appointment, a relevance to all their descendants and to the relationship of males and females in all future generations. The subordinate relationship of women to men is a permanent one and is to be observed in the Christian church throughout the New Testament era. Any act on the part of women today which sets this relationship aside is a violation of "the law," of the will of God expressed in creation and stated in His word. To speak in the public worship assembly in the sense that Paul indicates in verse 35 is an act of this nature. For this reason women now, too, should be silent in the worship of the church; certainly they should not serve as pastors of Christian congregations, all modern objections to this application of Paul's teaching notwithstanding.

Referring to some of the rationalistic views of objectors who support the practice of having women serve as clergy in the church, R.C.H. Lenski observes:

> It is only an evasion to charge Paul with an inferior view regarding woman, because he himself was unmarried, and to assert that he voices only his own personal opinion

> when giving such direction to the Corinthians. That would make him a miserable apostle indeed. Back of Paul is the divine *nomos* or Word. And that binds him as well as us. Equally shallow is the assumption that what Paul wrote was well enough for his time and age which assigned a different position to woman than does ours. If woman is assigned a different position now, this is done not by God but by man, and by man in contradiction to God. The claim that the sexes are equal collides with the simple fact that God did not make them equal; and no amount of human claiming can remove or alter the divine fact.[12]

All questions raised in our day regarding the place of women in the church should find their response in the teaching of "the law." Whatever position is assigned them must not conflict with the directives of the word of God.

Verse 35

To what extent women in the Corinthian congregation should demonstrate at public worship their acceptance of their position of subordination to the men is made clear by Paul when he writes in verse 35: *ei de ti mathein thelousi, en oikoo tous idious andras eperootatoosan*, "Now if they desire to learn about something, let them inquire of their own menfolk at home." It seems that in the course of early Christian congregational worship services time was set aside to ask questions, questions which probably had to do with new insights and understandings of the word of God which the pastors and teachers had shared with those present, or questions about other matters pertaining to congregational life. Some of the women may have thought about, or desired the privilege of, asking questions as the men did. Paul speaks of the matter and counsels against the practice. Women were not to speak in this manner at public worship. Paul's reasoning, reflecting the divine will, must have been something like this: speaking and teaching the divine word at worship was not to be permitted to women, for in so doing they would exercise authority over men and leave their subordinate position. Asking questions in the assemblies would also be inappropriate, since this activity would put women on a par with men; and in this way they would not give public

demonstration of their subordinate position in relation to men and of their acceptance of this status.

Therefore the Pauline counsel is given in verse 35a, "If they [the women] desire to learn about something, let them inquire of their own menfolk at home." The justification for translating *andras* as "menfolk" and not "husbands" (as some versions render this word) is simply that, as has already been pointed out, there is nothing in the context of the apostle's instruction here to indicate a limitation to husbands. Men, males, menfolk, as opposed to women, females, womenfolk are the referent in Paul's mind.[13] The apostle conceives of the Corinthian congregation as consisting of families having husbands, fathers, sons, or other male relatives of the women, who would also attend worship services. Let the women ask their questions of them in the home; and presumably, if the latter would be unable to give the requested responses, the women could bring the questions to the expounder of the word or the congregational leadership privately and have them answered. The apostle is expressing a principle here. He therefore does not take into consideration the exceptional case of a lone woman who has no male relatives living with her. In such a situation the opportunity would likewise be there for such a woman privately to present her questions to the church leadership.

The violation of any of the foregoing directives of the apostle concerning women is a serious matter. Paul adds: *aischron gar estin gunaiki lalein en ekkleesia*, "for it is shameful for a woman to speak"—and here included is the whole range of speaking discussed in chapter 14—"in a worshipping assembly." Hers is the shame, perhaps not in the general popular estimate, but first of all and fundamentally before God, who has clearly expressed His will in His Word, any violation of which is a shameful thing, indeed. Hers is the shame also before genuine Christians, who seek to do the divine will in their lives and desire to have it carried out in the Christian congregation.

The word *aischron* derives from *aischos*, meaning "baseness," "disgrace"; the adjective, accordingly, has the lexical meanings of "base," "shameful," "ugly," and "dishonorable." In other contexts Paul says, for example, that it is shameful for a woman to be shorn, having her hair cropped closely to

the scalp, or shaven bald (1 Corinthians 11:6). He writes with reference to the sexual filth and perversion of his day, "It is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret" (Ephesians 5:12). He refers to the *aischrotees*, "baseness," which is the abstract for the concrete word *aischrologia*, "obscene speech," in which worldly contemporaries of his engage (Ephesians 5:4). He scores mind-deceiving false teachers who subvert whole houses for the sake of shameful gain (Titus 1:11). These usages elsewhere in Paul give an idea of the intensity of the shamefulness which the *aischron* family of words connotes.

What the apostle says in verses 34 and 35 settles for the present writer any questions concerning the permissibility of women reading the Scriptures from the lectern in church services today, of women assisting in the administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion at public worship, and of similar activities. He knows of the differences that exist in the synod regarding these matters, but he registers his own view that these practices ought not to be.

At this point the question may be asked whether some women had actually spoken at worship services in Corinth and whether this action prompted Paul to issue the decided imperatives of verses 34 and 35. We may note that Paul nowhere employs the expression used in 11:18 to say, "I hear that your women are speaking in worship services." (One may also compare 1:11 and 5:1, where Paul states what actually happened in Corinth by virtue of having received a direct report.) Nor does the apostle indicate that the Corinthians in their letter to him have informed him to this effect. It is best to presume that he is saying what he does in verses 34 and 35 in order to ward off a danger rather than to correct a present abuse. It is preferable in exegesis as in human relations to follow the eighth commandment and put the best construction on everything. In the case at hand, as long as Paul does not explicitly state that female members of the Corinthian congregation were speaking in the worshipping assemblies, we should assume that such an action had not yet occurred, but perhaps had only been discussed.

Verse 36

Nestle-Aland has verse 36 conclude the paragraph begin-

ning with verse 33b and thus pertain particularly to Paul's directives recorded in verse 34 and 35. Verse 36 could be construed with the verses 37-40 following and constitute the opening sentence of the closing section of chapter 14, in which he refers to the divine authorization for all he has written in this chapter and sums up his instructions concerning orderly procedure to be followed in congregational worship services. Accepting the Nestle-Aland decision, however, we proceed with the exegesis of verse 36 as attached to the previous verses.

Paul writes: *ee aph' humoon ho logos tou theou exeelthen, ee eis humas monous kateenteesen*, "Or did the word of God go out from you, or did it reach you alone?" Anticipating possible disagreement on the part of some in Corinth with what he has said concerning women keeping silent at worship services, the apostle counters such objection in advance by asking these questions. They contain a touch of irony intended to sting haughty objectors. The *ee*, "or," in both questions is elliptical, that is, the "or" precedes the omission of a number of words which Paul might have added to express the sense of what he writes. The thought is this: "Or if you in Corinth disagree with what I say, if you have another idea, is it to be presumed that from you (the Greek has this word toward the beginning of the sentence, in emphatic position) the word of God went out? Did you originate or author the divine word and send it out to the church and world, which would mean that you know the will of God better than anyone else, including me, Paul, His inspired apostle?" Of course, a positive answer to this question would be an utter absurdity, which every Corinthian Christian would have forthwith to reject.

The apostle adds another possibility, saying as it were, "or, if this is not the case, then is it to be assumed that the word of God reached you alone, as a kind of mother church, so that you are the first and authoritative communicators of divine truth in Christendom?" "What a preposterous idea!" every Corinthian would have to declare. The alternative to entertaining such folly is simply to accept the apostle's instruction as proceeding from God, acknowledging that Paul under divine inspiration was speaking the word of God. Such inspiration is precisely what Paul asserts in verse 37, when, referring to all his directives in chapter 14, he avers: "what I write to you is the Lord's commandment." It may be remarked that churches today which teach and practice otherwise than God's

word plainly teaches absurdly imply that they know the will of God better than God Himself. Such people imply, too, that their doctrinal views (which are in opposition to the divinely inspired Scriptures) are really God's truth that ought to be followed in the church and communicated to the world.

Verse 37

Verse 37 begins a final summary paragraph. Paul proceeds to say in verse 37: *Ei tis dokei propheetees einai ee pneumatikos, epiginoosketoo ha graphoo humin hoti kuriou estin entolee,* "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or a spiritual person, let him acknowledge that what I write to you is the Lord's commandment." Surveying all that he has written in chapter 14 (indeed, in chapters 12-14) and considering particularly the imperatives in this material, the evangelical directives he has issued the Corinthians, Paul urges that any member of the congregation who believes that he is a prophet (that is, one possessing the gift of prophecy) or a spiritual person (one who is spiritually knowledgeable and mature) bear witness to the fact that the apostle has communicated nothing other than God's will—indeed, the commandment of the Lord.

According to biblical usage, the term *propheetees,* "prophet," designates one who under divine influence speaks for God, one who is a recipient and then a "speaker forth" or proclaimer of the word of God. The message the prophet speaks is revealed to him by God's Spirit either directly and immediately or, on the other hand, mediately through the already existing and orally communicated or inscripturated word, which the prophet is moved to re-present and elaborate for the benefit of others. The contents of the message may be gospel, edifying historical or moral instruction, prediction, or application of the foregoing in discourse which is comforting, encouraging, hortatory, admonitory, and so on (compare 1 Corinthians 14:3). The word "prophet" occurs 144 times in the New Testament, ten times in Paul's writings.

The word "prophet" in verse 37 doubtless harks back to the functional usage of this designation in verses 29-32, where the reference is to various "prophets," members of the congregation who prophesied (spoke forth the word of God) at worship services, rather than to 12:28, where "prophet" is used to designate a person who had a position of ministry in the

congregation. A "prophet" in the latter sense was a person who belonged to the class of preachers who appear to have been somehow attached to certain congregations in the early church, like the ones in Jerusalem and Antioch, and to have assisted the pastors with the preaching of the word. They apparently also travelled occasionally to other congregations and rendered service in preaching and related ways (see Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10). It is better, however, as has been stated, to take "prophet" in the verse at hand in the sense of a (lay) member of the Corinthian church who was gifted with the charisma of prophecy and exercised this endowment at congregational worship. That understanding is preferable because of the usage of "prophet" in the immediate (preceding) context of verse 37 and because it is doubtful that there were numerous prophets in the sense of 12:28 who resided among the Christians in Corinth.

For the significance of *pneumatikos*, "spiritual person," it is best to revert to the substantivized *ho. . .pneumatikos* regarding whom Paul spoke in this same letter at 2:15 and the dative plural *pneumatikois* at 3:1. In the context of these verses Paul contrasts the spiritual person with the *psuchikos. . .anthroopos* (the "psychikal person" in 2:14) and with the people designated *sarkinois* (dative plural, "sarkinal" in 3:1) and *sarkikoi* (plural, "sarkikal" in 3:3). Opposed to the *pneumatikos* is the *psuchikos anthroopos*, the "psychikal person" in Paul's parlance (here the adjective *psuchikos* has been transliterated, since the English has no exact counterpart), the unconverted individual who is wholly controlled by his sinful, unregenerate psychical make-up (his unregenerate intellect, emotions, and will) which uninterruptedly leads him into the pathways of sin. The *sarkikos* ("sarkikal" or "fleshly") person, according to Paul, is a Christian who is to a certain extent directed in his living by his unregenerate nature, the flesh (which consists of his entire unregenerate psychical and somatic apparatus), and obeys its promptings. The *sarkinos* ("sarkinal" or "fleshy") individual is, as Paul says appositionally (3:1), a babe in Christ, in whom the flesh still predominates, because of the short period of time since he became a Christian; substantial spiritual growth has not yet been possible.[14] Far different from the others, the *pneumatikos*, the spiritual man or "pneumatic" person, is the spiritually mature individual who in his regenerate spirit is

filled with the Holy Spirit, who has deep knowledge of God's word, and who is bent on following the leading of his regenerate spirit in order to carry out the instructions of the divine word.

Returning to the words of Paul in verse 37, Paul (who himself knows that the Lord through His Holy Spirit has prompted him as an apostle to write the Corinthians what he has in chapters 12-14) invites those in the congregation who are in the best position to do so publicly to pronounce the judgment that the things which Paul has told the church he has received from the Lord—that they are the expressions of God's holy will and are, indeed, the Lord's commandment. The person best equipped to make such a judgment is a prophet in the congregation who knows and speaks forth the word of God to the people, or a spiritual person, the spiritually mature Christian who is possessed of an advanced understanding of the divine word and will. Paul in verses 29-32 of chapter 14 has spoken of prophets who address the Corinthian worshipping assemblies. He now urges that anyone who regards himself to be a prophet acknowledge that what the apostle has written is the Lord's commandment. Such a prophet can prove that he is not mistaken in regard to himself, if he offers such acknowledgment. The same is true with regard to the person who believes that he is a spiritually mature Christian, a spiritual person. He should provide such acknowledgment and be assured with regard to his estimate of himself. If either fails to attest to the divine origin of Paul's directives, it will be evident that he is not a prophet or a spiritual person.

Entolee is a collective singular, referring to the information and especially the directives which Paul has given in the material of the chapter at hand. The Lord has caused Paul to write the things he has written as an expression of the divine will. This will includes, of course, Paul's directions concerning the silence of women in the Corinthian worship assemblies. These directives are, in composite, the commandment of the Lord, too. Throughout the New Testament an *entolee* of the Lord is a divine requirement—a commandment of the decalogue or any supplementary expression of the will of God in the form of a directive. Now Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). The apostle John writes: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His

commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him" (1 John 2:3-5). "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). God's people today will out of love for Him seek to keep all of the Lord's commandments, including the Pauline regulation proscribing women from speaking at public worship; certainly women desiring to obey God completely will have no wish to serve as pastors of congregations or in any way exercise authority over men in the church.

Verse 38

In verse 38 Paul adds a word as to what the Corinthian congregation's reaction ought to be to any person (such as a self-styled prophet or spiritual person) in its midst who takes issue with or rejects any of the Pauline instruction, which constitutes "the commandment of the Lord," in the section of 1 Corinthians before us. He writes: *ei de tis agnoei, agnoeitoo*, "But if anyone disregards [this instruction], let him be disregarded." It should be noted that Nestle and Aland have placed the indicative verb *agnoeitai* in the text as the second verb in verse 38, instead of the imperative reading *agnoeitoo*, which they have relegated to the apparatus. The present writer has come to the conclusion that the second verb in the text should be the imperative *agnoeitoo* and translated accordingly. Scholars differ in their decisions as to the correct reading here, as can be seen, for example, in the differing translations found in the modern English versions of the New Testament, their renderings reflecting acceptance either of the indicative or of the imperative reading for the second verb in this verse.[15]

If the indicative *agnoeitai* is accepted as the reading for the second verb of the Greek text, then verse 38 may be rendered: "But if anyone disregards [this instruction], he is disregarded." The significance would probably be "disregarded by God," with the implication being that such a person will then be disregarded, too, by the faithful members of the Corinthian congregation. The idea of the verse would be this: If anyone does not acknowledge that what Paul writes is the Lord's commandment, such a person is not acknowledged by God as

a prophet or a spiritual person, and so he will not be acknowledged by the congregation either; and surely, like his pretension, his disagreement with Paul's instruction will be disregarded.

Some scholars give a stronger significance to Paul's words in verse 38. The editors of the *Concordia Self-Study Bible* (using the text of the New International Version, which translates the second verb of verse 38 with a future: "he himself will be ignored"), for instance, comment on this verse: "Paul and the churches will ignore such a disobedient person, and so he will be disregarded as an unbeliever."[16] Again, the editors of the *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (following the Revised Standard Version text, which translates the second verb thus: "he is not recognized") explain: "that is, not recognized by Christ as His own. If he continues in disobedience to the apostolic Word, he must expect to hear his Lord say to him on the Last Day: 'I never knew you'" (Matthew 7:23).[17] These interpretations, however, do not seem to fit well into the context of Paul's discussion here.

The present writer has opted for the imperative *agnoeitoo* as the reading for the second verb of verse 38 on the basis, firstly, of the textual evidence. The imperative is supported by the important third-century Chester Beatty papyrus 46, the second corrector of the fourth-century majuscule Codex Sinaiticus, the first corrector of the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus (A), the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus (B, probably the best single manuscript of the New Testament), the second corrector of Codex Bezae (D), majuscule Psi, the Majority Text, and all the Syriac witnesses. In favor of the imperative reading, then, are important papyrus and majuscule manuscripts, the significant agreement of B and D, and wide geographical distribution of the reading. Also a momentarily inattentive scribe could inadvertently change the ending of an imperative verb to an indicative ending, an *oo* to an *ai*. The imperatives preceding and succeeding the second verb of verse 38 suggest, too, that the latter verb, which stands in series with the others, is likewise an imperative. In support of the indicative reading *agnoeitai* are the original scribe of Sinaiticus, A (as it appears), D, four other majuscules, three minuscules, a few other minuscules not cited, Itala manuscript b, and the manuscripts of the Coptic tradition. It also has considerable geographic distribution.

The present writer has concluded that, while the textual evidence is almost evenly divided for the imperative and indicative, the edge belongs to the imperative. He has accepted the imperative reading on the basis of the textual evidence and the application of text-critical canons, but also on the basis of the flow of Paul's thought in the context. Paul has given the Corinthians detailed instructions concerning spiritual gifts (especially prophecy and speaking in tongues) in the first twenty-five verses of 1 Corinthians 14. Following this instruction, beginning with verse 26 and continuing to the end of the chapter, Paul employs a string of imperative verbs (in verses 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, 37, 39, and 40) to give the Corinthians directions as to what they ought do in their worship services so as to use these spiritual gifts in an orderly way and the most beneficial way possible. It would seem natural for the apostle in the final hortatory paragraph (verses 37-40) of the chapter, a paragraph which concludes his whole discussion of spiritual gifts in chapters 12-14, to continue in the imperative with the second verb of verse 38, as he uses imperatives in the rest of the verses of that final paragraph. According to the present writer's determination, verse 38 should be translated: "But if anyone disregards [this instruction], let him be disregarded." The significance of the imperative clause, then, is this: let such a person's claim to be a prophet or a spiritually mature person be disregarded by the Corinthian congregation, and so, of course, let his objections to Paul's teaching likewise be completely disregarded by the church.

So then, what Paul wrote in the fourteenth chapter of his First Letter to Corinth was the Lord's commandment and had application to the regulation of procedures at first-century Corinthian public congregational worship. This instruction included the requirement that the women keep silent in the worship assembly (in the manner explained above) with the evident implication of excluding them from the pastoral office. While the Pauline directives relating to certain features of the Corinthian worship services have no pertinence to the manner in which Lutheran worship services are conducted today, since prophesying and speaking in tongues are not a part of these services, the prohibition of speaking by women during public worship (again, in the manner previously explained) still has applicability in our day; and those who fear and love the Lord in our churches will seek to observe His will in this matter as

in all others. By the grace of God there has never been a woman pastor in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This situation will remain true as long as our church body continues to believe, teach, confess, and adhere to the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of all of Holy Writ, including 1 Corinthians 14.

ENDNOTES

1. That the Corinthians had inquired of Paul concerning spiritual gifts is suggested by the phrase *peri de toon pneumatikoon* in 12:1, at the beginning of the three-chapter section, 12-14, dealing with this subject. This phrase is similar to ones found in 7:1 (see also 7:25), 8:1, and 16:1, all of which indicate that in the verses following each introductory phrase the apostle responds to questions on different matters which the Corinthians had submitted in a letter brought him presumably by the visiting Corinthian delegation of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:17. The first of the *peri* phrases, at 7:1, reads: *peri de hoon egrapsate*, "Now concerning the things of which you wrote." It is the presumption of scholars generally that *hoon egrapsate* is to be understood with the succeeding *peri* phrases also and that these phrases introduce Paul's reply to matters about which the Corinthians inquired of him in a letter. The entire letter of 1 Corinthians is written in response to conditions in Corinth reported by Chloe's people (1:11) and the three-man delegation mentioned above and in response to the specific questions addressed to Paul in the congregation's letter to him.

2. Bible passages cited in this paper are quoted from the New King James Version, unless otherwise specified. The present writer has provided his own translation of 14:33b-38, the verses which are under exegetical study in this paper.

3. The Greek text on which this investigation is based is Nestle-Aland: Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland, *et al.*, editors, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, twenty-sixth edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979).

4. It may be noted that most ancient exegetes connected these seven words with the preceding sentence, while Nestle-Aland and modern scholars read them with the sentence following, as also the present writer does and indicates in his translation. The

reason for doing the latter is that the previous statement of verse 33a, "God is not the author of confusion but of peace," appears to be complete in itself. What takes place in other congregations need not be pointed to for corroboration of this fact. On the other hand, the reference to women keeping silent in all other worship assemblies of Christendom serves as an encouragement to the Corinthians to follow this practice at their public worship services, too.

5. We encounter the first sign of a variant reading (in the verses at hand) treated in the Nestle-Aland apparatus before the *hai* at the beginning of verse 34. Additional signs of other variant readings appear in the Greek text of verse 34 and in succeeding verses of 14:33b-38 and are dealt with in the apparatus. Since, with the exception of the variant in verse 38, these variant readings, upon examination of the evidence given in the apparatus, have insufficient attestation for them to be considered as preferable to the readings presented in the text, they will not be discussed in this paper.

6. Compare Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 148.

7. *Gunee* may refer to a woman in either of these categories; cf. 1 Corinthians 7:2, Romans 7:2, Luke 4:26.

8. Compare, e.g., Luke 9:36, where it is reported that after the transfiguration of Jesus the watching disciples "kept quiet [*esigeesan*], and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen" (but certainly they spoke of other things); also Luke 18:39; Acts 12:17; 21:40-22:2. Nor is absolute silence implied by *heesuchazoo* and *heesuchia*, synonyms of *sigaoo* and *sigee*, in Acts 11:18; 21:14; 22:2; 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

9. Compare Luke 20:26; Acts 12:17; 15:12-13; 21:40-22:2; 1 Corinthians 14:28, 30.

10. A glance at any Greek lexicon or concordance will show how frequently, in scores of New Testament passages, *laleoo* is used of teachers—of Jesus, the apostles, and others.

11. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985, pp. 30-32.

12. *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, n.d.), p. 627.

13. Stephen B. Clark comes to the conclusion that all women are included in the apostle's directive in another way. He writes: "The rule is intended for all women, although the passage sees wives as the model. To use an analogy, if Paul had forbidden children to speak in public as an expression of their subordina-

tion to their parents, no one would hesitate to apply the rule to orphans as well as to children with parents. The parent-child relationship would be the normal case, but the rule would also apply to children with surrogate parents. Similarly unmarried women would be expected to adhere to a rule for married women." *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980), p. 187.

14. The distinction between *sarkikos* and *sarkinos* is clarified by the following helpful comment of Lenski, *op. cit..*, pp. 124-125: "He [Paul] makes a fine distinction when now [in 3.3] he calls the Corinthians *sarkikoi.* Once, in their early days, they were *sarkinoi*, still largely made up of flesh, because their spiritual part was still in the infant stage. They could not then help it; they were 'fleshly' in heart, mind, and life, yet giving promise that they would soon outgrow that stage. But something has interfered with their development. Paul finds that now they are *sarkikoi (kata sarka oon)*, 'fleshly,' people who ought to obey the true spiritual norm, and yet who by a choice of their own obey the norm of the flesh. The difference between the two terms is: 'fleshy,' and you cannot yet help it; 'fleshly,' and you can but you do not help it. 'Fleshy,' you carry a bad load, but will soon be rid of most of it; 'fleshly, you follow a bad norm, and refuse to get rid of it. Paul approves of neither condition, but he cannot especially blame them for the former, whereas he must decidedly blame them for the latter. Our versions erase the difference by using one word, 'carnal,' [the King James Version, e.g.] for translating both Greek terms."

15. Some examples of English versions with varying translations of the second verb are listed below. The entire translation of verse 38, as found in the texts of the versions consulted, is given to show also other differences in the understanding of what Paul is saying in verse 38. Among the translations reflecting acceptance of the imperative reading for the second verb in verse 38 are the following:

New King James Version (following the KJV): "But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant."
An American Translation (Beck): "But if anyone ignores this, he should be ignored."
God's Word to the Nations (now called *New Evangelical Translation*): "But if anyone ignores this, just ignore him."
Today's English Version: "But if he does not pay attention to this, pay no attention to him."

Weymouth New Testament: "But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant."
The Complete Bible (New Testament, translated by Goodspeed): "If anyone pays no attention to it, pay no attention to him."
The New Testament in the Language of the People: "If anyone ignores it, let him ignore it."
The Epistles of Paul (translated by Conybeare): "But if any man refuse this acknowledgment, let him refuse it at his peril."
New English Bible (1961, first edition): "If he does not recognize this, he himself should not be recognized."
Letters to Young Churches (translated by Phillips): "As for those who don't know it, well, we must just leave them in ignorance."

Among the translations reflecting acceptance of the indicative reading for the second verb in verse 38 are the following:
Revised Standard Version: "If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized."
New American Standard Bible: "But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized."
The Berkeley Version: "But if anyone disregards it, he is disregarded."
New English Bible (1970, second edition): "If he does not acknowledge this, God does not acknowledge him."

The *New International Version* offers this free translation, employing a future tense (unattested textually): "If he ignore this, he himself will be ignored." Similarly, *The Living Bible Paraphrased* translates with a future tense: "But if anyone still disagrees—well, we will leave him in his ignorance." However, a footnote reads: "Or, if he disagrees, ignore his opinion."

16. *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, edited by Robert Hoerber *et al.* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), p. 1767.

17. *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, edited by Walter Roehrs and Martin Franzmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), p. 157 (New Testament section).

The Department of Exegetical Theology of Concordia Theological Seminary has requested the editors to append the following lines to the article printed above: The department commends this essay to the careful study of the church of God and unanimously concurs in the conclusion drawn herein that verses 34 and 35 clearly require a negative answer to any question of the permissibility of women reading the Scriptures to the congregation at worship or assisting in the administration of the sacrament of the altar; the department, accordingly, beseeches all the churches of Christ by the mercies of God to remain faithful to the necessary implications of the divine word.

Ritschl's Appropriation of Luther: A Reappraisal

Terrence Reynolds

In his massive, three-volume work on the *Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* Albrecht Ritschl sought to restore the proper biblical and historical meaning to these central concepts of the Christian faith.[1] His dual purpose in doing so was to overcome the prevalent errors of his age and to offer an apologetic to it. It was his contention that the experiential and practical truth of these doctrines had been brilliantly re-grasped by the young Luther, but compromised in the ensuing Reformation controversy. Roman Catholic pressure, he maintained, forced Luther to define excessively the process of justification and thereby rob it of its essential vitality. Philip Melanchthon, his closest associate, exacerbated Luther's faulty tendencies and directed orthodoxy into a rationalistic sterility, marked by unwarranted metaphysical conceptions of God, over-estimations of natural theology, and a scholastic aridity which rivaled that of Roman Catholic adversaries. These tendencies, in both Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy, invited attacks from a variety of quarters. Enlightenment thinkers drew the logical conclusions from the orthodox premises and undermined the rational foundations of the church. In reaction to the objectifying elements in orthodoxy, pietism sought to restore the subjectivity of faith and to re-emphasize the personal moral life of the believer. This reaction led pietism, however, into a number of crucial misinterpretations of the Christian life and church which Ritschl felt conscience-bound to expose. From the Roman Catholic side came condemnations of the Protestant Church which accused its founders and contemporary adherents of distortions of the Christian faith and life. Ritschl felt the need to reply to these voices as well, concurring with the legitimate attacks upon orthodoxy, refuting the errors of pietism, and offering a defense of what he regarded as the seminal thought of the Reformation. In attempting to recapture the spirit and essence of the Reformation Ritschl found a champion in the young Martin Luther and believed that, by basing his work upon Luther's early insights, he could bring about a restoration of the Protestant faith and offer a formidable historical-theological apologetic to its opponents. It will be the purpose of this essay to examine Ritschl's distinction between the young and mature Luther, his attacks upon orthodoxy, and

then his reconstruction of the doctrines of justification and reconciliation, including therein his views of man, the Christian life, and the all-embracing Kingdom of God. His appropriation of Luther will be critically discussed, and a rationale for his selective interpretation will be offered.

Ritschl's respect for the young Luther bordered on reverence,[2] and he deliberately constructed his system on the basis of what he understood to be Luther's central motifs.[3] It was his conviction that, by recovering Luther's emphasis upon the subjective religious experience of the believer within the church, he could reinstate the guiding principle of the Reformation and recall Protestantism to its truth. He felt that Luther's call for a new religious self-consciousness found its best and clearest expression in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, *On Christian Liberty*, and selected sermons and tracts written before the indulgence controversy (1515-1517).[4] According to Ritschl, Luther's first theological principle was "the thought of the abiding revelation of love as the essence of God in Christ," not the doctrine of justification itself.[5] What this principle meant was that justification was "a practical experience of the living member of the Church of Christ," in which he became subjectively aware of divine forgiveness.[6] Luther was not concerned with the details of conversion, but with the existential self-consciousness which answered the profoundly personal question of religious certitude. It was in this certitude of love and trust in God that man was able to live out his total religious and moral life in the world, in and through the community of believers.

Thus, for Luther, there was no "disinterested" knowledge of God.[7] One could not apprehend the nature of God through metaphysical speculation, nor through rational methodology of any sort. Religious knowledge of God could only be attained in the personal experience of trust, wrought through the believer's relationship to God in Christ. Talk of God's love and forgiveness was always to be in the context of *pro me* or *pro nobis*, for it was only in the subjective relation of the believer to his Creator that God was genuinely known. Luther withdrew faith from the sphere of understanding altogether, saying of various articles of faith: "the more we speculate about them the less intelligible do they become."[8] Luther's purpose in this radical exclusion of God from the realm of

philosophy was to effect a break with the scholastic methodology of his age, an epistemological stance which Ritschl claimed to share.

Justification was not "an objective theological dictum in the church's system of doctrinal beliefs,"[9] but was the experienced assurance of the removal of one's guilt which, as Luther said, "filled the present with the sense of security against death and hell."[10] It was the recognition of a harmony with God and the world, based upon God's reconciling love. In this existential relationship with the Father, the believer lived with a self-understanding rooted in the principles of "grace alone" and "faith alone."

Thus justified and reconciled with God and the world, the believer lived out his Christian life in free and joyful response to both: "Luther defined the Christian life thus: that through the religious virtues of humility, confidence in God, and patience, the Christian is free lord over all things, subject to no man, and that through the moral exercise of his civil occupation he is obligated to every man."[11] One's Christian freedom was the manifestation of the unity of justification and renewal, a unity which was strictly maintained by the early Luther.[12] It was in this reciprocal assurance of the believer, through personal trust in God and through his participation in the life of the Christian community, that the certainty of salvation was to be found.

As Ritschl understood the historical development of Lutheran orthodoxy, he was forced to acknowledge that its weaknesses were grounded in the faulty evolution of Luther's own thought. Ritschl's admiration for Luther did not prevent him from candidly stating his reservations about these later emphases. With the mounting pressure from his Roman opponents, Luther was compelled to elucidate and recast his thinking in terms that would be intelligible to his scholastic critics, with the result that he began to explicate matters of doctrine which he had previously, and for good reason, avoided.[13] Briefly put, Ritschl objected that Luther's experiential view of justification became gradually delimited by scholastic thought-forms.[14] Furthermore, he asserted that the later polemic Luther had regressed into a nominalist doctrine of God, a judicial and Anselmic concept of the atonement, and a prevailing intellectualistic distortion of the faith. His later

theologizing sacrificed the centrality of the believing community and severely weakened the practical-religious cohesion of his early view of justification.[15] These are serious charges indeed, if correctly understood, so it will be useful to look more closely at what it was to which Ritschl was objecting.

When Ritschl accused Luther of defining God in nominalist terms, he had a number of things in mind, none of which was positive in character. The nominalists posited God as able to will whatever He chose,[16] unbound by what men thought reasonable, appropriate, or just.[17] What God did was good, not because it obeyed a particular philosophical conception of what the good was to be, and not because it contributed necessarily to a higher human good, but merely because God willed it. His purposes were often hidden, His nature could not be known, and man before God was a passive agent upon whom the Almighty will carried out His designs. These influences were thought to be evident in Luther's publication of *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), a book which Ritschl found particularly distasteful.[18] In this work Luther stressed the complete passivity of man in regard to the salvation process and painted a picture of man's moral life which had (as Ritschl saw it) a decidedly deterministic and necessitarian color to it.[19] Furthermore, Ritschl felt that, in his description of God, Luther separated His love and His justice, as though God were schizophrenic in His dealings with men. The powerful emphasis upon original sin, with its crushing, objective consequences for all mankind, was also disagreeable to Ritschl.

These distortions were said to be intensified in Luther's well-known law-gospel distinction, in which the process of salvation was explained in a manner which Ritschl thought to be thoroughly Romish in character.[20] The unbeliever was said to be in a state of total sinfulness, objectively guilty under the sentence of God's holy law.[21] The proclamation of the law was the means whereby the sinner was convicted of his own shortcomings and became personally aware of his guilt before God. It was at this point that the faith-creating proclamation of the gospel, brought to bear upon the sinner by the power of the Holy Spirit, could move the unbeliever to genuine repentance and forgiveness under Christ. Once the conversion had taken place, the believer would begin his new life in Christ

under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the ever-regulative proclamation of law and gospel. The Christian's progress in sanctification was thereby (in Ritschl's eyes) separated from his justification and had no effect upon it.

As Luther further defined the operation of justification, he relied heavily upon Anselmic categories.[22] In short, he argued that the penalty of man's sin required payment to satisfy God's judgment, and that God sent His own Son to work the justification of men according to His grace and love. The essential point of concern to Ritschl was that the atonement was now described in penal terms, as a legal transaction. Such failed to do justice to the believer's experience of God's gracious, undeserved love. This movement in Luther, thought Ritschl, rendered the notion of justification unintelligible and experientially inaccurate.

Philip Melanchthon, Luther's closest associate, and other Lutheran schoolmen of succeeding generations concretized the aberrations of Luther's thought. Ritschl conceded that the second generation of any powerful movement is obligated to erect certain rigidities of thought and practice in order to preserve the truth of the movement,[23] but he remained a severe critic of the lengths to which Lutheran orthodoxy had gone in this regard. Objectivism and metaphysicalism, two tendencies which were anathema to Ritschl, came to dominate the theology of orthodoxy.[24] Metaphysical concepts of God, which posited God as a "limitless," "indeterminate being,"[25] became the starting point for a flood of natural theology within Lutheran circles. Melanchthon and others proposed that theology should begin, not in one's religious self-consciousness of forgiveness, but with a natural or rational knowledge of God which all men possessed.[26] It was held that special revelation could be proven by its agreement with philosophical and juridical views of the world, a premise which Ritschl labeled as absolutely "incompetent."[27] Theoretical and philosophical constructs began to drive out the personal, religious emphases of Luther, and faith came to be understood as abstract knowledge to be communicated through the rational presentation of correct doctrinal propositions. The deeply subjective experience of God's love in Christ, as mediated through the church, was replaced by a doctrinal detachment which portrayed the notion of justification by faith in an "increasingly unintelligible" fashion.[28]

According to Ritschl, Melanchthon and others followed Luther's later thought and espoused a purely forensic doctrine of justification. They, too, began with the concept of guilt as an objective impersonal liability based on the ravages of original sin.[29] Thus, the sinner owed a debt to the holiness of God, the payment of which was required by divine justice. In what Ritschl described as an irrational and unscriptural step,[30] God was said to have acted out of His grace in the sending of His Son, through whose innocent death the satisfaction was made, and man was once more just in the eyes of God. Ritschl compared this notion to the condemned view of Socinus, who held that sin was an offense to be wiped away by an appropriate fine,[31] and found them strikingly similar. This wholesale juristic bias and the stress upon individual acceptance of "pure" doctrinal truths placed orthodoxy in a number of untenable positions.

For one thing, orthodoxy separated redemption from morality and could make no convincing demonstration of how or why faith was to be active in love.[32] It separated Christ from the Holy Spirit because it could show no genuine inner connection between past satisfaction and present sanctification.[33] Since the confession of certain central dogmas had become the condition and the chief guarantee of Christian perfection,[34] some later orthodox thinkers had altogether omitted discussion of the crucial concept of Christian freedom before God and in the world.[35] The forgiveness of sins and newness of life were separated so thoroughly by the mature Luther and Melanchthon that there is no mention at all of the practical aim of justification in Article IV of the Augsburg Confession.[36] Ritschl called this failure to include the believer's relation to the world "shocking."[37]

The result of this objectifying of an intensely personal experience was the weakening of the idea of the church. By promoting individual assent to rational propositions, orthodoxy reduced the church to a theological school and, by forfeiting the identity of justification and reconciliation, the orthodox underplayed the moral development of the individual within the community of the faithful. No longer was the religious self-consciousness of the gracious presence of Christ, with its religious and ethical implications, a matter of central concern. The individual was now instructed, logically and

rationally, in those propositions to which his assent was required if he was to be saved.[38]

This steady drift away from active participation in the world by the community of believers gave rise to the movement known as pietism.[39] Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), a leading German pietist, epitomized the movement's dissatisfaction with the pedantic theology and religious formalism of the day, and sought a return to a faith based upon simple trust and firmly anchored in the Holy Spirit.[40] Ritschl commended Spener for these worthy intentions, but he was hard pressed to find value in the movement itself. He compared it to Anabaptism and Roman Catholicism in its emphasis upon works and the law, and he scored the pietists for their restoration of asceticism.[41] The denial of the significance of secular vocation and the correlative renunciation of the world were called by Ritschl the very antithesis of genuine Protestantism, which exhorted the believer to penetrate the world.[42]

This severely distorted version of the Christian life arose from a faulty conception of justification and reconciliation, which became characteristically, though not universally, accepted by those with pietist leanings.[43] Oetinger, Stier, Steudel, Klaiber and Rothe are a few of those Ritschl charged with making justification dependent upon the degree of one's sanctification. This erroneous notion conceived of justification as a judgment based upon the moral value of one's faith, such that the resulting perfectionism depreciated the worth of the means of grace and lessened the significance of the true nature of justification and sanctification.[44] In short, this reinterpretation of orthodoxy perverted true religious self-understanding by affirming a revivalist form of legalism which pushed the church toward sectarianism. It was also said to be thoroughly Roman in character in its promotion of uncertainty of salvation, ascetic living, and the depreciation of one's worldly vocation.[45] Nevertheless, the movement possessed considerable popular appeal and posed a serious threat to both established orthodoxy and the reconstructed faith to be laid out by Ritschl.

The separation of justification from the Christian life was not, however, the only level at which orthodoxy was vulnerable. The assertion by the orthodox schoolmen that the Christian faith was inherently reasonable also began to

backfire, to the detriment of genuine Protestantism.[46] Theological naturalism, which took up this orthodox premise and explored it thoroughly, began to flourish.[47] Movements in England, France, and Germany relentlessly applied reason to the notion of revelation and its so-called "embodiment" in the New Testament, and they argued against the orthodox claim that the contents of the Bible were sufficient to convince any reasonable person of their accuracy. Herbert of Cherbury in England, Voltaire and the *philosophes* in France, Semler, Kant, and Lessing in Germany, and many others were leaders in undermining the philosophical framework upon which orthodoxy had taken its stand. Lessing, for example, denied to theology the right to any claims which were not rationally warranted and defensible. In dismissing numerous central doctrines of the Christian faith, Lessing spoke for many of his contemporaries when he derisively referred to the supposedly rationalistic orthodox theologians as *Halophilosophen.*[48] With its philosophical foundation under attack and its de-emphasis of the ethical life of the believer exposed by Enlightenment moral theologies, Lutheran orthodoxy was subjected to contemptuous rebuttals from its Roman Catholic critics as well.

It was in this setting that Ritschl determined to reconstruct Protestantism, restoring to its rightful primacy the gospel as it had been proclaimed by the early church and by the Luther of 1516. To proceed systematically, beginning with Ritschl's view of natural knowledge of God and continuing with a discussion of the nature of man and his spiritual status subsequent to the fall, would not only have met with Ritschl's strong disapproval, but also would not do justice to the body of his theology. The core of his theology is the united doctrine of justification and reconciliation, which is the wellspring from which flows his understanding of the nature of man, the community of the redeemed, and the uniquely Ritschlian idea of the Kingdom of God.[49] Thus, it is with the quintessential area of justification and reconciliation that we must begin, for it is here that all knowledge of God finds its source: "The truth is that we know the nature of God and Christ only in their worth for us."[50]

Justification and reconciliation, which are respectively the forgiveness of sins[51] and the active entrance into a harmonious

relationship with God,[52] offer the solution to the universal dilemma of man to which all religions seek to address themselves. Man lives in a world of contradiction, in which he finds himself a part of nature, subject to forces of cause and effect, yet bearing also, as a spiritual being, an inherent claim to dominate his surroundings.[53] In addition to his sense of discord with the world, man also feels a deep sense of alienation from God, and it is this feeling which constitutes the fundamental ground of his predicament. Man is conscious of his inability to fear and trust in God and suffers thereby from an inner self-dissatisfaction. This vague sense of spiritual impropriety is manifested in the oppressive weight of guilt which is described as a permanent contradiction involving "the objective factor of the moral will which is produced by the abuse of freedom in non-fulfillment of the law, and the unworthiness which is expressed for the moral subject in his consciousness of guilt." Ritschl adds that among "the relations that make up the separation of sinners from God, the consciousness of guilt is foremost."[54] Man's predicament, then, is that he exists in a condition of separation and alienation with respect to his world, himself, and his God.

Justification and reconciliation, which receive a full and rich treatment from Ritschl, are defined more completely as follows:

> Nothing further can objectively be taught about justification and regeneration than that it takes place within the community of believers as a result of the propagation of the Gospel and the specific continuous action of Christ's personal character in His community, through the awakening in the individual of faith in Christ as trust in God as Father and of the sense of union rooted in the Holy Spirit, by which are dominated our whole view of the world and estimate of self, despite the continuance of the sense of guilt. How this state is brought about eludes all observation, like the development of the individual spiritual life in general.[55]

Man's estrangement is removed in the moment of pardon, in God's answer to the sinner's question, "How can I stand before God in my imperfection?"[56] The answer is the free resolve on God's part to pardon sin without regard for the sinner's moral rectitude.[57] This gracious act of God, mediated through the

community of the faithful, places man in a new self-conscious relationship with God in which he can properly apprehend himself, his world, and his redemption:

> Complete knowledge of Jesus' religious significance depends. . .on one's reckoning oneself part of the community which He founded, and this precisely in so far as it believes itself to have received the forgiveness of sins as His peculiar gift. . .One understands forgiveness, justification and reconciliation as far as we consciously reckon ourselves part of the Christian community.[58]

Lest he relapse into the scholastic niceties which he deplores, Ritschl specifically refuses to attempt an explanation of the process of justification itself, for he insists that the matter is beyond human comprehension.[59] Nevertheless, on the basis of the biblical revelation and the historical self-consciousness and God-consciousness of the Christian community, there are a number of related issues to which Ritschl addresses himself at length.

In the experience of his acceptance by God, the believer is made aware that his prior conceptions of the Almighty were unfounded. He now knows God as Father, not as a God of wrath, and he knows himself to be an adopted child in the holy family.[60] His experience of God in Christ informs him that the Father is both good and infinitely loving.[61] "Theology," states Ritschl, "in delineating the moral order of the world, must conceive of God in His relation to His Son, which is extended likewise to His community."[62] In the community, this relation is revealed, without fail, as "loving will." In fact, Ritschl goes on to assert that God is either conceived of as love, or He is not conceived of at all.[63] Because He is eternally loving, justification cannot be conceived of as a penal or judicial act, for man is not indebted to a wrathful judge, but loved by a gracious Father: "Penal or retributive notions, common as they may be in men's consciousness, must be tested against the declarations of Christ, and here they do not fit."[64]

Faith, which Ritschl defines as trust in God and Christ, characterized by peace of mind, inner satisfaction, and comfort,[65] is the emotional conviction on the part of the believer that God's purposes are, indeed, in man's best interests as well.[66] Obviously, it is by faith that man becomes self-consciously aware of this justification and reconciliation

and takes his place in the Christian community. As Ritschl explains it, faith is essentially a value judgment.[67] The mind is said to appropriate sensations in one of two ways. One way involves action by the Ego on the basis of feelings of pleasure and pain; the Ego judges if a sensation heightens or depresses it. A sensation may also be judged with respect to its cause or connection with other causes. Such an appropriation of sensations provides us with scientific knowledge. Value judgments, which are formed by the working of the former appropriation upon the latter, are always a part of knowledge. According to Ritschl, there are two kinds of value judgments, concomitant and independent. Concomitant value judgments are operative and necessary in theoretical cognition, but independent value judgments involve one's perception of moral ends. In the independent value judgment one perceives moral ends or moral hindrances in so far as they excite moral pleasure or pain. "Disinterested" knowledge has no relation to such judgments, but religious knowledge, which is always practical and moral, is entirely made up of them.[68] It would seem that, in the act of faith, man's will is confronted by God with the pleasurable relief of guilt, the overwhelming relationship of love, and the unity of divine and human purpose in the Kingdom of God, all profoundly attractive options. The value judgment is readily made, in freedom, that the new relationship is to the moral and religious advantage of man, and therefore the will seizes upon the offered justification and reconciliation.[69]

The person of Jesus Christ is understood by the believer as the founder and revealer of this profoundly significant value judgment:

> To believe in Christ implies that we accept the value of divine love, which is manifest in His work, for our reconciliation with God, with that trust which, directed to Him, subordinates itself to God as His and our Father, whereby we are assured of eternal life and blessedness.[70]

Although Ritschl is unwilling to subscribe to any creedal or doctrinal formulations about the nature of the person of Christ, considering the subject to be beyond the scope of theological inquiry,[71] he does speak about Jesus as making the aim of His life the aim of the world.[72] Inasmuch as God's aim is specifically the aim of the world also, in and through the

Kingdom of God, it would appear that Ritschl is at least proposing a unity of their wills. Jesus regarded Himself as the "complete self-revelation of God,"[73] and He understood the name "Christ" to denote His unique vocation. The business of His vocation was the establishment of the universal ethical fellowship of mankind, or the Kingdom of God, which is also the supreme end of God in the world.[74] In carrying out His vocation flawlessly, in perfect patience, humility, prayer, and trust, Jesus became the "living head of the community of God's kingdom" and authored a moral code insofar as He directed all men to one another in the Kingdom of God.[75] Only in this apprehension of His mission, then, can one appropriately speak of His godhead:

> . . .the eternally beloved Son of God, on the ground of the like content of His personal will, and of the uniqueness He holds to the community of the Kingdom of God and to the world, is to be conceived under the attribute of Godhead.[76]

As a part of the Christian community, actively participating in the Kingdom of God through faith, one becomes conscious, in a dramatically new fashion, of the nature and effect of sin. In the eyes of God, says Ritschl, sin is simply ignorance, which serves as a negative precondition to reconciliation.[77] As one would expect, sin, like faith, possesses both a religious and a moral dimension. On the one hand, it exhibits a perverted religious attitude toward God, manifested in failure to trust and revere the Almighty, while, on the other hand, it promotes harmful actions, destructive of the moral development of man. Ritschl suitably describes the universal prevalence of sin as the Kingdom of Sin,[78] for it directly impedes the moral end of the world, or the perfection of man in the Kingdom of God.[79] This is all that Ritschl wishes to say about sin, considering himself to have spoken sufficiently on the matter by ascribing to it universal prevalence. He sees no need for a theological explanation of death,[80] rejects even the Zwinglian notion of man's sinful propensity as "unintelligible,"[81] and tosses out original sin as the recrudescence of a gross, historically conditioned over-reaction:[82] "To use original sin to combat merits is just as appropriate as it would be to use a boulder to kill a gnat."[83]

In spite of his reconciliation the Christian continues to sin, failing in his relationships with both God and man, and guilt continues to be a factor in his consciousness. But the guilt is now of an entirely different nature. Ritschl makes what appear to be contradictory statements on the question, but their resolution indicates his principal concern and break with Luther's law-gospel dialectic. As previously shown, Ritschl openly affirmed that justification, or the removal of the separation of sinners from God, should be understood as "the removal of the consciousness of guilt,"[84] or setting a man free from guilt before God.[85] He also asserts, in conjunction with his delineation of faith as a value judgment, that the feeling of guilt is painful and that the removal of guilt in justification is pleasurable.[86] Yet elsewhere he insists that forgiveness, as an attribute of the Christian community, "implies that in that community men may enjoy fellowship with God in spite of their sins and in spite of the intensifying of their guilt."[87] Again, he states that the assurance of forgiveness is confirmed by the fact that it intensifies the sense of guilt for sins we commit and awakens a sensitive dread of transgression.[88] What Ritschl is endeavoring to differentiate is that the consciousness of one's guilt after justification is directly conditioned by his gospel-oriented perspective. Where the sinner had previously felt an undefined sense of moral accountability to a divine judge, the believer's guilt consists of his shame at failing to follow the personal will of his loving Father, a will he both understands and wishes to uphold. The believer remains absolutely certain of his forgiveness and is ever conscious of his adoption as a child of God, yet it is precisely in the light of this new relationship that he perceives the harm done by his religious and moral shortcomings.[89] Thus, Ritschl took issue with Luther's contention that the preaching of the law was necessary to sting the consciences of the regenerate before assuring them of their pardon as guaranteed in the gospel. Ritschl felt that such preaching treated Christians as if they were regularly in need of conversion, and he insisted instead that it was only through the gospel and the awareness of grace that men knew of their justification and genuine guilt. He also feared that such separation of law and gospel would lead to confused revivalistic preaching or renewed forms of nomistic piety.[90]

As an immediate practical result of justification and reconciliation, the Christian comes to his religious understanding of the world, joyfully and confidently acknowledging his relationship with the Father as a cherished gift and as an appointed task to be carried out in his life. The believer's relation to the world is characterized by freedom in and over the world, attachment to Christ, love for fellow-men, and the conscious effort to realize the joint aim of God and man in the Kingdom of God. Freedom, as independence of natural causes, is felt when "the believer stops and deprives of their power those impulses to action which arise from the correspondence between individual propensities and the goods of the world."[91] One is detached from the lower desires of the world and thereby rises above them, concerned, in as undefiled a manner as possible, only with the religious and moral goals of life:

> The higher experience of freedom is the ordering of our impulses so that they serve only as a means to the final end we have in our mind. . . The highest stage of freedom is that at which the supremely universal end of the association of mankind is made one's personal end.[92]

This freedom also involves uncoerced attachment to Christ, and the willing acceptance of any worldly losses attendant thereto. The highest proof of the Christian life, says Ritschl, is the joyful acceptance of such consequences as suffering and the sacrifice of vital elements of the natural life.

The pervading impulse in all Christian action is love, and the "universal ground of all moral conduct towards our fellowmen is that the Christian religion has for its end the Kingdom of God."[93] This Kingdom of God, a distinctly Ritschlian concept, is defined as follows:

> The Kingdom of God is the divinely ordained highest good of the community founded through God's revelation in Christ; but it is the highest good only in the sense that it forms at the same time the ethical ideal for whose attainment the members of the community bind themselves to each other through a definite type of reciprocal action.[94]

The Kingdom of God is said to be supernatural, for it surpasses all ethical forms in society which are conducted by man's endowments or offer occasions for what Ritschl terms "self-

seeking." These forms include marriage, family, vocation, and the state, for all of these are conditioned, at least to some extent, by considerations of sex, birth, class, nationality, and the like.[95] The Kingdom of God transcends such limitations. It is also said to be supramundane, for it enables man, in the only way possible, genuinely to achieve dominion over the world. It is a movement by the Christian community which defies empirical observation, yet it proceeds nevertheless among those who consciously seek to fulfill God's purposes.[96] Jesus, who perfectly understood the will of the Father, saw the Kingdom of God as the moral end of the community which He founded, and it is, as He correctly perceived it, the *summum bonum* realized by God in man.[97]

It remains the task of Christians, through the rendering of loving obedience, to assist God in the fulfillment of their common final end. In this life of moral and religious activity, or *Lebensideal*, the Christian lives in a Christ-like fashion, not in imitation of His life as such, but in accord with His steadfast adherence to His vocation. For as Christ, perfectly and without succumbing to worldly temptation, served as the revealer of the Father's grace and founded the community of faith, so too the believer serves the furtherance of the Kingdom of God through his consistent, loving participation in his ethical vocation. Every ethical vocation "falls within the scope of the moral law." Each man, in exercising his ethical vocation, at once attains his own self-end and renders his rightful contribution to the eternal end of society as a whole.[98]

In all spheres of life the believer is to demonstrate the spirit of patience, humility, prayer, and thanksgiving. By "patience" Ritschl means the feeling which enables the believer to view the evils in life in the light of divine providence and accept them accordingly. Humility begins with the deliberate submission to God which makes tolerable even the most profound moments of suffering. It is more complete humiliation when this feeling coincides with man's desire to fulfill his ethical vocation. Ritschl contends that remaining patient in the absence of success and maintaining proper humility in its abundance are clear marks of Christian piety. Prayer, which stands closest in connection with reconciliation, since it reflects in its intimate dialogue the destruction of enmity between God and man and the restoration of the relationship

of Father and child, is to be a regular part of the Christian life. One must pray with the recognition that the will of God is always best and must be done, even if our desires are not always fulfilled as a result. Above all, one must pray and engage in all of life in a spirit of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving, which is the grateful acknowledgment of God's loving presence and grace, underlies the other three virtues, and must predominate in the church.[99]

The question of Ritschl's appropriation of Luther, even on this brief and limited scale, is a highly complex matter. David Lotz has dealt with the issue in a commendably thorough and fair-minded work.[100] In what follows I shall indicate clear elements of Luther's thought in Ritschl, refer to difficulties which Lotz has uncovered in Ritschl's use of Luther as well as raising several of my own, and offer a rationale for these misinterpretations.

There can be little argument that Ritschl successfully restored a number of Luther's central motifs. The diatribe against "disinterested" metaphysical speculation about God, together with the worthlessness of the resultant knowledge, is a prime example. For Luther, like Ritschl, Christian theology found its proper starting point in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. There is also a strong existential, experiential element in Luther which Ritschl recaptures, but perhaps overplays at the expense of Luther's equally consistent God-ward or objective dimensions. Certainly the unity of justification and reconciliation, severed by Melanchthon and the Lutheran schoolmen, was at the heart of Luther's thought and is assertively replaced by Ritschl back into the context of Lutheran theology. While his unique articulation of the Kingdom of God was not appropriated from the early Luther, his rendition of the Christian community and the virtue displayed by its members was a direct repudiation of an ascetic negation of life and a grateful acceptance of the "priesthood of all believers." Ritschl's conscious use of Luther was more than a mere recitation of early Reformation themes; his desire to capture the essential Luther was decidedly genuine, and, in several significant cases, he was conspicuously successful.

This assertion is not to suggest, however, that Ritschl was not guilty of key distortions and misinterpretations as well. In fact, the degree of his misrepresentation is such that one would

assume that it would have displeased Luther himself. On the nature of sin, for example, Ritschl refuses to go along with the Luther of *The Bondage of the Will*, for whom sin was a crushing spiritual reality, permeating all of man's existence. More seriously, Ritschl believed that such a view signaled Luther's departure from his original articulation of justification and gave to sin an erroneous pervading influence on the lives of unregenerate and regenerate alike. Ritschl posited man in a state of moral imperfection, in search of *rapprochement* with his God. What Ritschl heard Luther ask was this: "How can I, in spite of my moral failings, be certain of God's favor?" What Luther had actually asked was this: "How can I, radical sinner that I am, stand in God's presence?"[101] Where Ritschl speaks of the believer's "relative imperfection" and "dissatisfaction," Luther stressed his "root sinfulness," self-accusation, self-condemnation, and self-hatred. By this minimizing of sin, first in the unregenerate and then in the regenerate, Ritschl missed Luther's point that justification makes a new creature out of the redeemed. The transformation from sinner to saint is not adequately appropriated by Ritschl, nor does he demonstrate a complete understanding of Luther's *simul justus et peccator* emphasis.[102]

Furthermore, Ritschl's conclusion that man sees in Christ his own moral ideal and finds, within himself, proper grounds for contrition and repentance, is jarringly discordant with Luther's view of regenerate man. It was precisely because Luther rejected any notion of the *homo religiosus* that he insisted upon the Christian's harsh confrontation with God's holy law. For it is only in the penetrating light of God's perfect standard that one can see the darkness of his own miserable piety. Ritschl's argument that the law-gospel distinction would lead to nomistic piety further reveals his misunderstanding of Luther. While the convicting "spiritual" use of the law belongs, technically, to the realm of the law, it is precisely nomistic piety which its use is designed to negate. Ritschl's more optimistic view of man, therefore, seems to have forced him to part ways with these central themes in Luther.

Despite Ritschl's disclaimer to the contrary, the question of how grace was bestowed remained a crucial matter to Luther throughout his career, and it was his revolutionary solution to the issue which constituted his attack on medieval tradition.

As Lotz explains it, in Luther the consciousness of one's justification cannot be appropriately spoken of "apart from specifying the way this consciousness is continually regulated by the word of preaching."[103] For Luther, the justification of sinners took place according to the strict judgment and tender mercy of God, and it was on the basis of that understanding that the law-gospel distinction was founded. In discarding that distinction, Ritschl dispenses with Luther's entire biblical theology of which it was the cornerstone; thereby Ritschl cripples Luther's radical views of conversion, sanctification, and the awesome power of God's ever-creative word. On the basis of his various observations Lotz concludes that Ritschl's interpretation of the young Luther on justification is "not only dubious, but patently defective."[104]

If we place Ritschl in the perspective of his time and his objectives, perhaps we can understand the shortcomings of his appropriation of Luther.[105] Lotz charitably observes that Ritschl did not have complete, or even very adequate, sources when he conducted his work; but while this fact excuses Ritschl's failure to grasp the complete picture of Luther, it does not serve to excuse his "defective" interpretations of the works in his possession. Certainly there are other explanations. It would seem apparent that Ritschl was guided by strong polemical and apologetic considerations which demanded a return to the giant of the German Reformation and which required that he find in Luther answers to the errors and problems of his day. In addition, Ritschl himself, in proposing to write a "scientific" treatment of the doctrines of justification and reconciliation, was not willing to recite motifs of Luther which he and his age would find intellectually unacceptable and offensive. Ritschl was a proud man, possessing considerable personal and theological integrity, and his return to Luther could only be on critical grounds of his own choosing. Thus, one has to suppose that Ritschl's "misinterpretations" of Luther were, for the most part, conscious attempts to refute the faulty tendencies of orthodoxy and pietism or to defend Protestantism from its critics, be they Enlightenment thinkers or Roman Catholic polemicists. Furthermore, Ritschl had his own theological system to construct. In selecting what he took to be the best of Luther as the basis for his own theology, Ritschl must be judged a poor interpreter of Luther, but he must

never be evaluated as less than a major contributor to the history of Christian thought.

ENDNOTES

1. This voluminous three-volume work surveyed in a critical fashion the history of the development of doctrine (volume 1) and the biblical basis for doctrine (volume 2). In volume 3 Ritschl presented his own theological reconstruction on the issue. It was and remains a major historical-theological work.
2. David Lotz, *Ritschl and Luther* (New York, 1974), p. 31.
3. A variety of scholars and theologians have understood Ritschl in precisely these terms. Horst Stephan, Otto Wolff, and Walther von Loewenich all affirmed that Ritschl made Luther's thought the foundation of his system. Wilhelm Herrmann, perhaps the greatest of Ritschl's disciples, had this to say about his teacher: "Ritschl had the power to preserve Luther's work from that ruin into which it had fallen, even among those who comported themselves as the most loyal of Luther's heirs. For he once more brought the Christian faith into plain view as that life set free for earnest men through the person of Jesus. . ." (see Lotz, p. 25).
4. Lotz, p. 30. Ritschl's methodology places quite a severe limitation on Luther's vast corpus, which would seem to open it to intense criticism, but Ritschl knew precisely what he was doing and had systematic and polemic considerations in view in doing so.
5. Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Clifton, New Jersey, 1966), p. 166. Henceforth this work will be referred to as Ritschl, III.
6. Albrecht Ritschl, *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Edinburgh, 1874), p. 140. Henceforth this work will be referred to as Ritschl, I.
7. Ritschl, III, p. 6. What Ritschl gleans from Luther, and correctly so, is that any supposed knowledge of God not mediated through Christ is no knowledge at all and is, in fact, idolatrous.
8. Ritschl, III, p. 395. As Ritschl evaluated Luther's development, Luther's later errors were due to his failure to heed his own warning.
9. Ritschl, I, p. 120.

10. Ritschl, III, p. 498. Ritschl explained that it was this assurance that enabled Protestant Christians to live out their faith on the basis of a childlike trust in God, while their Roman Catholic counterparts, in doctrine and in practice, functioned with a childlike fear.

11. Albrecht Ritschl, *Three Essays*, translated with an introduction by Philip Hefner (New York, 1972), p. 71. In his essay, "Prolegomena to the History of Pietism," Ritschl demonstrates the faulty understanding of the Christian life exhibited by the anabaptist and pietist movements and uses Luther as an example of a proper understanding.

12. Lotz, p. 134.

13. Ritschl objected to Luther's explanation of "how" one was justified, of the precise nature of the person and work of Christ, and of the objective nature of sin. He believed that such inquiries were useless, because they moved into areas which surpassed human understanding, and were often harmful because they misdirected the religious and moral energies of Christians.

14. Lotz, p. 32. Ritschl stated that Luther, who was never an outstanding systematician, slowly regressed from religious genius to doctrinal theologian.

15. Lotz, p. 52.

16. William of Occam and Gabriel Biel were two of the leading figures of the nominalist school. There were, however, many others, and the movement was not noted for its theological unanimity. In what follows only the barest generalities are offered, for there seems to have been general consensus on these matters.

17. God was said to be bound only by the law of non-contradiction.

18. Interestingly enough, Ritschl's displeasure with the work was in direct contrast to Luther's evaluation. Luther felt that it was his finest book.

19. For example, Luther wrote: "For if a man has lost his freedom and is forced to serve sin and cannot will good, what conclusion can more justly be drawn concerning him than that he sins and wills evil necessarily?" (*Bondage of the Will*, part IV, section III).

20. Ritschl, I, p. 171.

21. Ritschl, I, p. 344. Ritschl vehemently rejected the objectifying of guilt as an impersonal liability based on original sin. Each man, he said, was personally responsible and guilty for his own sin.

22. Ritschl, III, pp. 26ff. Anselm's theory of atonement, according to Ritschl, involved a legal propitiation of God. Ritschl contrasted this idea to Abelard's ethical notion, which he generally preferred.

23. Ritschl, III, p. 25.

24. Ritschl, *Three Essays*, p. 21. One can find a discussion in greater length by Hefner in his introduction to this volume.

25. Ritschl, *Three Essays*. One can find a discussion by Ritschl in his essay, "Theology and Metaphysics."

26. Ritschl, III, p. 5. Some of the orthodox thinkers to whom Ritschl is referring are Gerhard, Calov, and Hollaz. Gerhard is singled out for special attack by Ritschl, for it was Gerhard who assigned faith in God's providence to the realm of natural theology, an almost unforgivable error in Ritschl's system.

27. Ritschl, III, p. 24. See also in this regard I, pp. 625ff., and III, p. 181. In this final section Ritschl sarcastically denounces the inconsistency of the orthodox as exemplified by Melanchthon and Gerhard. Melanchthon, in the Apology, had listed ignorance of God as an effect of original sin. Later he offered rational demonstrations of God's existence, the immortality of the soul, the congruence between philosophical morality and the divine law, and the like. Gerhard followed with his assignment of faith in God's providence to natural theology. Ritschl dryly commented: "The fidelity of this orthodox divine to the Augsburg Confession is such that he declares possible to the natural, that is, sinful man, the very trust in God which the chief standard of the church expressly denies to him!"

28. Ritschl, I, p. 123.

29. Ritschl, I, p. 365.

30. Ritschl, I, p. 320. One of Ritschl's complaints about orthodoxy, and one which struck a nerve, was that its theology was marked by "slovenly and thoughtless use of the Bible."

31. Ritschl, III, p. 262.

32. Ritschl, III, p. 14.

33. Lotz, p. 155.

34. Ritschl, III, p. 659.

35. Ritschl, III, p. 114.

36. Ritschl, I, p. 171.

37. Ritschl, *Three Essays*, p. 128. Ritschl's comment occurs in the "Prolegomena to the History of Pietism."

38. Ritschl, III, p. 5. In Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* (1535 edition) and in subsequent orthodox dogmatics, systematics proceeded from the study of natural theology to original sin and on to the work of Christ, presenting each as objective, almost abstract, propositions. Instruction in the faith, to a large degree, followed suit.

39. In what follows the characteristic features of a highly varied movement will be discussed as they are criticized by Ritschl.

40. Ritschl, III, pp. 7-11. While Ritschl has a number of carefully qualified, yet discernibly favorable, comments to make about Spener and the intentions of pietism, his attitude toward the movement remained decidedly negative. He was so conscious of its potentially harmful impact upon the Christian faith and of his possible categorization as a part of the movement that he devoted a full ten years of his life to the production of a remarkably thorough work on the subject, *The History of Pietism*. In this work, he meticulously dissects the erroneous tendencies of the movement.

41. Ritschl, *Three Essays*, p. 72.

42. Ritschl, *Three Essays*, p. 87. Ritschl's comments occur in the "Prolegomena to the History of Pietism."

43. It must be stated again that pietism was a highly diverse movement, and Ritschl was careful to discriminate among its proponents when leveling his criticisms.

44. Ritschl, III, p. 83; I, p. 537.

45. Lotz, p. 82.

46. In what follows an admittedly brief account of intellectual developments affecting orthodoxy in England and on the continent is offered. It is not meant in the least to serve as a thorough account of these movements, but is merely intended to operate as a setting in which Ritschl figures. For a lengthier and much more useful account of these developments, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard*, pp. 49-96.

47. Ritschl, I, pp. 324-325.

48. Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* (St. Louis, 1950), pp. 89ff.

49. The unity of justification and reconciliation is a distinct theme in Luther which is gradually lost in Melanchthon and later orthodox thinkers. Ritschl does Luther a great service in this restorative work.

50. Ritschl, III, p. 212.
51. Ritschl, III, p. 40.
52. Ritschl, III, p. 78.
53. Ritschl, III, p. 199.
54. Ritschl, III, pp. 58 and 54. Otto Heick states that man's guilt over his failure to trust and serve God causes him to construct a false picture of God's holiness and wrath, which he naturally fears. This fear prevents man from venturing near God and sustains his alienation. I think Heick is essentially accurate in this interpretation. See Heick, *A History of Christian Thought*, II, p. 238.
55. Ritschl, III, p. 607.
56. Ritschl, *Three Essays*, p. 21. Philip Hefner contributed the excellent introduction to Ritschl's essays.
57. Lotz, p. 37. Lotz writes that in Ritschl justification is manifestly forensic in nature, on the model of "the pronouncing of one as righteous by the sentence of a judge." The words quoted come from Ritschl's "Instruction in the Christian Religion." This quotation does not conflict with Ritschl's rejection of penal conceptions of justification; it merely asserts that God's pardon of men through Christ possesses a finality in its authority, not unlike the official pardon of a judge.
58. Ritschl, III, pp. 2, 4. This assertion was meant, at least in part, to follow in Luther's footsteps and sidestep the charge of subjectivism. Luther was not subjectivistic and was able to distinguish between true and illusory faith. The touchstone of faith was always its object, Christ.
59. In volume 3 Ritschl wrote the following: "We must give up the question of how man is persuaded by the Holy Spirit. We must only verify life in the Holy Spirit in the believer's knowing God's gracious gifts, calling on God as Father, and cherishing a spirit of union" (p. 22).
60. Ritschl, III, pp. 94ff.
61. Ritschl, III, p. 260.
62. Ritschl, III, p. 273.
63. Ritschl, III, p. 282. Ritschl's emphasis is not an un-Lutheran one, but his stress upon love at the expense of God's other attributes raises some difficulties with both the early and the mature Luther.

64. Ritschl, III, p. 260. Ritschl called the retribution of God a carry-over from Greek mythological thought about the gods. As a foreign, unscriptural element, it did not belong to a Christian theological system. Because of this and other such positions, Otto Heick refers to Ritschl as a "biblicist." Given the climate of Ritschl's time, the appellation fits. His general confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture, compromised by occasional critical interpretations, made him somewhat conservative in his day. He was sincerely, yet scientifically, trying to uphold the principle of *sola scriptura*.

65. Ritschl, III, p. 142.

66. It is Calvin's definition of faith (coming from the early Calvin, naturally) which Ritschl uses approvingly.

67. To my knowledge, which is admittedly limited, Ritschl is the first to use the category of value judgments in the description of faith, which is a development worthy of note.

68. Ritschl, III, pp. 203ff.

69. My description of Ritschl's thinking here, while not doing complete justice to him, is essentially accurate. His thinking raises some very difficult questions in the area of conversion. What does he say of those whose wills are not "excited" when confronted with the gospel? What does he say of those who refuse to make what seem to be the appropriate value judgments of faith? Ritschl says, "The love of God can be conceived in relation only to such sinners as have not fallen into that degree of sin which excludes conversion of the will" (III, p. 383). He even speaks of men being incapable or "capable" of conversion. This distinction would appear to be a rather lame attempt to escape from the problem and seems to suggest a degree of morality in the subject before divine grace can become operative. (Ritschl thereby comes dangerously close as well to doing something he censures, namely, describing the process of justification.) Ritschl concludes that we cannot say whether there are any people whose opposition to divine purposes has come to full consciousness and determination; the answer is beyond our knowledge.

70. Ritschl, III, p. 591.

71. Ritschl says, "The origin of the Person of Christ—how His Person attained the form in which it presents itself to our ethical and religious apprehension—is not a subject for theological inquiry, because the problem transcends all inquiry" (III, p. 451).

72. Ritschl, III, p. 414.
73. Ritschl, III, p. 436.
74. Ritschl, III, pp. 449ff.
75. Ritschl, III, p. 414.
76. Ritschl, III, p. 464.
77. Ritschl, III, p. 384.
78. Ritschl, III, p. 344.
79. Ritschl, III, p. 320.
80. Ritschl, III, p. 327. Ritschl, very modern in this regard, looked upon death as an existential reality, not a dogmatic dictum.
81. Ritschl felt that speaking of sinful propensities promoted the faulty conception that man was somehow bound to sin, which he felt lessened one's responsibility and guilt for religious or moral failure.
82. Ritschl states that original sin was originally developed as a means to uphold the sacramental character of infant baptism.
83. Ritschl, III, p. 340.
84. Ritschl, III, p. 54.
85. Ritschl, III, p. 100.
86. Ritschl, III, p. 142.
87. Ritschl, III, p. 543.
88. Ritschl, III, pp. 544-545.
89. The certainty of salvation, or complete assurance of the forgiveness of sins, is a recurring theme in Ritschl, as it was in Luther. In a characteristic passage he writes, "Personal assurance, springing from justification, is experienced in and through trust in God in all the situations of life, and especially in patience, by him who through his faith in Christ incorporates himself into the community of believers" (III, p. 192).
90. Lotz, pp. 108-109.
91. Ritschl, III, p. 513.
92. Ritschl, III, pp. 513-514.
93. Ritschl, III, p. 511. As the believer engages in the religious and moral life of his faith relationship, he completes the three points of the circle of religion, which are God, man, and the world. When any of these elements are minimized, religious conceptions suffer grievously.

94. In his work *Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century* Bernard Reardon speaks of a "practical incentive" which "finds its highest expression in Christianity, the monotheistic, completely spiritual and ethical religion, based on the life of its founder, Jesus of Nazareth, by whom was established that Kingdom of God whose end is the pardon of sinners, the motivation of conduct by love and the deepening of men's sense of filial relation to God" (pp. 138-139).

95 Ritschl, *Three Essays*, p. 224. In "Instruction in the Christian Religion" the point is made that the pure spiritual motivation involved in seeking the Kingdom of God places it above other societal forms.

96. Ritschl can be accused of equivocating on the nature of the Kingdom of God. If it is to be a temporal kingdom, in which God's end is realized in the moral perfection of man, then one might fairly ask Ritschl to produce evidence of its historical progression. If one can perceive no moral change, can the perfection of man in the ethical realm be said to be taking place at all?

97. Ritschl, III, p. 30.

98. Ritschl, III, p. 445. Ritschl's thinking closely parallels Luther's idea of the priesthood of all believers. Ritschl clearly approved of this emphasis in Luther and appropriated it effectively and consistently in his articulation of the Kingdom of God.

99. Ritschl, III, pp. 627-644.

100. David Lotz, *Ritschl and Luther* (New York, 1974).

101. Lotz, p. 28.

102. Lotz, pp. 98-104.

103. Lotz, p. 124.

104. Lotz, p. 105.

105. Lotz, because of his delimited purposes, does not examine as closely as he could have the reasons underlying Ritschl's misinterpretations of Luther. Certainly something other than a simple misreading must have been the cause. Van Harvey raises this question politely, but firmly, in his review of Lotz's work.

Homiletical Studies

Epistle Series B

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

February 17, 1991

Romans 8:31-39

Introduction: This may not be the shortest sermon that you have ever heard, but it may have the shortest text—one little word from today's epistle—"if." For many, life revolves around that little word "if." Recently one woman told me seriously, "*If* I win at the racetrack today, I'll give half to the church." We had a little talk about that particular "if," but it shows how our many "ifs" can go either way. Winning or losing, success or failure may hinge on it. You may win your golf game *if* you make the putt, your tennis game *if* you make the point. Students pass *if* they study. The doctor tells you that your health will be fine *if* you lose some weight, *if* you quit smoking.

How many times do we hear "if only"! You are familiar with them: "*If* only I knew then what I know now." "*If* only I had more money." "*If* only I had listened." Many people continue this "iffy" reasoning in their relationships with God. They confront God with this word: "*If* you get me out of this problem, I'll dedicate my life to you." "*If* you make me rich, then I'll give to the church." But things do not work in this way. We cannot make deals with God. We must understand that St. Paul's statement in the text is a sure and certain fact, not conditional, when he says:

IF

I. If God were not for us, our future would be conditional.
   A. Many people hope to be forgiven *if* they are good enough.
      1. In verse 17 Paul reminds us that the entire creation was subjected to frustration as a result of man's sin. God told Adam that, *if* he disobeyed, he would die. He sinned and so received the death sentence. Death is still our sentence today (Romans 6:23).
      2. Death is still the enemy, no matter how many "ifs" of diet and exercise we follow. The best proven of all scientific laws, the law of increasing entropy, describes the tendency in all natural systems toward disorganization and so death. We are born in sin with a death sentence. There is no hope in seeing *if* I can be good enough.

B. God did, to be sure, make a covenant with His people.
   1. "Now *if* you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then you will be My treasured possession" (Exodus 19:5). This covenant had an "if-then" aspect. Therefore, with the promise came a warning: "*If* you ever forget, you will be destroyed" (Deuteronomy 8:19). This covenant taught both God's absolute trustworthiness and man's weakness. The death sentence remained *if* people forgot.
   2. Scripture records how time after time God's people forgot. Our history today shows how we forget. But Scripture also records how God did not forget His people, that God is for us. He is faithful to His promises.

II. "If God is for us" (verse 31), however, assumes a certain fact.
   A. God promised a Savior.
      1. Scripture shows that God keeps the promises He makes. The evidence of Scripture shows that what God has done seals what He will do. God has already done the most infinitely difficult and costly thing He could possibly do. He did not spare even His own Son (verse 32). In the blood of Jesus He made a testament in favor of "us all" (verse 32). It is based on all that God has already done; it is not conditional on what we do.
      2. He effected forgiveness while we were still enemies (Romans 5:10). It is easy to love a beautiful baby that needs care. But we were not attractive at all. Outside of His eyes of love we appear more like repulsive maggots than beautiful babies. But He gave us the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus (6:23).
   B. "What, then, shall we say in response to salvation?"
      1. Now that we have a new relationship we can cry, "Abba, Father" (verse 15). There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (8:1). *If* we are in Him, all His merits are credited to us as well. There is nothing "iffy" about it.
      2. "*If* you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Colossians 3:1). Here "if" equals a fact: you are risen with Christ.

Conclusion: "If"—your salvation hinges on that little word. What God has done in Jesus Christ now seals what He will do for you. *If* God is for you, then nothing in all His creation can separate you from His love. He *is* for you.

Ronald M. Baker
Evanston, Wyoming

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

February 24, 1991

Romans 5:1-11

Introduction: "Hey boss, can I have Friday off?" "Maybe." "Mom, can I spend the night at Alisha's?" "We'll see." "Do you want to go out to dinner tonight?" "Oh, I don't know." As we all know, life is filled with uncertainties. Answers such as "Maybe" and "We'll see" and "I don't know" are as common as smog in Los Angeles. The fact of the matter is that life itself is very uncertain. How do you know your job will still be waiting for you tomorrow? How do you know your home will still be standing? How do you even know that your heart will still be pumping and your brain still functioning? The truth is that you do not know, and neither does anyone else. Life truly is uncertain. We do not know what tomorrow will bring (James 4:13-15). But in today's text the Apostle Paul speaks, not of that which is uncertain, but rather of that which is certain. In clear and certain words he reminds us:

CHRIST CREATES CERTAINTY

I. About trials and sufferings.
   A. Trials and sufferings tend to make the people of this world more uncertain about their standing with God.
      1. They view them as signs of God being angry with them.
      2. They consider them to be a punishment for their sin.
      3. They are driven further away from God and His grace.
   B. Because of Christ we can face trials and sufferings with absolute certainty.
      1. The anger and wrath of God fell upon Christ.
      2. The punishment for our sin was borne by Him.
      3. Through faith in Him we know that we are at peace with God.
   C. Trials and sufferings benefit us in our walk with God.
      1. They produce in us perseverance.
      2. They produce in us character.
      3. They produce in us hope.
   D. In Christ we can even rejoice in our trials and sufferings.

II. About what will happen when we die.
   A. The people of this world are fearful and uncertain about death.
      1. They know that they have committed sin.
      2. They try to be good, but wonder if they have been good enough.

3. At best they "hope" to make it into heaven.

B. Because of Christ we can face death with absolute certainty.
   1. We know that salvation is God's doing and not our own.
   2. We know that, while we were in sin and enemies of God, Christ died in our behalf.
   3. We know that, if God was willing to reconcile us to Himself through the death of His Son, He will most certainly see us through to our eternal glory.

C. In Christ we can even rejoice in the death of ourselves and of fellow-Christians.

Conclusion: Much of life is about as certain as receiving a check in the mail from Ed McMahon. But as believers in Jesus Christ we are unique. For in us Christ creates certainty. He creates certainty in life, promising to be there even in our trials and sufferings, producing in us perseverance, character, and hope. He creates certainty in death, for He once died, taking the sting, the power, and the fear out of death. You can go forth into a world of uncertainty, knowing that the crucified and risen Christ goes with you and that, in life and in death, Christ creates certainty.

Mark W. Demel
Carson City, Nevada

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

March 3, 1991

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Introduction: "Why should we have a crucifix on the altar? Why should we want to look at that every Sunday instead of a nice, clean cross?" While these may not be the exact words in which the question would be phrased, the thoughts are common enough among us. Why do we gaze upon the image of a dying man every time we gather for worship? For many, the thought of God becoming a real man is repulsive. The incarnation simply does not resonate with the reality that they have created for themselves. A real God who has become a real man is not so easily manipulated; His words are more than just religious theory. In the crucifix we see all the foolishness of mankind and all the wisdom of God. It is in the cross adorned with a corpus that we see the stumbling block—the trigger to the trap—that exposes the man who considers himself wiser than God. It is in the cross adorned with a corpus, however, that we see the salvation of us all.

OUR FOOLISHNESS, GOD'S WISDOM

I. We seek to be saved by works that fail.
   A. We try to live on the highest level of life in order to placate our consciences.
   B. We think that if we improve our station in life—socially, intellectually, or morally (in terms of some false piety)—we are holier.

II. Christ's simple, yet profound work is effective for us all.
   A. Christ suffered the lowliest death in order to reconcile us all to God.
   B. Our social, intellectual, or "spiritual" level is not important because Christ became the lowest of all in order to save all.

III. We seek to be argued into believing.
   A. We want to spiritualize Christ so that God becomes theoretical, not real.
   B. We look to the philosophy of the Jew, the Greek, and the Oriental for answers to our dilemma.

IV. God does not argue with us; He established His relationship with us historically, on the cross.
   A. Jesus Christ is God incarnate; He is real and His work is effective.
   B. The foolish "wisdom" of man as epitomized by the Jew and the Greek is ended by the wisdom of Christ's presence on the cross and in His catholic church.

V. We seek a god who reveals glorious might and power.
   A. We expect God to submit to our criteria of what is "glorious" and "miraculous."
   B. Revelation does not belong to the world, but to God alone; we do not decide on the form of God's revelation.

VI. In Jesus Christ crucified we see the revelation of God.
   A. The most glorious miracle of salvation is found in the humiliation of the cross.
   B. Jesus Christ suffering on the cross for our sins is the revelation of our loving, merciful God.

Conclusion: Man's foolish contempt of the crucifixion is not the fault of God's choosing to suffer for man. On the contrary, God revealed Himself in just that way so that the lowly fools that we are might be saved by the lowly death of Christ. As we look to the altar we see God's glorious acts of the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. When we look just below that beautiful crucifix, we see God's presence yet again. For on this day our crucified and risen Lord graces this table with His presence in the blessed sacrament. Today we feast on His holy body and precious blood which were given once

as a sacrifice for us and which are now given as a gift to us. Thanks be to our most wise God!

Douglas H. Spittel
Arnold, Pennsylvania

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 10, 1991

Ephesians 2:4-10

This beautiful and powerful passage is one of the clearest biblical helps to our understanding of God's grace freely earned and given through Jesus Christ, as verses 7-8 teach us. Major emphasis and clarity must be given to these words: "dead," "alive," "by grace," "workmanship." What a powerful contrast this passage draws between our nature under "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" and being made alive in Christ Jesus.

Introduction: The films of today tell their story in living color with all the graphic details of the "realities" of life, often portraying all that is wrong in the world as exciting and compelling, the glories of life in the "fast lane." St. Paul reveals the reality of life too—as a tragedy of hopelessness when we are outside of God's mighty plan of grace.

GOD'S MIGHTY PLAN

I. God's plan in the beginning: We frustrated it.
   A. We find ourselves in a world of transgressions and sins (verse 1).
   B. The world follows its own ways, the "ruler of this world," and the spirit of disobedience (verse 2).
   C. The personal story common to us all is the "gratifying of our cravings" (verse 3).
   D. The result is spiritual death, an eternal and painful separation from God (verses 1, 3b).

II. God's plan in Christ: He came to redeem us.
   A. God made us alive in Christ. The link that ties us to this new life in Christ is faith, freely given us by God's mercy and grace (verse 4).
   B. He saved us from eternal death, raised us up, and set us at His side (Galatians 2:20).

C. All of His plan was for us and centered in Christ, the Savior of the world (verse 8).
D. All men are part of this universal plan of redemption, even as all of us are born into sin (verse 3).

III. God's plan in us: We are His workmanship.
A. Now we are no longer motivated (as new men) by the threatening finger of the law.
B. Rather we boast in our freedom in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-5; 2:8-9).
C. We are made complete in order to participate in the proclamation of Christ as Lord of the nations (verse 10).
D. We are given plans and good works which begin at home, with family and friends, and then move beyond as we live out God's mighty plan of service in us.

Conclusion: We do not need to see or believe in a world of "make-believe," a man-designed world that leads to spiritual emptiness. Rather God's plan of victory over sin and death in Jesus Christ is His plan for each of us, for we are His workmanship.

Daniel J. Vogel
Miami, Florida

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 17, 1991

Hebrews 5:7-9

The lessons are appropriate for a Sunday so near to Easter. They deal with anticipation of blessings and glory that is to come. They speak of the cross that must be borne before the crown of victory can be worn. As part of the festival half of the church year, the lessons help us to focus on different facets of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews shows the superior nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and His way of salvation. The epistle of the day reflects the overall thematic thrust of the book very well.

Introduction: Today's sermon theme attempts to put into words at least one aspect of the significance of the actions of Jesus described in the text. Many people have felt disillusioned by religious leaders who fail to live according to the principles that they proclaim. Eyes that focus on these fallen preachers need to be redirected to Jesus Himself. Here they will not be disappointed because Jesus has impeccable integrity and can stand the closest scrutiny. Jesus is

worthy of our allegiance. He asks nothing of us that He has not undergone Himself, and, indeed, He asks much less. He says:

I PRACTICE WHAT I PREACH

I. Jesus is the perfect model of obedience.
   A. Jesus became flesh to live the perfect life that God's law demands.
      1. He was subjected to the temptations that we experience (Hebrews 4:15).
         a. He does not ask us to do anything that He did not do Himself.
         b. He knows exactly what we are experiencing (Hebrews 2:18).
         c. He is worthy of our allegiance to Him as our Lord (Revelation 5:9).
      2. He never gave in to sin (1 John 3:5).
      3. He was obedient to God even to the point of a tortured death (Philippians 2:8).
   B. Jesus set aside the use of His own power as God and became dependent.
      1. Jesus prayed fervently to God and trusted Him.
      2. He followed the plan of God even when it was difficult.
II. Jesus' sacrifice has won our salvation.
   A. He took our place.
      1. He lived the perfect life that we should have lived.
      2. His death paid the penalty for our sins that we could never have paid.
   B. Salvation is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
      1. Jesus rendered the perfect sacrifice in an obedience that was perfect and perfecting.
      2. He dispenses it to those who are empowered to the obedience of faith.

Conclusion: Jesus has always done what He said He would do and will surely do what He says that He will do in the future. His creeds are all backed up by His deeds. He is deserving of our submission to His authority in our lives. He loves us more than we love ourselves, knows us better than we know ourselves, and wants better things for us than we would ask for ourselves. He likewise works in us the ability to practice what He preaches.

Robert A. Dargatz
Irvine, California

THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT
PALM SUNDAY

March 24, 1991

Philippians 2:5-11

The epistle gives shape to the ancient Palm Sunday collect: "Almighty and everlasting God. . .who didst send Thy Son to take our nature upon Him and to suffer death on the cross that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility. . .". There is humiliation and exaltation for the king who rides into Jerusalem. Palm Sunday joins in a perfect union both passion and praise. Thus the connections with the "Palm Sunday Procession with Palms" (see *Lutheran Worship Agenda*, pp. 35-38) are obvious. In this regard we also take note of the hymn of the day, "Ride On, Ride On, in Majesty" (*LW*, 105).

The exegetical literature on this pericope is both vast and complex. Several monographs have been written on this so-called *Carmen Christi*. For helpful treatments of the text the preacher is directed to Ralph P. Martin's *Carmen Christi* (Cambridge, 1976) and *Word Biblical Commentary: Philippians* by G.F. Hawthorne (Waco, 1983). Special attention should be paid to the translation of *harpagmon* in verse 6, since an incorrect translation leads to splitting apart the two natures in Christ (as occurs in the RSV at this point). Jesus does not grab for that which He already possesses. We note the clear movement from humiliation to exaltation in the text, with the cross itself being the axis (verse 8).

Introduction: The road to Jerusalem is the royal highway; it is also the way of the cross. Palm Sunday's parade culminates in the passion of the king of Israel. Praise and passion go together, for the one who is acclaimed with palms and paeans of praise is the blessed king of whom Zechariah spoke (9:9-10), who comes to die for the world's salvation.

IN PRAISE OF THE KING

I. He is the king who comes to us as true man.
   A. Jesus does not grab at equality with God.
      1. He already possesses equality with God, as we confess in the Nicene Creed: "I believe in. . .the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God."

2. The Creed continues to confess that "for us men and our salvation" He "came down from heaven. . .and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate."
3. The Lord Christ's equality with God was hidden in His flesh.

B. Jesus came as a servant.
1. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).
2. His whole life is an illustration of this servanthood.

II. Our king humbled Himself and became obedient to death.
A. Human beings *must* obey the call of death.
1. When death comes calling, we cannot refuse.
2. Our sin leaves us with no other options. Die we must.

B. Christ Jesus did not have to die.
1. One with the Father from all eternity, He was and is life.
2. He willingly embraces death—the death we earned—for us.
3. He takes no detours. He does not dodge death. The parade of Palm Sunday is a parade with a purpose; the destination is Calvary.

C. Our obedient King is exalted and enthroned by God.
1. This exaltation occurred not in spite of the cross, but through the cross.
2. In fact, the Gospel of John speaks of our blessed Lord's suffering as the hour of His glory.

III. The humble king is received in the humility of faith.
A. The Lord Jesus came in utter humility.
1. He was born in the poverty of Bethlehem's stable.
2. He rides to His death on a donkey, the humble beast of burden.

B. He will be acknowledged as the Lord. Finally, every knee will bow at His name.
1. For unbelief, it will be a bowing down in utter and unending shame.
2. For faith, it will be the glad recognition that this crucified king is the source of unending joy.

Conclusion: In the Holy Scriptures palms are a symbol of victory. In the Book of Revelation we read of a great multitude that no one could count from every land and language. They are gathered with palm branches in their hands as they praise the lamb of salvation, singing: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the lamb." We sing this song on this Palm Sunday, too. For the Lord Jesus Christ, the king of kings, came to this planet to suffer and die for us, to achieve our salvation. Risen from the dead, He gives us

the fruits of His victory with His body and blood. "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

John T. Pless
Minneapolis, Minnesota

EASTER SUNDAY
THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

March 31, 1991

1 Corinthians 15:19-28

Pastor: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen, indeed.

Introduction: So the people of God have greeted one another at Eastertime since the earliest centuries of the New Testament era. The words of the ancient greeting proclaim the core of the great Easter news, the radiant New Testament gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the world's Savior from sin, after His redemptive death on Calvary on the first Good Friday gloriously burst the bonds of the death that held Him and triumphed over the grave that shut in His body by rising from the dead on Easter Sunday to enter into a condition of endless life.

Now the marvel of Jesus' resurrection is not simply this, that it meant for Him the utter defeat of death in His own being. Much more—the marvel of the resurrection is that it also opened up the total conquest of death and the grave to all men of our mortal race. For this is the assurance that the risen Christ Himself offers to every human being: "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). On this Easter morning we rejoice anew in this magnificent gospel truth and glorify the risen Christ as the guarantor of our resurrection. Saint Paul treats this mighty verity in today's text:

THE RISEN CHRIST—GUARANTOR OF OUR RESURRECTION

I. Christ rose triumphantly from the dead.
   A. The resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of Christians to eternal life are pivotal companion teachings of the Scriptures. Earlier in this great resurrection chapter (1 Corinthians 15) Paul speaks of some members of the Corinthian church who, while accepting Christ's resurrec-

tion, held that there would be no resurrection from the dead for the people of God. They probably had embraced the then current Greek prejudice against the material as the seat of evil and trouble in the world and man. The idea of man's spirit, freed from the prison-house of the body at physical death, then returning in the process of resurrection to that body was repugnant to them.

B. Paul argues (in the previous context) that, if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ did not rise. He draws a series of conclusions from the latter observation, the central one being that then "you are still in your sins" (verse 17). If this is the case, then we upon death, like Christians who have died before us, shall perish, that is, be damned forever in hell.

1. Death—physical, spiritual, eternal—came into the world because of sin. All people are born into the world spiritually dead because of original sin (God regards all as having sinned in Adam [Romans 5:12] and punishes all accordingly) and therefore subject to physical mortality and to everlasting death in hell (verses 21a, 22a). So it was with you and me.
2. God sent Christ, the second Adam, to make full atonement for the sins of humanity, that all who believe in Him might have forgiveness, life, and salvation (verses 21b, 22b). The Father's raising of Jesus from the dead was absolutely necessary to show that the latter's redemption was sufficient for the satisfaction of the divine justice and that through faith men might obtain eternal salvation. Without the resurrection of Jesus we should have no assurance that the debt of sin is fully paid; there would be no *risen* Christ, who is the only object of saving faith and who with the Father justifies us believers.
3. In view of the preceding, the inference follows: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (verse 19). How so? Unbelievers are to be pitied, too, are they not? Those Corinthians who denied the resurrection of God's people probably thought of believers' salvation as consisting in the continuing life of the spirit after physical death. But, while there will indeed be such a continuation, there would be no life even for the believer's spirit after physical death if Christ had not risen and demonstrated the sufficiency of His redemptive sacrifice. How pitiful, then, to harbor a (deceptive) hope of everlasting life—and adjust behavior on earth accordingly—only at death to find this an illusive dream and to be damned! Unbelievers at least cherish no deceptive hope.

C. But now Paul sweeps away all these negative deductions with his triumphant declaration: "But now Christ is risen from the dead!" (verse 20a). He was seen alive by many witnesses. There were five resurrection appearances on Easter Sunday alone, and additional appearances during the ensuing forty days. With Christ alive from the dead, redemption is complete. The gift of God is eternal life for us and all believers. Hallelujah!

II. He became the firstfruits of all who die in faith.

A. Paul says that Jesus "has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (verse 20b), that is, those who have died in the faith. (The apostle is speaking of believers only in this pericope.) The reference to firstfruits calls to mind a great harvest and the Levitical requirement of Israelites that they bring the first sheaf reaped from the harvest to the priest for consecration to the Lord (Leviticus 23:10). There could be no firstfruits unless there were an entire harvest ready to be reaped. Just so, when the risen Christ is called a firstfruits of believers who have died, the certainty is that there will be a whole harvest of believers ready for resurrection at the world's end. The interval of time does not count with God; the great harvest of believers is already present to Him.

B. At the end the dead in Christ will rise with fully restored and glorified bodies (1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:21). Following the final judgment we shall enter into the eternal joy prepared for us by God.

C. Paul's combining the fact of Christ's resurrection with that of the believers leads him (in verses 24-28) to think of other great events pertaining to the consummation. First, he points to the exalted Christ's rule over all things, over the forces of nature and the universe and over the affairs of men and nations throughout the period of New Testament history. This rule He conducts in the interest of us His people, the church, to keep us safe from spiritual harm and bring us to heavenly glory. One may compare Ephesians 1:20-23.

D. When the last enemy, death, is destroyed, so that with the resurrection of believers it shall no longer even exist, then Christ according to His human nature will subject Himself to the Father (verse 28), so that the Triune God may reign conjointly and supremely over us in all eternity. (Verse 28 does not teach a subordination of the Second Person, according to His divine nature, to the First Person of the Trinity.)

E. Therefore, we are strengthened and comfort one another with these gospel assurances: Have no fear of your death (Hebrews 2:14-15; Psalm 23:4; Job 19:25-27). Praise the Triune God for

the hope of the resurrection (1 Peter 1:3). "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:38).

Walter A. Maier

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 7, 1991

Acts 3:13-15, 17-26

Many parishes have adopted the *Lutheran Worship Lectionary*, based upon the New International Version of the Bible. The frequent criticisms of Reformed theology within the NIV are particularly valid in this pericope. Verse 21 contains the phrase *hon dei ouranon men dexasthai*, translated by the NIV as "he must remain in heaven." This translation, reflecting Reformed Christology, ought to be translated as either "who must receive heaven" (Luther, Chemnitz) or "whom heaven must receive" (KJV, RSV, NASB, GWN). Both are grammatically possible (cf. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 142-143); the former is reflected in the Formula of Concord (VII:119). The meaning is not, as indicated by the NIV, "that Christ must be so taken in or circumscribed or comprehended by or in heaven that He in no way can or wills to be with us on earth with His human nature" (FC VII). Preachers should take care in clarifying the NIV lectionary lest false christological and subsequently false sacramental conclusions be drawn.

Introduction: Holy days have a way of bringing renewal to the life of God's people. Last Sunday, the holiest day of all, Easter, reminded us of the greatest renewal of all—the renewal of life through an open and empty tomb. But that was last Sunday; today, a whole week has passed and things have gone back to normal. Children are at school, parents are at work, the world has picked up right where it left off before Easter. Is that all there is to Easter—a busy celebration for a day with a joyous message that disappears in the noise of day-to-day life? Or does Easter continue to shout over the roar of the world:

ALLELUIA! EASTER NEVER ENDS!

I. Alleluia! Life is victorious over death!
   A. Death appears to be undefeatable.

1. So it seemed to those who demanded the death of Jesus (verses 13-15).
2. So it seemed to Thomas, the "doubting" disciple (John 20:19-31).
3. So it seems to all mortals who stand at the grave and cannot see beyond to Easter.

B. Easter defeats the undefeatable.
1. Peter, that former coward who denied his Lord, announces to a crowd the message of life in Jesus, whom they crucified but "whom God has raised from the dead" (verse 15).
2. Where is the power of death over Jesus? It is no more. Where is the power of death over the Christian? It is no more, having been destroyed by the water of baptism (Romans 6:4).
3. A young widower, standing over the fresh grave of his beloved wife, could confess that the grave is not the end: "She's just renting space." Because of Easter, life has defeated the undefeatable enemy, death. Alleluia! Easter never ends!

II. Alleluia! Forgiveness has risen over condemnation!
A. Condemnation seems irreversible.
1. We cannot avoid the consequences of sin. Not even ignorance excuses us (verse 17).
2. Nor can we avoid the weight of our guilt; the law stands ever accusing us.
3. What guilt have you borne? What dark spot within your heart do you keep closed to all people? Is there some part of you that seems too much even for God to love and restore?

B. Easter reverses the irreversible.
1. God made a promise through the holy prophets of old (verse 18), the promise of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. In Jesus of Nazareth that promise was fulfilled.
2. Now the message is proclaimed: "Repent" (verse 19). Times of refreshing have come. Hear the word of absolution. Receive the blessed sacrament, where Christ, possessing all of heaven, comes to His people on earth with His body and blood (verse 21).
3. New life is yours. Sin's power is forever broken. Alleluia! Easter never ends!

III. Alleluia! A new day has dawned!
A. That new day is not seen with our eyes.
1. The prophets spoke of a new day (verses 21-25).
2. In that day, God's salvation would go out to all people—including us (cf. introit).

3. Though hidden by the present age, that day has come and shines in the hearts of the redeemed of God, His Easter people (cf. collect, gradual).

B. Easter reveals the reality of our new day.
1. Easter assures us that there is more to reality than that which meets the eye. Death, the great enemy, is defeated. Forgiveness removes all condemnation.
2. Turned to God by word and sacrament, we live His life.
3. Turned to God by word and sacrament, we share in the power of His death and resurrection.

Conclusion: It is true that the festival of Easter is over—if we limit it to one day a year. But thanks be to God—Easter never ends! Come to His table. Here is life; here is forgiveness; here is Easter.

Daniel L. Gard

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 14, 1991

Acts 4:8-12

All three lessons assigned to this Sunday prevent us from forgetting the glorious news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is obvious that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles at Pentecost continued to be manifest in the days, months, and years which followed. Peter and John were on their way to the temple at an hour of worship and sacrifice when they met a crippled man in the outer court. "Silver and gold we do not have," said Peter, "but what we have, we give you. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, stand and walk!" He did! He even did a joyous dance of liberation with limbs that could not move before. It was late in the day; the religious elite, the Sadducees, who controlled the temple and its priesthood, had God's men thrown into jail for the night. It is the following morning when the prisoners stand before the accusers and the judges. They are asked, "What do you mean by speaking in the name of Jesus and saying that He was raised from the dead? How dare you say that a crippled man was made whole by Jesus' name?" The Sadducees had little use for a resurrection or a personal Messiah. It is at this point that Peter truly stands as a rock and addresses that august assembly of the religious left and makes a powerful confession concerning the power of Christ and His resurrection.

The Book of Acts is a natural continuation of Luke's gospel. In the first chapters of Acts those who were apostles chosen by the Lord in

His state of humiliation are in the forefront. Later on, new names appear: Paul, Silas, Philip, Barnabas, Aquila and Priscilla. They carry on the triumphant procession of those bearing the gospel to the world.

At this juncture in the passing parade of saints Peter is the object of Christ's promise, in Luke 12:12, of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. He speaks boldly before the assembly of religious authorities concerning the name of Jesus. He makes no apologies for his personal faith in Christ and challenges his audience to examine honestly and carefully what is involved in that "name which is above every name."

Introduction: It is interesting to look at the derivation of names. The meanings of some names are obvious—Smith referring to one who works as a blacksmith, Tinker referring to one who fixes things mechanical, Baker referring to one who bakes bread. [At this point one might delve into the meaning of his own personal name.] As interesting as it may be to find the meaning of names, there is one name which has much more importance and meaning than any other—the name of Jesus Christ. When we think of that name, we should ask ourselves this question:

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

I. In the name of Jesus there is power and compassion.
   A. Peter and John healed a cripple by the power of Jesus' name. It is for this reason that Peter makes a bold defense before the Sanhedrin (verses 8-10a).
   B. The name of Jesus is still a name of power. We no longer perform miracles such as Peter and John performed at the temple gate; nevertheless, we should understand that "the arm of the Lord is not shortened." He is still the author of great and wonderful deeds in the lives of His people. [Here one might illustrate with events in one's ministry where God worked in the lives of people—through word and sacrament.]

II. In the name of Jesus there is offense.
   A. The offense to the "elders" of Israel was that the one whom they rejected was now being preached. It was stated boldly that He had risen from the dead. This teaching was particularly offensive to the Sadducees (verses 10b-11).
   B. While statistics and polls indicate that people are aware of Jesus Christ, He still remains a rock of offense to those who stumble and fumble for a salvation effected by human achievement and not by grace.

III. In the name of Jesus there is salvation.

A. Christ stated in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." Peter repeated the same principle before the high council of the Jews: "There is one name given whereby people are to be saved"—the name of Jesus. The Sadducees denied His power and compassion; they rejected the cornerstone of salvation. But Christ is still the wisdom and power of God that brings salvation.
B. In this world salvation is promised in a great variety of ways, from gurus to gross acts of demonism, from "I'm o.k., you're o.k." philosophy through "looking out for number one" to the fraudulent claims of a "new age" religion which says we are all gods and can work out our own salvation. It is a relief to know there is still one name which means salvation—Jesus Christ!

Conclusion: In 1989 the French observed the two hundredth anniversary of their revolution. An instrument of death which was the product of this revolution was the guillotine. That clever device permitted a razor-sharp blade of steel to descend upon a victim's neck and forthwith dispatch him to eternity. The guillotine was the invention of a medical doctor by that name. Dr. Guillotine would have preferred that his name be rememberd not for death, but for life. But his name is now, in fact, associated with death. In contrast, the name of Jesus Christ implies eternal life. Jesus is not a name of death, but of life and salvation. What is in a name? In the name of Jesus Christ there is power and compassion. In His name there is offense only to those who despise God's grace. In the name of Jesus Christ there is the salvation of a world alienated and separated from God. Do you know what is in a name? In the name of Jesus there is everything we need.

Edmond E. Aho
Chula Vista, California

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 21, 1991

Acts 4:23-33

The references to the servant of God in verses 27 and 30 remind us of the "Suffering Servant" passages in Isaiah. Such references show us just how aware the early church was that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. In verse 33 we see that the proclamation of the resurrection was paramount to the apostles. Do we ever preach Christ

crucified without preaching the risen Christ? A Christ-centered sermon must be centered on the *risen* Christ.

Introduction: Can you fight city hall? Does a believer in Jesus want to fight city hall? How do you react when you get hassled for proclaiming Jesus' atoning cross and empty tomb? What do you do when the law of the land sanctions the murder of four thousand unborn Americans every day? Today the Holy Spirit shows us the answer to the questions in our Christian walk:

REMEMBER WHO IS IN CHARGE

I. The Creator was in charge when Peter and John confronted "city hall" (Acts 4:1-24).
   A. Peter and John were up against the most authoritative people in Israel.
   B. Equally powerful forces confront faithful disciples of Jesus today.
   C. Remembering who made heaven and earth reminds us who is in charge of local governments.

II. God the Father was in charge when the nations raged against His Son Jesus (Acts 4:25-28).
   A. The authorities of the whole world raged against Jesus and killed Him.
   B. Nations, even the United States government, still rage against Jesus' followers.
   C. Remembering whose will and power decided the events of Holy Week long before they transpired reminds us who is in charge of all which happens everywhere in this world.

III. The Lord is in charge when we need boldness (Acts 4:29-31).
   A. The early church never had an attitude of "fighting city hall." Rather their sole purpose was to speak God's word with boldness in all settings.
   B. We want to remember continually who gave us our Great Commission.
   C. The Lord is still quite able to shake us up when we need it and to support us.

IV. The Holy Spirit is in charge, making us one in purpose (Acts 4:32-33).
   A. The early disciples' oneness in heart and soul showed itself in their stewardship of material possessions and in the focus of their testimony.
   B. He who is in charge has made us one. Now we pray that He may help us show this oneness in everyday witness and living.

Conclusion: Often we cry out: "O God, why?" This really is not an appropriate question for people living in the light of the open tomb. We do better when we remember who is in charge and then pray: "And now, Lord, see how they are threatening us, and grant that Your servants may continue to speak Your Word with all boldness, as You stretch out Your hand to heal and work miraculous signs and wonderful proofs by Your holy servant Jesus" (verses 29-30; GWN).

Warren E. Messmann
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THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 28, 1991

Acts 8:26-40

This is a powerful pericope in reference to evangelism since it shows the early church at work carrying out the Great Commission in a cross-cultural way by employing the means of grace under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As is typical in the Book of Acts when the gospel is about to cross an important cultural barrier, God Himself sets the process in motion (cf. Acts 2; 16:9-10) but uses men to carry out the work, in this case Philip, introduced earlier as Stephen's associate (Acts 6:5) and as God's agent in bringing the word to Samaria (Acts 8:5-13). Later (Acts 21:8 ff.) he appears again as Paul's host in Caesarea upon the latter's final journey to Jerusalem. The Ethiopian eunuch, though unnamed, has a place of major significance in the story of the church, since he is the first Gentile Christian. Although not a pagan but rather a Jewish proselyte, he does represent another culture and race, serves a pagan queen, is physically maimed, and so, to our eyes, seems an unlikely candidate for conversion—but not to the Lord, who sends Philip to tell him the gospel. Significant, too, is the means Philip uses for witnessing, the Old Testament, specifically a text from Isaiah 53. Apart from God's revelation in Christ, however, the Old Testament remains a closed book even to this faithful follower of Judaism. Many today raise the same question about this pericope as does the Ethiopian, but Philip at once gives the answer of the church: Isaiah is speaking about Jesus in whom all the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah are fulfilled (cf. Luke 24:27, 44). Moreover, Philip uses not only the word but also baptism, by which the man receives all the merits of Christ. The catechetical verse 37 is textually questionable but not impossible, seeing that confession of faith prior to baptism is indicated elsewhere (cf. Acts 16:30-33). Finally, we observe that the Ethiopian continues on his way

"rejoicing" even though Philip disappears, because his faith is not in the evangelist, but in the gospel which Philip preached.

Introduction: The United States remains an attractive homeland for people from all over the world. Asians, Latin Americans, and Arabs, as well as Europeans, continue to flock to America, seeking freedom and opportunity. Native-born Americans often feel threatened by the influx of newcomers, who not only compete economically but also bring with them unfamiliar ways and customs. The text, however, reminds Christians not to identify the church with one culture, not even home-grown American culture, but to realize that the church embraces all people:

JESUS IS THE SAVIOR OF ALL

I. Crossing barriers in apostolic days.
   A. Everybody is ethnocentric.
      1. Ethnocentricity represents a natural affinity for the familiar.
      2. Ethnocentricity becomes sinful when we equate our "kind" of people with the best and disdain all others.
      3. Ethnocentricity is especially destructive when it inhibits our willingness to share the gospel.
   B. The first Christians were Jewish.
      1. They could cite biblical support of ethnocentricity: Old Testament promises and blessings, physical kinship with Christ, Levitical law, etc.
      2. But God made sure that the gospel of Christ crossed cultural barriers.
   C. Philip bore witness to the Ethiopian.
      1. There were big barriers between them: race, language, culture, physical condition, and geography.
      2. All these barriers were overcome by the special intervention of the Holy Spirit.
II. Crossing barriers today.
   A. The study of anthropology, linguistics, history, and geography contributes to understanding other people.
   B. More fundamental, however, are these considerations:
      1. All are one in the human condition—sinners before God.
      2. All have one Savior, Jesus Christ.
   C. We receive power from the Spirit.
      1. In the Scriptures God speaks to us of Jesus Christ.
      2. In baptism God clothes us with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: As Philip responded to the situation in which God placed him, so the church today must take advantage of the

opportunities which she encounters. We have the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Savior of all. We also have the task of bringing that message to all.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 5, 1991

Acts 11:19-30

This pericope concerns the expansion of the church to the pagan city of Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire, with a population of about 500,000 people. News of Christ's resurrection changed many of the people there in such a way that they were set apart from the people at large and given the name "Christians" as a designation. The term *christianos* is a hybrid word from the Greek translation of Messiah and the Latin suffix *ianos*. This suffix can designate being a soldier or partisan of someone (as in *herodianos*, Mark 3:6), or it can designate being a slave of someone. It occurs but three times in the Bible, never with embarrassment.

It is important to note that it was ascribed to Christians by non-Christians and non-Jews. (Jews would not use the name of the Messiah to describe what they considered a cult.) This fact testifies to the christocentric character of these people, their community, and especially their teaching. There is a symbiotic relationship between any label and its bearer. The actions of the person reflect on the name, and the name affects and reflects on the person. As we bear the name "Christian" today, what we think it means determines who we are. The common misunderstanding of the label makes it a sanctimonious boast. The biblical understanding of the label makes it a reason for humble thanks and sharing.

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

I. If being a Christian means that we claim to act like Christ, then it is a name impossible to bear.
   A. We cannot actually live perfect, loving lives that will make all look upon us and say, "Ah, now there is a Christian." To do so would be impossible.
   B. We can put up a facade of righteousness by keeping people at arm's length and having one *persona* in the street and another in the bedroom. We may even reinforce our masks

with sanctimonious criticism of others whose masks have slipped or cracked. To do so would be tragic.

C. We can refrain from bearing the name in fear of being accused of hypocrisy or in fear of having great things demanded of us. We can "try to be Christians" or "try to be good Christians" as a more achievable goal—anything but audaciously calling ourselves Christians. To do so would be common.

II. If being a Christian means that we claim that Christ has acted for us, then it is a name impossible not to bear.

A. We can let the facade drop, knowing that Christ will uphold the frail person under the facade. To do so is a relief.

B. We can confess our unworthiness, admitting that we are no better than anyone else and deserve death, yet knowing that Christ has paid the penalty for us. To do so is telling the truth.

C. Like never before, we can strive to do good, to spread the gospel, to visit the lonely, to help the weak, and to fight temptation, knowing that we can survive our failures because of Christ's success. To do so is having a purpose.

Philip T.R. Spomer
Waterloo, Iowa

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 12, 1991

Acts 1:15-26

Most Bible students can readily identify Matthias as the man who replaced Judas Iscariot as apostle. Few, however, have given careful thought to the reasons for this replacement. More than mere practical considerations were involved. Peter clearly perceived that an essential spiritual imperative existed to maintain "the twelve." Judas had been part (verse 17) of a specific and divinely called group of witnesses whose number reflected the Savior's claim upon the twelve tribes, the whole Israel. In order to reaffirm this commitment, which was highlighted in a predictive way even in the Psalms of David (verse 20), Peter emphasized to the brethren the urgency ("must" in verse 22) of selecting another "witness to His resurrection" (verse 22). Their confidence was that God, as always, would provide what was needed (verse 25).

The goal of the sermon outlined below is to emphasize that a certain evangelical urgency accompanies everything that God equips His people to do, as confirmed even in the selection of a new apostle to

replace Judas. The problem is that too often we fail to grasp this urgency and do not fully recognize how it colors everything that God desires for His own. The means to the goal is the grace-inspired confidence that the Lord's plans and actions are always motivated by love and that He empowers His people to be part of these plans.

Introduction: Most of us would probably not be flattered if someone said to us, "You sure have a one-track mind!" For some reason we do not consider it particularly desirable to be known as people who are totally occupied with one certain pursuit. Yet from a spiritual viewpoint preoccupation is highly desirable. In fact, our God's intense preoccupation with the proclamation of the gospel, in accordance with His gracious one-track mind, truly effects our salvation. Everything the Lord does contributes to the progress of His gospel. Even the selection of another man to replace Judas as apostle, while superficially seeming to be of no major significance, reveals a God for whom everything has an evangelical importance. In the choosing of Matthias we note this theme:

CHANGING A WITNESS AND KEEPING THE TRUTH

I. The selection fulfilled the Scripture.
   A. It verified the "mouth of David" (verse 16).
      1. Judas' position would be vacated (Psalm 69:25).
      2. Judas' office would be filled (Psalm 109:8).
   B. It supported the observation of Jesus regarding Judas (Matthew 26:24).
II. The selection continued the ministry.
   A. It identified the nature of an apostle.
      1. The replacement was to be someone who had accompanied the other apostles during the whole ministry of Jesus (verses 21-22).
      2. The replacement was to be someone who was a "witness to His resurrection" (verse 22).
   B. It completed the whole number of called witnesses (verse 25).
      1. The work of proclamation was just beginning.
      2. The need for qualified proclaimers was growing.
         a. God would not be stopped by a disciple's betrayal and death.
         b. God has work to do and will let nothing deter Him.

Transition: By bringing the number of apostles back to "full strength," the Lord was proving that His purpose and truth remained unchanged. He urgently desired that His people might understand His persistence.

III. The selection emphasized the gospel.
  A. It reaffirmed God's love for Israel.
    1. The twelve would offer His forgiving grace to the entire "twelve tribes."
    2. The twelve would represent His renewed commitment even to those who crucified Him, His own people.
  B. It proclaimed the persistence of God's unchanging compassion.

Conclusion: The replacement of Judas as apostle should never be viewed as just another story in the progress of biblical history. The changing of a witness shows with great effect how committed our Lord is to the unchanging truth that His forgiving grace "must" (verse 22) be proclaimed to all, even to the whole people of Israel. It is strengthening to know that we can never overemphasize the Savior's urgent desire to keep the ministry moving and the gospel growing in every heart, including our own.

David E. Seybold
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

WHITSUNDAY
THE FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST

May 19, 1991

Acts 2:22-36

Pentecost is an exciting and extremely important occasion in our church year. The preacher, however, may approach preparation of that day's sermon with some trepidation. The charismatic movement, along with other novel ideas concerning the Holy Spirit's place and work contrary to orthodox theology, make it all the more necessary to proclaim the biblical message of Pentecost boldly and clearly. This lesson fits very nicely with the gospel of the day, in which Jesus says: "From deep within the person who believes in Me streams of living water will flow" (John 7:38). As Ylvisaker comments concerning the believer: "Not only shall his own thirst be quenched and find everlasting satisfaction in the Spirit, but he shall impart this blessed gift also to others" (*Harmony*, p. 378). This is exactly what Peter sought to do in the sermon which forms the epistle—to glorify Jesus in a message filled with christological kerygma. To testify concerning Jesus is, after all, the primary work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-14).

The goal of the sermon outlined below is that the hearer would be assured and encouraged by the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is both Lord and Christ. The malady is that the hearer can become discouraged because of a false view of who Christ really is, which tears at the base of God's message of salvation to mankind. The means is the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the word, who leads us to repentance and trust in Jesus as Messiah and Lord.

Introduction: Who is He? Who is Jesus? That question has been asked by people ever since He walked among us. Even today articles, books, and Hollywood films have been produced which address the question: Who is Jesus? Almost all agree that He is an influential and important figure in the history of the world; His presence has left an everlasting imprint on the pages of our past. But just who is He? Was He just a man, albeit a great one? Was He merely a great teacher? Was He just another charismatic religious leader among many in the world's history?

The answer is in today's epistle. On Pentecost, when we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the early Christian Church, we find that the Spirit, as Jesus had promised, testified concerning Him. Pentecost gives us an opportunity to see the power and the work of the Holy Spirit in the church through Peter's bold witness. Today we see the testimony of the Spirit as Peter addresses this question:

WHO IS JESUS OF NAZARETH?

I. Jesus the Man.
   A. He was a man who lived among us (verse 22a) and experienced life as we do.
      1. He was tempted as we are.
      2. He felt human feelings and emotions as we do.
   B. Yet He was a man "whom God commanded" (verse 22b).
      1. He performed many "miracles, wonderful proofs, and miraculous signs."
         a. They were well known by all. His fame had spread.
         b. They were worked by God.
      2. The mighty works that Jesus did were signs that the awaited Messiah (Anointed One) had come.

Transition: We can see that Jesus was not an ordinary man, nor merely an extraordinary man. Jesus was *the* man, God's own Son, whom God had chosen for a special purpose.

II. Jesus—Lord and Christ.
   A. The Jews were looking for another kind of Messiah.

1. They were hoping for a mighty king who would lead them into prosperity.
2. We must be careful not to try to package Jesus and His message in order to suit ourselves.

B. His message was rejected by the Jews (verse 23).
1. They put Him to death.
2. We, too, are guilty of rejecting the Messiah when we fail to look to Him for forgiveness.

C. Yet in the resurrection God proved that Jesus is the Christ (verse 24).
1. He freed Him from the power of death.
2. His resurrection had been foretold by David (verse 25).

D. God proved that Jesus is Lord (verse 33).
1. He was raised to God's right hand to take up the rulership of the world.
2. His exaltation had been foretold by David (verses 34-35).

Conclusion: In view of what we know of Jesus by the power of the Spirit, our reaction should be like that of many of the Jews who heard Peter's message—repentance and trust in Jesus as Lord and Christ. Then we can also rejoice in the personal implications of His joyous confession: "I saw the Lord always before Me. Because He is at My right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore My heart is glad and My tongue rejoices: My body also will live in hope. . ." (verses 25-28). We see here who Jesus really is: Jesus is more than merely an excellent teacher or a charismatic religious leader. God made Him who is also man to be both Lord and Christ (verse 36) for us. This is the message of the Holy Spirit; this is the message of Pentecost. We can confidently look to Him and His cross in all assurance of the forgiveness of sins.

D.L. Rutt
St. James, Minnesota

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
THE FESTIVAL OF THE HOLY TRINITY

May 26, 1991

Romans 8:14-17

In Romans 8 St. Paul characterizes the life of one who has been justified by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith (a justification clearly described in the previous chapters) as a life that is led by the Spirit. Such a life stands in stark contrast to a life in which the sinful flesh is in control (cf. verses 5-13). In the text Paul seems to be giving

us motivation to live this life in the Spirit. In a sense he is saying, "Remember, after all, who you are? You are God's own child, chosen and adopted by Him as a son. One day you will inherit all He has!"

These words are a shot in the arm to Christians who daily struggle with living a Spirit-directed life. In the face of a sinful nature that competes for control of our lives and often wins out (Romans 7:7ff.; 8:12,13), enslavement to fear as we allow the law to condemn us (verse 15), and a world where the righteous suffer (verse 17b), we take comfort in knowing that we belong to God's family by His choice and His action. As a commentary on this text Paul's words in Galatians 3:26-4:7 should be read.

Introduction: "Every child, a wanted child" is a slogan that is used (with varying points of reference) on both sides of the abortion debate today. All would agree, however, that all children should be loved and wanted. It is a need that children have and one that parents have instilled within them by God to provide. St. Paul tells us Christians that we are children of God. It is wonderful to personalize and to know the certainty of this saying:

GOD'S CHILD, A WANTED CHILD

I. At one time we were slaves who were outside God's family.
   A. We were bound by the sinful flesh (verses 5-13).
   B. We were bound by the fear of God and threats of the law (verse 15).
   C. The desire to return to this life of slavery is an urge we must fight daily.

II. We have received the "Spirit of adoption."
   A. Adoption is often viewed today as a "last resort" method of entering a family.
      1. Those who are adopted may feel like second-class children.
      2. The thought is sometimes this: "They just wanted a child; they did not want *me*!"
   B. But adoption should be viewed positively.
      1. An adopted child is one whom the parent usually knows beforehand and wants in paticular.
      2. An adopted child is chosen because he is already loved, not simply because he is available.
   C. God adopted us in love (Ephesians 1:4,5).
      1. He knew and chose us from eternity (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:29,30).
      2. He paid the ransom price and declared us to be His (Romans 3:24).

3. He sent His Spirit into our hearts to confirm the fact that we are His (verse 16; Galatians 4:6; He called us to faith).

III. As sons we belong in God's family.
   A. Sons are free.
      1. We are led by God's Spirit and so are no longer slaves without purpose and hope in life.
      2. We are led by God's Spirit in a life of God-pleasing service to God and others.
      3. Our spirit finds joy and purpose in such living.
   B. Sons enjoy all the rights and privileges of sonship.
      1. God is a dear Father ("Abba") who does not grow weary of our crying (cf. Jesus' intimate use of "Abba" in Mark 14:36).
      2. At the end of our suffering for Christ's sake here on earth, we will inherit all that is God's (verse 17).

Conclusion: As Jesus, our substitute and Savior, is God's Son, so we by God's choice and redemption are privileged to be called "God's child." God wants us! Thus, we live now by the power of the Holy Spirit and willingly suffer for the sake of our Brother Jesus, and at the end of this life we shall finally arrive in the glorious home of our Father.

Paul E. Cloeter
Bessemer, Michigan

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 2, 1991

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

Some key words in the text are these: "light," "shine," "darkness," "show," "face," "manifest." These words and the Genesis quotation (Genesis 1:3) are an extension of a theme that runs throughout the early chapters of 2 Corinthians—that Paul's ministry is based on the gospel of Jesus and not on himself. The reason why some did not believe was that a veil covered their minds (3:15) whenever they read the law of Moses. Some are still under the veil because the god of this world has blinded their mind (4:4). That veil is removed only by God (4:6).

Introduction: It is very often difficult to understand the blindness of human beings, sometimes even religious ones. Imagine people, religious people, taking Jesus and nailing Him to a cross! How could people who tried to keep God's law so thoroughly turn on the one who

loved them? How blind could they be? What if we had been there? Would we have done the same thing? How blind would *we* be? Knowing that we are sinners just as they were should lead us to an honest search for the truth about ourselves and about our God. So we pray:

LET THERE BE LIGHT

I. Paul's concern was that the Corinthians were rejecting the gospel of Jesus.
   A. In rejecting Paul they were rejecting the gospel he preached.
   B. Paul did not "doctor" the gospel to make it acceptable (4:2,3).
   C. Rejection came from the god of this world (4:4).
   D. The gospel treasure comes in an earthly vessel for a reason (4:7-12).

II. Concern about the acceptance of the gospel of Jesus among us is real.
   A. Christians do believe that Jesus is the Savior or they would not be Christians.
   B. Christians still often have something of a veil over their eyes.
      1. They still believe they must measure up to some standards to be acceptable to God (3:15-17).
      2. They still rely on the force of the law to achieve Christian behavior (3:17).
   C. Christians often fail to see themselves in the mirror of Jesus (3:18).

III. God says: "Let there be light!"
   A. God has not stopped providing light.
      1. God created and still gives physical light (4:6).
      2. God also gives spiritual light to human hearts (4:6).
   B. God provides light through the face of Jesus (4:6).
      1. When we see Jesus, we see God's glory.
      2. When we see Jesus, we see what God made us to be (3:18).
   C. God's light in us shines on others.
      1. God is revealed in our weakness (4:7).
      2. The life of Jesus is seen in our suffering (4:10,11).

Conclusion: The children sing, "This little gospel light of mine, I will let it shine." But sometimes a veil keeps people from seeing the gospel. That veil is self-righteousness, the belief that one can measure up to God's expectations by means of one's own achievements. But when God shines in your heart (with the mercy of Jesus), you in turn will reflect that light and others will see the power of God and Jesus in you.

David Schlie
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 9, 1991

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

The goal of the sermon outlined below is to bring Christians to view present afflictions in an eternal perspective. The malady is that we get bogged down by the "troubles" (verse 17, NIV) of this life and our "wasting away" (verse 16, NIV) toward death. The means to the goal is living in the hope of the resurrection, what Christ has done—and is doing—and will do for, in, and to us.

Introduction: Have you ever been intently engaged in listening to a joke, only to have the person telling it forget the punch-line? How disappointing! Forgetting the punch-line not only renders the entire story pointless; it deflates any chance of humor. The whole thing is a waste. Do we forget the "punch-line" of our Christian lives? In the midst of the very real "afflictions" and "decay" that we experience, do we "lose heart" because we have forgotten the eternal end-of-the-story in store for us? Does everything seem to be a waste? Affliction and decay, trouble and turmoil are all easier to bear when we look at them in proper perspective:

THE RESURRECTION PERSPECTIVE

I. Troubles and wasting away are real and present problems in our lives as they were in Paul's.
   A. We can neither avoid nor deny their presence.
      1. The troubles of illness, family strife, job stress, unemployment, financial woes.
      2. The wasting away of our bodies as we approach the inevitable death that awaits us all.
   B. But these are never excuses to lose hope, to be "down on life."
      1. Sometimes we look at life through cynical, negative, downcast eyes. Do you find yourself cursing the dead ends of disorder and chaos of your existence? Do you ever dread the start of a new day? Do you fear your coming death?
      2. Having lost the resurrection perspective, the "punch-line" of our lives, we may even lose the divine perspective, and push God out among the peripheral concerns of life, since He apparently has nothing to offer, no visible solution to our wasting away.

C. Paul and his fellow servants of the gospel suffered great "troubles" because of the ministry to which Christ had called them.
   1. They were beaten, stoned, imprisoned, pursued, left for dead, etc.
   2. Yet they kept up their ministry with persistence and joy. Why?

II. With Paul we view troubles and wasting away in the resurrection perspective.
   A. Paul considered the present good that was resulting from the troubles which he suffered (verse 15).
      1. Through the ministry of Paul and his fellow sufferers the gospel was reaching more and more people (verse 15).
      2. God is able to transform the worst that life can throw at us into great blessing. Do you believe this? As we decay outwardly, our inner nature is daily renewed. God is at work not only in our lives, but also in our very selves (verse 16).
      3. The affliction of Christ—specifically His cross—has brought us the greatest blessing—forgiveness and eternal life. The blessing of eternal life is ours now. The resurrection is at work in us now (Romans 6:1-11).
   B. Paul considered the "eternal weight of glory" which was in store for him, his hearers, and for us (verse 17).
      1. In the resurrection perspective we see our end, not in the present decay, but in the reality of our own resurrection. He who raised Jesus will raise us as well (verse 14).
      2. In the resurrection perspective we endure our afflictions, knowing that our Lord has prepared for us a rest beyond all affliction, suffering, loss, grief, and loneliness. In this light troubles are momentary, and wasting away is temporary, not terminal.
      3. The resurrection, however, is not just a carrot on a stick to impel us to "keep on going"; it means that Christ is at work within us, leading us to eternal glory.

Conclusion: The resurrection provides us with the punch-line of our lives. Our troubles are real, painful, and at times seemingly insurmountable. But the greater reality is not these things that we cannot but see, but rather the blessings of Christ that we see only by faith—His renewing work within us and the eternal glory He has prepared for us.

Michael A. Schmid
Manchester, Iowa

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 16, 1991

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Our Lord Jesus Himself established the paradigm of the Christian life. "Whoever finds his life will lose it." Here Christ marks out for us what has ever since been the Christian's battle cry. He looks beyond the boundaries of this life to that life which is to come. Many are the examples which Jesus gives of those enraptured by the world: The rich fool, the would-be disciples who demanded first to conclude various tasks, the man who did not "hate his own life," those who "treasured to themselves treasures on earth," and many others. These Christ puts on display as those who have become so enraptured by pleasures temporal (i.e., wealth, prestige, worldly knowledge, sinful associations, etc.) that they have lost sight of things eternal.

Jesus' call allows the disciple no fleshly latitude. Business, family, pride, and self all become secondary as the Lord and His kingdom assume their rightful primacy. The Christian's life-vision is therefore myopic. He looks not toward the accomplishments and glories of this life but instead toward the glory which is to be revealed, which "neither eye has seen nor ear has heard nor has it entered into the hearts of men." In this perspective he makes his life's decisions, wary of ever growing too comfortable with the world and knowing that soon he must leave it for that life to come which is "very much better."

To those of the world, the Christian must seem to have an unhealthy perspective on life. Death is thought to consume his attention to such an extent that life is forgotten. Paul, on the other hand, shows that our approach to this life is enhanced by and inextricably connected with our understanding of that life which is to come. It is because we long to "be clothed with our heavenly tent" that we can live life here and now in this "earthly tent." It is because we look to the "swallowing up of mortality" by life that we can "walk by faith and not by sight."

For this reason, a Christian is not one who allows the end to justify the means in family, society, church, conscience, or anywhere else. The ultimate victory, his eternal victory, has been completed. As Christ through His bloody sacrifice has made the Christian's salvation one in which he sits passively, awaiting reunion with his Savior, so also the Christian does not attempt to supplant his Savior elsewhere in his life. "We walk by faith." This means that divine teachings, life situations, world events, personal conflicts, church conflicts, and whatever else on which the flesh may wish to impose its own designs are left in the hands of the one who asks us to "walk

by faith." No man except the Lord wields the influence that he thinks he does. God sits in His heaven and laughs at human machinations. The Christian walks by faith.

Introduction: St. Paul had every reason for longing to be clothed with immortality. He suffered from beatings, wild animals, shipwrecks, stonings, and the fatigue of long journeys. He speaks of this longing to the Philippians, ultimately recognizing that for the moment he must remain in this life. We too often long to be "apart from the body" and to be clothed with our heavenly tent, immortality. It is this very longing, this inward groaning, that allows us to live this life not by sight, as does the world, but by faith.

WALK BY FAITH

I. A Christian walks by faith, understanding his mortal condition.
   A. It is a condition which is merely temporal.
   B. It is a condition from which he longs to depart.
   C. It is a condition in which God's gifts support and sustain him.
II. A Christian walks by faith trusting Christ's salvation.
   A. Christ's salvation gives the hope of eternal bliss.
   B. Christ's salvation frees us for a life by faith, not sight.

Conclusion: For Paul, as for us, life was often exceedingly difficult. We can feel his pangs as he speaks of "longing to be clothed with immortality." But it is just that longing and the recognition of its inevitable fulfillment that allows the Christian to live life to its very fullest as he walks by faith.

James C. Strawn
Green Meadow, Minnesota

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 23, 1991

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

In giving a rationale for his ministry, Paul magnificently throws open the gospel door. In one fell swoop, he covers both objective and subjective justification and at the same time gives the key to sanctification—the incalculably powerful motivation of the love of Christ. The "therefore all died" of verse 14 seems best understood as a clarification of "He died for all," a statement of objective justification, as in verse 19 Paul states that "God was reconciling the

world to Himself in Christ." Paul's autobiographical presentation here is a compelling testimony, a dynamic model, and a moving appeal.

The problem (the malady) we face is a "worldy view" (verse 10), putting divine concerns on a par with natural human concerns in daily life. We need a transformation of the mind (the goal of the sermon outlined below) to see and live life in God's perspective. Such a life is precisely what the Holy Spirit gives when He transforms us through the bold good news of Jesus Christ (the means). We become a new creation; we are given a new motivation, and we adopt new behavior.

Introduction: "Would you please turn down that terrible noise!"—a father yells at his son by the stereo. Father and son seem to hold different points of view on the merits of rock and roll. This difference is not surprising. Did you ever see two economists interpret the GNP in the same way or two philosophers agree on the ultimate questions of life? What is your point of view? Your viewpoint on various matters may be quite interesting, but your viewpoint on spiritual matters is crucial. Today St. Paul challenges you to examine your point of view: Is it worldy or biblical? Paul personally experienced a change of viewpoint.

WHAT IS YOUR POINT OF VIEW?

I. What is your view of Christ?
   A. The worldly view (verse 16b).
      1. Christ was a manipulated, but magnetic leader; we are not interested in Him.
      2. Christ was a "flakey fake."
         a. He was accused of blasphemy at His trial.
         b. Paul thought he was doing God a favor by persecuting this man's followers.
         c. The modern idea is that Jesus was just another guru with no answers.
   B. The biblical view.
      1. Christ is the agent of love (verse 17; John 3:16).
      2. Christ is the means of love—in the "great exchange" (verse 21).
      3. Christ is the motivation to love (verse 14).

II. What is your view of yourself?
   A. The worldly view.
      1. All of life is to serve number one—me!
      2. I am angry with God, and I think the feeling is mutual.
   B. The biblical view.

1. Love was God's initiative (Romans 5:8).
2. I have been made a new person (verses 14b, 15b, 18a).
3. Now I live for Him (verse 15c).

III. What is your view of others?

A. The worldly view.
   1. Other people are valuable—as they benefit me.
   2. Therefore I use and abuse others [one can give examples].

B. The biblical view.
   1. Others are objects too—of God's love (verses 19, 20).
   2. I am an ambassador of Christ to others (verse 20).
   3. The same loving message applies to others—reconciliation with God (verse 20).

Conclusion: Paul is engaging in no purely academic debate between merely theoretical points of view. He is asserting that your point of view is either deadly or indicative of a powerful new life. God is appealing to you today through me, Christ's ambassador: Be reconciled to God through Christ! This appeal is the passionate plea of the powerful love of Jesus. Made new by His love, you will also say: Christ's love compels me to love!

Lloyd J. Strelow
Tustin, California

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 30, 1991

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14

One of the unique developments of American religious life in recent decades has been the willingness of people to send millions of dollars to appeals by television evangelists of the electronic church. Much of this money has been misspent. It is important for Christians to be cautious that the monies they give are really and truly supporting the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul was asking funds for a very legitimate cause, aiding the suffering brethren in Jerusalem.

Both the Old and New Testaments teach the moral truth that God's children should show charity to their fellowmen. In the Old Testament there are many encouragements to be kind to orphans and widows; in fact, God labels it a serious sin to take advantage of the poor and downtrodden of Israel. Even strangers in Israel's midst were to be treated in a kindly way.

The commandment in the Old Testament, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is repeated by Jesus in the New Testament. The account of the Good Samaritan teaches the truth that even enemies are to be loved and helped. Jesus Himself by His many miracles of compassion powerfully demonstrated the virtue of helping the needy.

Introduction: The Apostle Paul, probably the greatest of the apostles, told the Galatian Christians: "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith." In his two Corinthian letters Paul expressed concern for the poor saints of the mother church of Christendom in Jerusalem and called upon the Corinthian Christians to take up an offering for the relief of the suffering Christians of Jerusalem. To give generously and willingly to this special collection was labeled by Paul as a "grace," which the Spirit of God creates in those who have become a new creation in Christ Jesus. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to grow in many Spirit-given graces and one of these graces was generous giving. Today we shall consider first-century apostolic instructions to twentieth-century Christians on this very theme:

THE GRACE OF CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE

I. The occasion for the giving of these instructions.
   A. While the Corinthian congregation had begun this collection, it had not completed it (2 Corinthians 8:1, 11).
   B. Some time had elapsed since the apostle had made his request, and this was his second effort to motivate the Corinthians to finish this collection for a worthy cause (2 Corinthians 8:11).

II. The motives for excelling in the grace of giving.
   A. The example of the Macedonian Christians who gave beyond their means (2 Corinthians 8:1-2).
   B. The need to give themselves wholeheartedly to Christ and God (2 Corinthians 8:5).
   C. The realization that willingness to give is a grace bestowed on believers (2 Corinthians 8:1).
   D. The great example of the sacrificial love of Christ, who though rich became poor to save mankind from everlasting destruction.

III. The method of carrying out the collection and realizing the goal of helping the needy saints of Jerusalem.
   A. Giving should be according to the believer's means (1 Corinthians 16:2).
   B. A systematic method should be followed; on the first day of the week they should contribute to the collection.

IV. The value of following Paul's admonitions.
   A. It would show and bear out Paul's teaching that in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, but all men are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).
   B. The gifts by the Corinthians and others would be a way of showing gratitude for the spiritual blessings that had come from the missionary efforts of the church in Jerusalem. Peter had been active in Corinth.

Conclusion: God expects Christians to help needy and suffering individuals. Christians are, above all, to help people with their spiritual needs. For that purpose Christ instituted the Christian church and commanded its members to make disciples of all nations. To build the kingdom of God on earth requires funds. Although the rationale and methodology of stewardship which Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 8 applied to a special collection for the saints of Jerusalem, the same reasoning may also be applied to the financial support of the program of building the kingdom of God locally, nationally, and internationally today. We dare not forget the command and promise of Christ: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you."

Raymond F. Surburg

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 7, 1991

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Introduction: All of us have heard the phrase, "Into every life a little rain must fall." But we also know that, "When it rains, it pours." And although we are familiar with the saying, "Every rose has its thorns," we sometimes feel like the neglected tomato plant which sits in the midst of an overgrown vegetable garden, choking and turning yellow under the grip of foreign weeds and cruel thistles. Yet ask the elderly veterans of this life—the dear Christian men and women who have been through the mills of life and have graduated from the school of hard knocks—ask them what the trials of life have taught them, and you will hear them tell you that it was the thorns of life which taught them what it means to appreciate and rely totally upon the grace of their loving God. It is a truthful statement that in every life both thorns and grace are to be found:

SUFFICIENT THORNS AND SUFFICIENT GRACE

I. Thorns serve God's purpose in our lives as Christians.
   A. Thorns humble us and show us our inabilities.
      1. We like to think that we are self-reliant and we boast of our wealth, our influence, our health, and our own ability to control the circumstances of our lives.
      2. But problems, trials, and weaknesses beset all of us, and soon our self-reliance fails us and our boasting is turned into humiliation.
   B. Our thorns lead us to contrition before God.
      1. As we face our own weaknesses, we realize that we have failed to live up to our own standards, the standards of others, and, most of all, God's standards.
      2. Our thorns allow us to see the consequences of sin and to admit our failures before God.
   C. Our thorns lead us into submission to God's purpose for our lives.
      1. When trials and problems fill our lives, we often do not understand why they come to us and we ask God to remove them.
      2. Even as God did not remove the thorn of suffering from Paul or from Christ Himself (although each besought God three times to remove the thorn), but rather allowed the thorn to remain so that His purpose might be accomplished, so also God allows thorns in our lives in order that His purpose for us might be accomplished.

II. God's sufficient grace yields fruit in our times of weakness.
   A. As God demonstrates His power and mercy in our weakness, we no longer boast in our strength but in God's grace.
      1. We glory in the fact that our thorns provide God the opportunity to demonstrate His power to work through the circumstances of our lives.
      2. We are grateful and we boast that God is greater than all the forces and failures of our earthly existence.
   B. Our times of weakness teach us to turn to God's mercy and rely upon His grace.
      1. Amidst the trials that test us and the painful thorns which afflict us we learn to lean solely upon the mercies of God, which are new to us each day.
      2. Our thorns teach us that His grace is all that we need.
   C. God's grace motivates us to walk by faith and live in obedience to His divine will.
      1. Daily we are reminded that we are nothing without God and so we walk by faith, knowing that when we are weak He is strong.

2. We live to obey God's will for our lives, knowing that the problems that are born out of our weaknesses yield evidence of our Father's saving favor on our behalf.

Conclusion: Our modern society praises self-reliance as a virtue and through the media lures us into thinking that we can handle any circumstance or challenge that we face in this life by relying on our own strength, sedatives, and successes, until such false hopes begin to fail us. It is then that we realize the inadequacy of our sinful natures, and we see that our strength is really nothing. What our society and our own sinful natures perceive to be weakness we learn to count as strength before God. The longer we live our lives as redeemed children of God, the more we come to see the sufficiency of our thorns to lead us right where God needs us, to the place where He is able to demonstrate His power and mercy. It is then that we realize the sufficiency of His grace to work in our lives, to the glory of His name, both now and forever.

Mark Berg
Crawfordsville, Indiana

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 14, 1991

Ephesians 1:3-14

Introduction: It is very easy in this highly sophisticated age of advanced degrees, skinny bodies, space travel, and computer technology to feel very insignificant and unimportant. We may even seriously question our overall value and worth. Especially in moments of discouragement, when life lets us down and when personal faith grows thin, do we doubt our place in the whole scheme of things. It is then, and especially then, that we need to be reminded of our blessings. In a tremendous doxology of praise Paul calls on us to remember them:

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS FROM HEAVEN ABOVE

I. God has chosen us to be His own.
   A. We were not an afterthought. He chose us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

B. We do not understand the selection process, but we rejoice in our heavenly adoption (chosen in accordance with His pleasure and His glorious grace) (Ephesians 1:5, 6).
C. God had plans to make us more than we could ever dream to be ourselves (chosen to be holy and blameless) (Ephesians 1:4).

II. God has made known to us the secret plan of salvation.
A. Our salvation came at a very high price (we have redemption through His blood) (Ephesians 1:7).
B. Christ our reigning Lord will bring our salvation to completion and on the last day will unite the church on earth with the church in heaven (Ephesians 1:10).

III. He has given us His Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our final redemption.
A. Our faith is evidence of the Spirit's presence (the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts through the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation) (Ephesians 1:13).
B. The Holy Spirit moves us to live for the praise of God's glory (Ephesians 1:14).

Conclusion: In our human weakness we can feel utterly inferior when we compare ourselves to others in terms of worldly accomplishment and acclaim. Yet, when we consider our spiritual blessings in Christ, we are overwhelmed by our standing in His eyes. We are mindful of those timeless spiritual blessings from above in every hour and in every circumstance of life.

Dennis S. Perryman
Acton, Massachusetts

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 21, 1991

Ephesians 2:13-22

Introduction: I can promise to everyone who remains here and listens to this sermon during the following few minutes a rich reward. God will fill your hearts with wealth. One could hardly find a richer text in all of Scripture than Ephesians 2. This must be one of the "Great Chapters" of the Bible. It gives us a portrait of the great work of Christ Jesus. But then it adds the application. No, it goes deeper even than application—it shows how the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ actually begins the "times of the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). It is a portrait of "God's new society or the new

humanity in Christ" [John R.W. Stott]. This text puts everything back together, beginning with what we were, then what Christ has done, and then how this changes us right here and now.

WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE: A PORTRAIT OF BEFORE AND AFTER

I. What was I before (*pote*, "at one time," verse 11)?
   A. Once I was "outside" God's kingdom, "alienated" and "hostile" and a "stranger" to the citizenship and covenant of Israel (verses 11-12).
   B. Then I was "hedged about" with high walls of separation, with a "middle wall of partition" dividing me vertically and horizontally, from God and from others, along both spiritual and racial lines. These nasty dividers, like the former "Berlin Wall," are depictions of the double alienation which we have all experienced (verses 14, 15). (Worthy of consultation is J.R.W. Stott, *God's New Society*; also the description of the walls of the temple in Jerusalem in Josephus, *Antiquities* XV.11.5, and *Wars* V.5.2; cf. the charges against Paul in Acts 21:27-31, that he defiled the temple by bringing in Trophimus; in the early centuries the double reconciliation accomplished by Christ was compared to the two members of the cross—vertical and horizontal.)
   C. Our separated, fragmented lives could only yield to despair (verse 12). Everything that could destroy the fabric of society and of fellowship with God stood against us. William Hendricksen summarizes verses 11-12 in this way: we were Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless, and godless. This was our "wretched state" before Christ (*Lutheran Hymnal* 387, stanza 4).

II. What did Christ do (*nuni de*, "but now," verse 13)?
   A. "You were brought near by the blood of Christ" (verse 13). The "blood" is always the price of the propitiation of God (Romans 3:25; 1 Peter 1:19). God's wrath was appeased by the precious blood of Christ. The vertical hostility was ended.
   B. Peace was preached: Jesus' fleshly offering on the cross made "both one" and made "one new man" (verses 14, 16, 17). We note that it was "in His flesh" and "in His body" that God's judgment was appeased and a reconciliation effected (cf. Romans 8:3; 1 Peter 2:24). Here is a golden treasure which no one should miss.
   C. "We have direct access to the Father by one Spirit" (verse 18). The walls are broken down, the hedges of "commandments of laws of dogmas" have been made impotent by Christ's sacrifice. Nothing, but nothing, now separates us any longer

from God. As in Romans 5:1-2, we have peace through Christ and immediately we enter the heavenly throne room before God.

D. We have hope. In the parallel passage of Colossians 1:27 reference is made to the "riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." What a treasure!

III. What am I now (*ara oun*, "so then," verse 19)?

A. I am reconciled and have a new citizenship (verse 19).

B. I am now God's "new society" (verse 19).

C. I am now the new temple, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Himself being the top-stone (verses 20, 21).

Conclusion: The three stages that make up the portrait presented in Ephesians 2 are clearly distinguished: alienated humanity, the peace-making Christ, and God's new society. An analogy may be helpful; we can view our "before and after" states in this way: Before I was a fragmented wreck—arms, fingers, eyes, ears, feet, hair, all disheveled; my emotions, my desires, my wishes, my thoughts, my efforts, and my strivings were all counterproductive, even contradictory, pulling me in opposite directions. But now something wonderful has happened—by virtue of the Holy Spirit dwelling in me and by virtue of Christ Himself taking possession of my life (through word and sacrament), I am (*qua* Christian) an integrated whole, a new person. The new man in me is the beginning of the restoration of God's new society. Each day as I overcome the old powers and give the new more sway—through faith in Jesus Christ—I am seeing the "restitution of all things" on the way to the world to come.

Waldemar Degner

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 28, 1991

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

Introduction: Benjamin Franklin was a man dedicated to becoming the best person he could be. He developed a list of twelve virtues. He decided that he would work on one each year until he had mastered each one in turn. One day he had a discussion with a Quaker friend:

"Ben, you need number thirteen," the friend told him.

"What's that?" asked the bewildered Franklin.

"Humility!" answered his friend.

At the age of eighty-three Franklin is reported to have said, "I think that I have come to live every one of my virtues perfectly except number thirteen. When I think about how humble I am, I become proud."

It is one thing to become the best person you can be by your own strength. But we shall do well to remember Benjamin Franklin's words and recognize our own limitations. If we are to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (verse 13), as God promises us in this text through the Apostle Paul, we shall have to learn this lesson:

HOW TO BE *MORE* THAN YOU CAN BE

I. Even being *all* you can be is a struggle.
   A. "Make every effort," Paul says in verse 3. In these words we are reminded that, even though we are Christians, saved by Jesus' death and given the hope of eternal life and salvation through His resurrection, we must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
   B. There is one body and one Spirit (verse 4); this unity is a given. But how often we see the body of Christ appearing to be broken and splintered! How often is there a party spirit even in the church!
   C. There is one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But how often we refuse to be under the authority of God! How difficult it is to live constantly in the light of the oneness of God! We choose for ourselves so many other "gods."

II. God calls us to be mature, of full stature, reaching unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.
   A. The words here do not call for us merely to be the best we can be, but to go beyond our own limitations and inclinations.
   B. We are to seek the fullness of Jesus Christ—a tall order indeed. We may consider all that such fullness means: We recall how Jesus obeyed the Father in everything. We remember how Jesus looked to God and trusted in Him in every situation. We recollect how Jesus loved everyone else more than Himself. Such a stature is well beyond our reach, humanly speaking.

III. There is hope for us in God's call because of God's gifts.
   A. He gives us gifts—things we do not deserve, nor can we manufacture them ourselves. These gifts are *graces* from God. They are testimonies of His love and evidence of His good will toward us.

B. He gives us the gifts of His Spirit: the sacrament of baptism, the word of God, the church. The place in which these gifts are given and supported and used is the body of Christ.
C. He gives us leaders who guide us toward Christian unity and spiritual maturity. Pastors, teachers, apostles, prophets, and evangelists all work to bring people to Jesus Christ, to a closer relationship with God, to a more mature and full life in Christ.

IV. There is certain hope for us through Jesus Christ.
A. Jesus is the means of our hope through His perfect life and sacrificial death. Jesus is the root of our hope through His recreating power in our lives.
B. The Holy Spirit brings us to Jesus Christ, and through faith in Him we have a new identity as part of the body of Christ. As such we are fitted together with other Christians into the one body, working together, building one another up in love.

V. Therefore, we have a high calling in Christ, to be more than we could ever be by ourselves.
A. We speak the truth in love. Sinners and saints all of us are. We do not pretend to be more. We do not allow others to be less.
B. We will grow up into Him who is the Head, Christ Jesus. This assertion is not just a calling; it is a promise.
C. From Christ Jesus every part of the body is built up and joined together and grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

Conclusion: We need not be satisfied with being just what we can be—we are too weak and limited for such an existence to be sufficient. No, God calls us to become more than we ourselves can be. He calls us to grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ. He provides for us the means and instruments of the Holy Spirit to do so: His word and sacraments, the church, pastors and other leaders. Through our baptism God begins that process. Through Christ's continual work in us we grow and grow and so become even more than we could ever become ourselves.

David L. Bahn
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 4, 1991

Ephesians 4:17-24

Preaching on the epistles brings us face-to-face with the question of preaching on sanctification. This pericope is no exception. Clearly these verses teach about sanctification. The question we face as preachers is this: What do these verses offer us to use in preaching?

We must recall that this pericope in particular, and this epistle in general, presents itself to us not as sermon material but as didactic material. We preach on the basis of Holy Scripture, not to take what has been written and mimic it in a verbal form, not to provide a commentary to guide the hearer in later study of the written text, but to norm a proclamation of law and gospel by the Scriptures. Preaching is always the proclamation of the voice of Christ in law and gospel. Therefore, though this pericope teaches us about the life of sanctification, the sermon based on it is not bound simply to duplicate and apply a lecture on the sanctified life.

Teaching sanctification is a matter of depicting sanctification, a matter of information, and therefore necessarily a matter of the law. *Preaching* sanctification is not a matter of *depicting* sanctification but of *evoking* sanctification. The reason why a preacher is concerned about evoking sanctification is that he perceives a need to evoke the new life in his hearers. Will information cause this to happen? No, nor is it likely that it is a level of ignorance about sanctification which brings about the perceived lack of sanctification. The law does not "stir up" sanctification, but rather it "stirs up" sin (Romans 7:5; the reaction results from a dynamic quality found within the law itself). It is to the gospel that the preacher must turn with his concerns over the sanctification of his hearers. A text filled with the teaching of sanctification, such as this present one, does not invite a sermonic depiction of sanctification (except as the preacher uses such a depiction to convict the conscience of sin), but rather it challenges the preacher to evoke sanctification through the gospel. The challenge is how to "stir up" his hearers to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24—*eis paroxusmon*, "to encouragement"—characterizing the impact of the message by reference to results). Sanctification happens in the environment of the gospel; it is the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22), not the production of the believer. The preacher must never lose sight of the fact that sanctification is not *the goal* of the gospel, but rather *the result* of the gospel. Therefore, sanctification should be not the purpose, but the result, of preaching. In this light we turn to the pericope from Ephesians 4.

Here St. Paul unpacks the problem we face with the life of sanctification. Certainly there is such a thing as the sanctified life, and it is different from the life of unbelief (verses 7-20). The root problem with the life of unbelief, however, is not the callous outward behavior which we see to be bad (verse 19). Rather, the root of the issue is the reality of darkened minds (verse 17), alienation from the life of God, and hardness of heart (verse 18), all of which belong to the "old nature" (verse 22). In this observation Paul does not simply point the finger at others; he addresses believers and notes that this is "*your* old nature" which still ties the believer to his "former manner of life" and corrupts him through "deceitful lusts" (verse 22).

The solution here is found in Paul's call to a daily activity (verses 22-24) which is patterned, not after some behavioral model, but after the gracious work of God in believers by which they have been translated from the kingdom of the devil into the kingdom of God. Paul uses these verbs to describe this saving activity as an action already completed in our conversion (aorists in verses 22, 24), which has an ongoing, albeit passive, reality in our present struggle against sin (present passive in verse 23—"continually be renewed," which is the consequence of the gospel in our lives). Contextually, we note that this saving activity is tied to holy baptism: "In Him you also, who. . .have believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory" (1:13-14); "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (4:30; 4:5; 5:25-27). Thus, Paul here, as elsewhere, provides clear scriptural warrant for Luther's teaching that the life of sanctification is located in holy baptism: "that the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

In brief, this pericope is not an invitation to pietistic or legalistic preaching about so-called "principles for successful living" (such as "put off; renew; put on"). It provides the opportunity to direct the proclamation of law and gospel so as to have the *purpose* of taking the hearers' eyes off of themselves and their works so as to see Jesus through ~~His cross~~ and through baptism into Him. In turn, this *purpose* will have the *result* that the hearers continue to grow in the life of sanctification (that is, they will respond to life as those who see themselves as having put on the total righteousness of the new man).

In the outline below the last sub-part (II.C.) is not intended as an invitation to teach the dynamics of sanctification to the hearers, but rather, in the light of one's own knowledge of the dynamics of

sanctification, to aim the sermon toward preaching in such a way as to renew the minds of the hearers with the pure grace of the gospel, in the light of which their renewed minds "put on" the new man, thus triggering the dynamics of sanctification within them. In a short conclusion, some explanation about the dynamics of sanctification might be appropriate, so as to encourage the hearers to seek out the mind-renewing gospel all week long.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE LIFE OF GOOD WORKS

I. In us, the life of good works is impossible.
   A. This truth neither Christian nor unbeliever wants to admit.
   B. But all works are corrupted at their source—the sinful nature.
   C. This corruption leaves even believers in their converted state bereft of the life of good works.
II. In Christ, the life of good works comes to us.
   A. Christ is the source and fount of all righteousness, all good works.
   B. We have been plunged into that fount of righteousness in holy baptism.
   C. The life of good works in us is generated as the gospel renews our minds.

Robert Schaibley
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 11, 1991

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Paul divides his letter to the Ephesians into two main sections. In chapters 1-3 Paul reminds his hearers of their blessed membership in the *una sancta*. This section is pure gospel. In chapters 4-6 Paul instructs his hearers in the duties of membership in the *una sancta*. This section of the letter focuses on sanctification and the third use of the law. The transition between the two sections comes in 4:1, "Therefore, walk in the manner worthy of your calling." The sermon text, Ephesians 4:30-5:2, comes in the midst of this discourse on the Christian walk. It is crucial in the interpretation of the text to understand that Paul has already laid the gospel foundation (which both saves and empowers us) before his exhortations to Christian living. Furthermore, in 1:19 and 2:10 Paul talks about the "power" that his hearers received "in Christ." This power is a reference to the

"new man" within us. Paul's treatment of this theme in Romans 6 is helpful background in understanding his exhortation to the Ephesians.

BE IMITATORS OF GOD

I. Remember who you are—God's children.
   A. God has made us (former enemies) into His beloved children through holy baptism (5:1).
   B. He has sealed us in the faith by giving us the gift of His Spirit.
   C. He exhorts us, as a father does his children, to imitate Him.
II. Follow your role model—Christ.
   A. He is our example in imitating God.
      1. He exemplifies faithfulness to the Father.
      2. He exemplifies service to others (4:32; 5:2).
   B. He is our enabler in imitating God.
      1. Through His sacrifice we have received forgiveness for all our past failures in imitating God.
      2. Through His sacrifice we have been reborn as a "new man" who is able to live as God's child (Romans 6).

Conclusion: Our Father in heaven exhorts us to imitate Him in our relationship with others. Paul has instructed us this morning how to do so. He tells us to remember who we are as God's children and to follow our role model Christ, who is our example and enabler. "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Ronald P. May
Walker, Minnesota

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 18, 1991

Ephesians 5:15-20

Introduction: We often take a careless approach to our Christian life. After all, we know we are Christians who believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We understand how He desires us to live. Yet, as we go about the labor of our Christian life, as we become tired and distracted by the other concerns of life, we start thinking to ourselves, "I really don't have to be all that careful how I live my

Christian life, for it really does not matter all that much." We learn from the sermon text, however, that our Christian lives do make the greatest of differences—not necessarily in regards to our own salvation, but in regards to the furthering of the kingdom of God. Therefore, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to strive after the will of God and to be very careful how we live for this reason:

YOU NEVER KNOW

I. You do know, of course, who God is and what the will of God is (verse 17).
   A. Such passages as John 6:35-40, John 4:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:2-5, and Matthew 28:18-19 make it scripturally clear what "the will of the Lord is."
   B. Such passages as 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and the verses of the sermon text are to be understood in this context. Therefore, God's will for our lives is that we should be witnesses to His gospel, not only through our words, but also through the actions (the attitude and behavior) of our lives.

II. Others, however, may know neither who God is nor who you are.
   A. So often in our Christian lives we act as secret agents; that is, through our attitude and behavior we make it very difficult for those around us, even to suspect our true identity as redeemed Christians.
   B. Whenever we act in this way, the effects can be devastating, not necessarily upon us (for we have complete forgiveness in Christ), but upon those around us, since our careless behavior hides and obscures the gospel which they so desperately need for their lives (Romans 6:1).
   C. The attitude and behavior of our Christian lives are very important, since the Holy Spirit, working through our lives, leads others toward hearing and believing the gospel (1 Timothy 2:2-5).

III. You never know how you may affect those who need to know God.
   A. We never know what is going on in the lives of those around us. So many people learn to be "master thespians," hiding the burdens of their lives even though they are "dying" on the inside.
   B. We never know how the actions of our Christian lives positively affect the lives of those around us.
   C. Since our Christian lives can powerfully affect the lives of those around us who still need the knowledge of the Savior, the Holy Spirit will strengthen us (as He forgives us) in our lives as His witnesses (Philippians 2:13).

Conclusion: Your life as an active witness, as a "not-so-secret agent," is of the greatest importance as the Holy Spirit labors through your life to accomplish God's will. You may never know how powerfully the Holy Spirit is working through your life as He empowers you to lead a "careful life" at work, at school, or in your neighborhood. And as you serve your church, you may never know how powerfully the Holy Spirit is working through you as you teach a Sunday school class; serve as a youth counselor, as an usher, or in the nursery; or even as you make an effort to greet that person next to you whom you do not know.

Karl W. Haeussler
Carmel, Indiana

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 25, 1991

Ephesians 5:21-31

The primary question facing the preacher in chapter 5 of Ephesians is the relationship of verse 21 to its context. Is this verse the summary of the preceding section on the relationship of Christians to one another in the church? Lenski and Stoeckhardt affirm this position. Or, on the other hand, does verse 21 introduce the following section on the relationship of husbands and wives? *Lutheran Worship* presents the pericope in this manner. Both positions reflect, in fact, a proper understanding of the verse. Verse 21 acts as a transitional statement by which Paul moves from the section on relationships in general within a body of Christians to an example of a specific Christian relationship. Verse 21 prohibits us from seeing Paul's words merely as a discourse on the "order of creation"; instead Paul uses the most fundamental and intimate interpersonal relationship as a paradigm for all earthly relationships (as he explains further in the remainder of the epistle; this section is, after all, dubbed "the table of duties").

This text can elicit a two-fold negative response. First, some preachers avoid this text out of fear of offending their hearers. Secondly, some sermons use this text as an opportunity to harangue either the feminist movement or the laziness of husbands. Both of these responses miss the point of the text. Paul instructs us to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." The word "reverence" (*phobos*) brings immediately to mind Luther's explanation of the ten commandments: "We are to fear and love God. . ." This reverence is

only possible through the work of God in our lives. Paul identifies this work as Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross (verse 25, *paradoken huper autes*), the benefits of which are given us in holy baptism (verse 26, *hina auten hagiase katharisas to loutro tou hudatos en remati*). However, the submission of the wife and the husband are not essentially the same: the wife is to submit to the husband as her head, while the husband is to love the wife with a Christ-like love. In summary, Paul speaks of the relationships of believers to one another in terms of service, namely, Christ's service first, which is now carried on in our daily lives as the baptized children of God.

Introduction: Chapter 5 of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians often causes discomfort in its hearers. In it Paul tells us the manner in which we are to serve God in our interpersonal relationships: Wives are to submit to their husbands, and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. In speaking in this way Paul exposes colossal failure on the part of most of us. But the positive note in this text is dominant. Paul tells us of the means through which we are able to attain the goal:

WILLING SUBMISSION

I. Apart from Christ we reject submission to any will but our own.
   A. According to our natural state we cannot submit to Christ in fear and love.
   B. Our relationships apart from God are merely self-serving, manipulative efforts. We are not content with the role in life which God has given us.
   C. By our sinful thoughts, words, and deeds we earn for ourselves the penalty for defiance of God—death.

II. Christ re-creates our relationship with God so we can willingly submit to Him and to one another.
   A. Christ submitted Himself entirely to God's will. His love for us expressed itself in fulfilling the law in our place.
   B. Christ suffered the death penalty for our willing defiance of God and thereby destroyed death forever.
   C. God effects a re-creation of our will through baptism and ushers us into His kingdom.

III. Still, even as Christians, we fail to live in willing submission to one another.
   A. Wives refuse to submit.
   B. Husbands refuse to love.
   C. Yet Christ works continually in our lives through the word and the sacraments so we can fulfill the roles He has given to us.

D. Our sins of defiance are covered up by the robe of Christ's righteousness. God sees us through the cross of Christ as the baptized community redeemed by His Son.

Conclusion: The fact of our status manifests itself in our interpersonal relationships, most fundamentally in marriage. Still we must realize that our status in God's eyes is not determined by our submission to His will; we have failed and continue to fail in this respect. But our situation is based on the sacrifice of Christ and our ingrafting into God's family through baptism, where God has re-created us and made us new beings in Christ. Through this wonderful work of God we are enabled to submit to Christ by submitting to one another through the roles God has established for us.

Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 1, 1991

Ephesians 6:10-20

Some interpreters look at the "armor of God" described in this text as meaning that armor which God Himself wears. As such, to "put on the full armor of God" would then mean that the believer must also exhibit such qualities in order successfully to "take a stand against the devil's schemes." The "belt of truth," for example, would be interpreted as the integrity and honesty which a follower of Christ should show.

The context of this section points to another interpretation. The whole point of verses 10-12 is that we cannot stand against Satan in our own strength, but must depend on the strength of the Lord. Therefore, the "armor of God" is that armor which God supplies for us. The "belt of truth," then, is the truth with which God provides us in His Word.

Introduction: Some years ago at the seminary Dr. George Kraus preached a very memorable sermon. He began by telling us about some new pastors out in the field who were having a very difficult time. Some were becoming discouraged; some were getting "burned out." He told us about one man who became so despondent about himself and his work in the parish that one day he went out into his garage, attached a hose from the exhaust pipe to the inside of his car, turned on the engine, and killed himself.

A few years after I heard this sermon Dr. Kraus himself died of cancer. But what a difference! All the way to the end of his life George Kraus was filled with hope, vitality, and joy in the Lord. What made the difference between these two pastors? Did one of them love the Lord any less or desire to serve Him any less than the other? I have no reason to think so. Were the circumstances in one person's life more overwhelming or difficult than those in the other's? I have no reason to think so. Both pastors wanted to serve the Lord with all their strength, and both were faced with many challenges and struggles which required great strength to overcome. The difference between these two pastors was not in the amount of strength they needed, but in the source from which their strength was supplied.

THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN STRENGTH

I. Satan is out to get us.
   A. In today's text, Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul warns us that we too will need great spiritual strength to survive (Ephesians 6:12).
   B. Satan is out to get us, to wear us down until we are finally so worn out that we shall not be able to resist him any more. He attacks from two fronts.
      1. Satan tempts us to sin. He starts with a simple temptation. We put it aside. It comes again. We resist. Again it comes, when we are not expecting it. Sometimes we give in without realizing it. Sometimes we resist a little longer, but finally our strength gives out.
      2. Satan fills us with guilt and doubts. He then attacks us on the second front with guilt and frustration. We say we are Christians, but we do not act like it. We are not doing the things we know we should be doing. What is wrong with us anyway? And the cycle continues.

II. Jesus gives us strength to stand firm.
   A. Jesus defeated Satan on the cross.
      1. Satan can accuse us no longer.
      2. Satan can force us to do his will no more.
   B. Jesus gives us strength with which to repel Satan's attacks.
      1. The source of our strength is in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10-11).
         a. Paul does not say just, "be strong," but rather, "be strong in the Lord."
         b. Paul does not say, "put on *your* full armor," but rather, "put on the full armor of *God*."
         c. The difference between the two pastors discussed earlier is that one tried to battle Satan's attacks with his own strength. The other realized that he would

never survive in that way and depended instead on the strength of the Lord.

2. We receive God's strength by putting on His armor.
   a. "Put on. . .the belt of [His] truth." We dare not depend on the unsteady truth of man to hold everything together; we shall depend on the firm truth of God in His word.
   b. "Put on. . .the breastplate of [His] righteousness." We dare not depend on our righteousness to protect us; we shall depend on the righteousness of Christ.
   c. "Put on. . .the readiness that comes from the gospel of [His] peace." We dare not wait for our own feelings of peace to share His love; we shall depend on the peace with God which Jesus gives and so share His love with others.
   d. "Put on. . .the shield of faith." We dare not try to work up enough faith on our own to ward off Satan's attacks; we shall thank God for the faith He gave us in baptism and remind ourselves every day of the baptismal promise God made us, and Satan will be unable to touch us.
   e. "Put on. . .the helmet of [His] salvation." We shall cover ourselves with thoughts of trust and joy in the salvation which Jesus gives us.
   f. "Put on. . .the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Above all, we shall use the divine word to defend ourselves and others against Satan's attacks. If the word of God fills our hearts, souls, and minds, we shall be ready for anything Satan can throw at us.

Conclusion: Satan is a powerful adversary, tempting us to sin against God and to doubt our faith. But Satan has been defeated by the cross of Christ. Our salvation is sure. And Jesus has given us God's armor to defend us from Satan's attacks. He truly is the source of Christian strength.

Steve Moser
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THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 8, 1991

James 1:17-27

This Sunday begins a series of four Sundays on which the second lesson is from the Letter of James. This letter, Luther's familiar quotation notwithstanding, urges a vital Christianity characterized by a faith that proves itself alive by good works. There are clear aspects of that emphasis in this text.

James says that by grace the Father chose to give us birth (verse 18, *apokueo*; a less noble use occurs in verse 15) through the word of truth, that is, the gospel. We become, therefore, a kind of firstfruits of all He created. The *aparche* was in the Hebrew Scriptures the first portion of the crop set apart for God; God has set us apart for Himself by giving us spiritual birth.

The word (*logos*) has been introduced and becomes the center of this text. Already it is clear that the word is more than just words to be rationally heard and understood. The word has power to give us life (verse 18), and, when it is planted and grows within us, it has the power to save us (verse 21). The idea of the planted word is reminiscent of the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13) and reminds us that the word has power to enable us to bear fruit.

Therefore, the word must be heard by us, humbly accepted and welcomed by us (*deksasthe*, verse 21). Everything that hinders such receiving of the word must be put away. Clearly this hearing is more than a mental awareness of words formed into sentences. It reminds me of the church's old collect for the word: ". . .grant that we may in such wise hear them [the Holy Scriptures], read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them. . ." Only the Holy Spirit can make such hearing possible for us.

But our hearing can fall short of that goal. Hearing can merely assimilate words and ideas in the mind instead of receiving life and power in the heart. Hearing can be forgetful, failing to remember the vision we have seen of what God has made us to be. Hearing can become a pious end in itself, instead of a powerful means to the end of doing the word in our lives. With such hearing we deceive ourselves (verse 22). This text does not pit hearing and doing against each other; rather it contrasts two kinds of hearing: (1.) the deceptive hearing that leads nowhere and (2.) that hearing which looks into the perfect law that gives freedom to the spiritually newborn and so moves us beyond hearing to doing the word.

What does such doing of the word that flows only from a full, proper hearing of the word look like? James suggests some rather practical things: It keeps a tight rein on our tongues lest our unbridled speaking torpedo our religious profession. It leads us to stand with the Father in looking after the fatherless, the widows, and all who are distressed. It helps us to keep ourselves unstained by the world. Then our religion is pure and faultless and acceptable before God. Here James "rehabilitates" the word *threskeia* (basically meaning the outward expression of religion in ritual, liturgy, and ceremony) by filling it with the meaning of doing the word that is heard. Such doing carries the promise of God's blessing (verse 25).

We can easily imagine what it is that motivated James to write the words in this text. As pastors we see enough of it ourselves: People sit in church services and Bible classes Sunday after Sunday. We assume that they are hearing the word through our words. Yet there is disappointment. When we look at their lives (like our lives), they are not what we would hope them to be. Their (like our) speaking often falls short of Christ-like speech. Their (like our) concerns seem to be centered more on self than on compassion and care for the poor, the needy, the distressed. They (as we) let themselves be too easily stained by the sin of the world around them.

What is the problem? Is it the word we proclaim? Certainly not, says James, and so we say, too. The word is good seed, with all the power of life, growth, fruit, and salvation. So the problem must be with the hearing, even as in the Parable of the Sower the problem was with the soil into which the seed fell. We need in this sermon to think about our hearing. Are our spiritual ears so clogged with the sinful debris of the world that the power of the word cannot get through? Then we need the Holy Spirit to use His gifts anew to correct us and our hearing so the word of the gospel can get through.

When we hear and receive the word fully and properly, when it grows within us, then doing the word will follow. It is important to notice here that this idea is not mere moralism on the part of James. He does not divorce ethical behavior from the power of the word; the former follows from the latter. We need to hear all of this through the word which God has spoken to us in these last times, the word of Jesus Christ (John 1; Hebrews 1).

The goal of the sermon outlined below is to help our hearers hear the word in a way that moves them beyond hearing to doing the word. The malady is our spiritual hearing problem—all the disorders arising from our hearts that keep the power of the word from touching our hearts and changing our lives. The means to the goal is to remember again what our Father has made us to be through the word, to see again what we are through the forgiving, redeeming word of

Jesus Christ, and to call again upon the power of the Holy Spirit to give us ears to hear.

Introduction: We Lutherans are people of the word. We place a high priority on preaching and teaching the word, on hearing and studying the word. But precisely this fact can become a trap for us. Hearing the word can become an end in itself. We can become satisfied with hearing. We can even feel quite religious just for hearing the word. But James warns us that we can be deceiving ourselves. We can be swept into a religion which the Father counts worthless. James suggests that we need to move beyond hearing:

BEYOND HEARING TO DOING

I. Have you heard?
   A. Sometimes with great excitement that question is asked of us: Have you heard?
      1. The enthusiasm of the question peaks our interest. We want to know.
      2. Sometimes the answer does not touch us and our interest fades.
      3. At other times the answer has the power to captivate us. We become quite excited and may even want to do something about it. Here is an example: "Have you heard? The first twenty patrons at the theater tonight will be admitted free!"
   B. Have you heard? The Father has chosen you for new life!
      1. Through the power of His word He has given you spiritual birth (baptism).
      2. By that birth He has dedicated you to Himself, like the special firstfruits of the Hebrew Scriptures.
      3. He has planted within you His word which has the power to make you grow, to save you, to help you bear fruit.
      4. It is the Word, Jesus Christ, who has redeemed you for this new life, the righteous life God desires.

Transition: What a word to hear! Have you heard?

II. We have heard all that before!
   A. It is true. We have heard it all before.
      1. We have heard the words and the sentences with our minds.
      2. We may feel "religious" because we have heard.
      3. But often our hearing does not move us beyond hearing to doing the word.
      4. We do not exhibit the new life and power of the word in our daily conduct.

B. We must confess: We have a spiritual hearing problem.
   1. We can make hearing the word in preaching and teaching an end in itself.
   2. There is much static that interferes with our hearing: our speaking, anger, sin, pride.
   3. We can be forgetful hearers. We see in the mirror of the gospel word what God has made us to be, but we go away and promptly forget who we are.

Transition: We become hearers of the word, but not doers.

III. We need to hear again!
   A. We seek the power of the Holy Spirit to give us ears to hear.
      1. We *are* newborn children of the Father by the power of the word.
      2. This powerful word has been planted in us.
      3. Through the Word, Jesus Christ, we have been saved, forgiven, and empowered for the righteous life God desires.
      4. We need to look again in the mirror of the gospel word and remember who we are.
   B. If we have really *heard*, we will *do* the word.
      1. We will keep a tight rein on our tongues.
      2. We will look after the orphans, the widows, and all who are distressed.
      3. We will keep ourselves unstained by the world.
      4. We will live the righteous life God desires.

Conclusion: Such hearing *and* doing will make our religion the kind the Father accepts as pure and faultless. Such hearing *and* doing carries the promise of the Father's blessing. "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

Sergei S. Koberg
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THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 15, 1991

James 2:1-5, 8-10, 14-18

Today's text, although emphasizing good works, strikes at a much deeper issue. When we consider some individuals to be more worthy than others, we show a failure to believe a gospel that preaches the cross before glory, faith before works. This partiality, which all of us

show to some extent, bears proof of our struggle to believe that we are truly justified by faith and not by works.

Two points ought to be mentioned. The negative particle with the present imperative in verse one indicates a prohibition of an action presently in progress. Also, I follow the opinion (so Lenski; TDNT) that *diakritheti* in verse 4 possesses a middle sense ("be at odds with oneself, doubt") rather than an active sense ("make distinctions").

Introduction: All of us have preferences. Some people like the wildest flavors of ice cream and others like plain vanilla. And distinctions are important: men are not women; adults are not children; and so on. But distinctions as to worth before God have no place for Christians. For this reason James tells us:

LIVE WITHOUT PARTIALITY

I. Because to live with partiality is to deny one's faith.
   A. Sinful partiality considers some people more worthy.
      1. The apostle is speaking to a situation in which a rich man is being given special treatment over a poor man.
      2. We often make value judgments about other people.
      3. Such attitudes are sinful, breaking the second table of the law (verses 8-9). And when the law is broken in even one place, one becomes guilty of sin in general (verse 10).
   B. Partiality by Christians is doing one thing and believing another.
      1. It places contradictions into our own lives (verse 4).
      2. God's entire nature and His dealings with us in law and gospel completely exclude partiality (Romans 2:11). Partiality sends a mixed message to others and causes others to stumble (Romans 2).

II. Because the gospel proclaims the same salvation for all.
   A. For all mankind there is only one salvation.
      1. There is only one Savior for all (John 14:6).
      2. Christ impartially took the sins of all people upon His shoulders.
   B. God forgives us, not on the basis of our worth, but on the basis of Christ's works.
      1. The accomplished work of the cross is an objective truth existing outside of ourselves. Man can take no credit for his salvation.
      2. Together we are all beggars at the same cross. We come equally undeserving, but we leave equally forgiven.
      3. The wonderful message of the gospel invites all of us to believe: "Your sins are forgiven; go in peace." All who believe these words have the same forgiveness.

III. Because to do so is to show our faith by our works.
  A. True faith produces works.
    1. We are saved by faith alone, but we are not saved by a faith that is alone. In effect, faith without works is dead.
    2. Beginning with our baptism, God is continually at work strengthening us for the life we are called to live as Christians.
  B. Being impartial shows others our faith.
    1. James invites the contentious person to show his faith without works (verse 18). He will show his faith by his works.
    2. Impartiality will open doors for us to share the message of our impartial gospel.

Conclusion: In today's text the Apostle James warns us against living with partiality. Why? First, to do so is to deny our faith. Secondly, the gospel proclaims the same salvation to all. Thirdly, as we avoid partiality, our works will be seen by others and will open the doors to giving them too this wonderful message. We urgently pray, therefore, that God would enable us all to live without partiality.

Berton L. Greenway
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THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 22, 1991

James 3:16-4:6

The NIV heading for this pericope is "Two Kinds of Wisdom," although the NIV follows Nestle's twenty-sixth edition by starting the paragraph with verse 13 rather than verse 16. James, in 3:1-12, 14-16 and 4:1-5, gives a picture of a wisdom that is earthly, unspiritual, and of the devil. We note that, as opposed to any ideas of perfectionism, James is confronting such wisdom within the church.

The opposite kind of wisdom, which "comes down from heaven," might well be called "holy wisdom." The Eastern Orthodox churches introduce the liturgical lessons with this cry: "Wisdom! Let us attend." The name of the magnificent Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople affirms that, although true wisdom may well be gained from books or great teachers, wisdom is to be found first and foremost in the church.

James chooses pastoral metaphors like "seed" and "sowing," "fruit" and "harvest." Lest we moralize or look toward human achievement in gaining wisdom, chapter 4 of James emphasizes God's gift of wisdom and man's need for right relations with Him. The word structure in this lesson is worthy of attention. Verse 3:17 begins with the cadence of an epsilon alliteration (a sequence of words with the same primary letter) and then moves to a contrasting double alpha privative (alpha prefixed to an adjective, indicating the negative). Finally, Lenski provides a helpful word study contrasting *psychikos* ("worldly," "sensual"—found in James 3:15 and illustrated throughout the pericope) and *pneumatikos* ("spiritual," "divine").

Introduction: It is humiliating when someone says that we have made an *unwise* choice. We like to make *wise* decisions, to do what seems smart to those who are watching us. We want to be seen as possessing, not only knowledge, but also *wisdom.* The Holy Scriptures contain many references to wisdom. However, these writings teach that there are two very different kinds of wisdom. The text, along with passages before and after it, asks the reader this question:

WHAT KIND OF WISDOM DO YOU HAVE?

I. Do you have earthly wisdom?
   A. It is based on falsehood because wrong motives (4:3), pride (4:6), and fleshliness (*psychikē*, 3:15) are based on the lies of the devil rather than on the truth of God's word.
   B. It points to the self. Bitter envy (3:16), selfish ambition (3:16), and boastfulness (3:14) alienate one from God and his neighbor because they seek to take advantage of others to satisfy one's own desires and self-interests.
   C. It is disorderly. Becoming the logical result of selfishness, evil desires (4:1), quarrelsomeness (4:2), and hatefulness go beyond alienation and seek to destroy the very fabric of family, society, and friendship.

Transition: It is the tragedy of man's lost condition since the fall of Adam and Eve that the divine gift of intelligence should be perverted to evil uses as it is in *earthly wisdom.* How wonderful it is that God has given us the gift of pure wisdom, holy wisdom. The text refers to it as "wisdom that comes from heaven."

II. Do you have heavenly wisdom?
   A. It is true. Heavenly wisdom working in the Christian brings purity of belief and action (3:17). This wisdom is directed toward God in His absolute purity and righteousness. It is

impartial (3:17), knowing that partiality bases itself on prejudice or self-righteousness rather than on what is right. Also heavenly wisdom is sincere (3:17). Belief is based on what is right, not what is convenient or comfortable.

B. It points to God (heaven). It is yielding or submissive (3:17) to God's good purposes, having a holy flexibility. It is humble (3:13), wanting to give glory to God and honor to others. In a world of personal power and striving, it finds meaning in recognizing where the forgiven sinner stands in relation to his heavenly Father.

C. It is peaceable. It not only loves (3:17) peace, but it strives and works (3:18) for peace, against all of the envy and disruption the world can foster. Also this peacemaking is expressed in mercy (3:17). As I am forgiven, I can forgive others. I can put the best construction on what my neighbor is and does. One can compare the bloody legacy of the French Revolution with the powerful force of non-violence in America's civil rights movement.

III. What kind of wisdom do you (as a Christian) have?

A. Because of the old nature, we still harbor the earthly wisdom, which must be continually beaten back by the holy wisdom which is ours in Christ Jesus.

B. Jesus is our wisdom. His word draws us to Himself, where we are made "wise unto salvation." As the perfect man, the New Adam, He lived according to heavenly wisdom, becoming the blameless sacrifice for our sins, doing for us what we were unable and unwilling to do.

C. In holy baptism we receive the full benefits of Jesus' wisdom and, by faith, are given the power to become the children of God and are promised His Holy Spirit. This Spirit will lead us into all truth, not just the wisdom that leads to salvation, but also the wisdom that gives shape to a godly Christian life, a life of response—in love and gratitude—to what God has done for us.

Conclusion: The Lord has made you "wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Now His holy wisdom works within you, bringing an awareness of your need for greater wisdom and leading you to greater wisdom in His service.

James H. Cavener
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THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 29, 1991

James 4:7-12 (4:13-5:6)

James' question—"Who are you to judge your neighbor?"—reflects his understanding of submission (*hupotassō*, 4:7) to God. Only the "one lawgiver and judge" (4:12; cf. Matthew 9:6; 28:18) ultimately has the authority to judge and delegate His authority to His chosen instruments. Relevant passages are Romans 13:1-2, Hebrews 13:17, and 1 Timothy 2:12. Luther comments: "No one has authority publicly to judge and reprove his neighbor, not even if he has seen him commit a sin, unless he has specifically been given the authority to judge and reprove." Luther's discussion of the Eighth Commandment (*Large Cathechism*) is a superb commentary on who has the authority to judge and a good corrective to the common misuse of this passage to deny even "right judgment" (John 7:24).

Great clarity must obtain when discussing "submission" in our "non-submissive society." However, it must be made clear that lack of submission to those appointed by God is rebellion against God, unless those so appointed are themselves promoting rebellion against God (Acts 4:19-20). So too when we assume authority that has not been given to us, we are "usurping God's judgment and office" (Luther).

Introduction: James asks of us the question, "Who are you to judge your neighbor?" Every Christian must answer this question. Before it can be answered properly the Christian must consider four important scriptural truths.

WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE YOUR NEIGHBOR?

I. Every Christian is subordinate to God.
   A. Each Christian knows that it is his duty "to serve and obey Him."
      1. Because He is our Creator and Preserver.
      2. Because He is our Redeemer (4:12).
      3. Because He is our Sanctifier (4:5, 10).
   B. Each Christian knows that Christ Himself became subordinate.
      1. When He humbled Himself, even unto death, God lifted Him up.
      2. When we humble ourselves, God lifts us up (4:10).

II. Every Christian has a role given by God.
   A. God Himself has established these roles.

1. They are pleasing to Him (4:12).
2. They create and maintain order.
3. They are good for us because God is good (4:11).

B. God has not given everyone the same role.
1. Every Christian is being renewed in the image of God, but in the relationship of male and female women are to be subordinate (1 Timothy 2:11).
2. Every Christian is a holy priest, but not everyone is a pastor (1 Timothy 3:1ff.).
3. Every Christian is confronted with sin, but not everyone has been given authority to judge his neighbor.

III. Every Christian is a sinner before God.
A. We sin against God when we try to usurp God-given authority.
1. We judge the law that protects our neighbor (4:11).
2. We judge the lawgiver who gave the law (4:12).
3. We consider ourselves gods, for we are "usurping [the one true] God's judgment and office."

B. We sin against God when we do not accept our God-given responsibility.
1. We judge the law that requires that order be maintained.
2. We judge the lawgiver who placed us in a position of authority.
3. We consider ourselves gods, for we overrule His rules.

IV. Every Christian has passed from judgment to life (John 3:18).
A. God Himself demands repentance.
1. He calls us to such repentance (4:8-9).
2. He creates this very repentance (4:5).

B. God no longer holds our sins against us (4:6-12).
1. He speaks well of us through the office of the gospel.
2. He desires that we speak well of others through the power of the gospel.

Conclusion: Unless our God-given role demands otherwise, when talking of our neighbor we should "defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything," for we have not been called by God to judge. Unfortunately, because of our rebellious sinful nature, we often usurp God's authority. The good news is that Christ's perfect submission has won us forgiveness for this usurpation and for every other form of rebellion. That news is good news indeed!

Eric Lange
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THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 6, 1991

Hebrews 2:9-11 (12-18)

This epistle reading has little in common with the other readings for this Sunday. The Old Testament and gospel readings speak about marriage. This is the first in a set of readings from the Epistle to the Hebrews which will continue until the Sunday before the end of the church year. Because of this scheme the remaining epistle readings are often unconnected with the other readings. To avoid repetition the preacher is encouraged to study all of these epistle readings and plan the sermon themes for the remaining Sundays in the church year at one time.

This section of Hebrews speaks about the incarnation of Christ our Savior. Hebrews 1:1-8 shows Christ as God's Son and so superior to the angels. Hebrews 2:6-8 is a paraphrase of Psalm 8:4-6. These verses contain some verbal similarities to Genesis 1:26 (the Old Testament reading). In Genesis 1:26 the Creator gives humanity dominion over the world. The Son of Man, however, exercises dominion over the whole universe by virtue of His deity (Daniel 7:13). Yet Hebrews 2:9-18 shows Christ in His state of humiliation as lower than the angels. The incarnate Christ had to become lower than the angels that by His death He might exercise dominion over the universe on behalf of His brethren. Hebrews 3 states that Jesus is greater than Moses. This is the pericope's context.

Christ came as the mediator of the New Testament (*kaine diatheke*—Hebrews 9:15-17). This testament was promised by God in Genesis 15. There God alone, in the form of a smoking firepot, passed through the sundered parts of the animals. God thus brought upon Himself the curse of death. God promised that He would humble Himself and die for sin. If God is to die, He must become human. In the Old Testament the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ was already prophesied. (Relevant statements of Luther can be found in *LW*, 36, p. 38; *LW*, 29, p. 213; *LW*, 27, pp. 264-268; *LW*, 35, p. 84; *LW*, 36, p. 179.) Jesus' death and resurrection are His glory and ours.

Introduction: We are often told today that less is more. Eat lightly—less calories, less cholesterol, and less weight contribute to a more healthy lifestyle. Less is more! The text shows that Jesus' humiliation results in exaltation. So with Jesus—less (humiliation) is more (exaltation)!

LESS IS MORE!

I. Less is more!
   A. Less: Jesus was lower than the angels (verse 9).
      1. As the incarnate Son of God, He is not ashamed to call sinful and imperfect human beings His brethren (verse 11).
      2. He took on Himself human flesh (the seed of Abraham), that He might be like His brethren (verses 16, 17).
      3. He came to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).
   B. More: Jesus is true God (chapter 1).
      1. The name "Jesus" identifies Him as the virgin-born Savior from sin (Matthew 1:21).
      2. He is the only person to have spent His entire life on earth without committing a sin in thought, word, or deed (Hebrews 4:15).
      3. As our sinless high priest, He made reconciliation for the sins of all people (verse 17; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). (Because of the emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness in this text, it might be best to use the introit appointed to this Sunday in the one-year series, which comes from Psalm 32:1-5.)

II. Less is more!
   A. Less: Jesus suffered in His state of humiliation (verse 10).
      1. Jesus was tempted to sin (verse 18; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:1-11).
      2. Human beings succumb to the temptations of Satan and sin by hardening their hearts, by getting unscriptural divorces, by committing adultery, and by tempting others to sin (verse 18; Mark 10:2, 5, 11, 12—the gospel reading).
   B. More: Jesus' suffering has brought exaltation to Himself and help to His sinful and suffering brethren (verse 18).
      1. He helps by making His brethren perfect through the forgiveness of sins which comes to them in word and sacrament (verse 10).
      2. He helps His sanctified brethren say no to sin (verse 11).
      3. He is able to bring His brethren to heavenly glory through His saving grace (verses 9-10; Hebrews 2:7-8).

III. Less is more!
   A. Less: Jesus died!
      1. This is why He was made lower than the angels (verse 9).
      2. Jesus died after suffering hell's full penalty for every sin of each sinful human being (verse 9). He is the propitiation for the sins of all (verse 17).

3. This death is why God had to become incarnate in Christ as He promised in the Old Testament.
4. Jesus' state of humiliation makes Him appear to be less than what He is, true God. Can God be lower than the angels? Can God suffer like a human being? Can God die? Human reason calls such things impossible, for they are seen as lessening God. But such "rational" thoughts must be rejected. Rather, we must firmly believe that Jesus—the incarnate God—did these things in His state of humiliation.

B. More: In Jesus, God has gained the victory for us!
1. Jesus is our perfect and sinless substitute. He did not deserve death (verse 9).
2. He died that He might destroy sin, death, and the devil for us (verses 14, 15).
3. With His death Jesus put His last will and testament into effect. By faith we receive the promised testamentary inheritance of the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, salvation, and the glory of heaven (verses 9-11; Matthew 26:26-28; Hebrews 9:15-17). These blessings are emphasized in the collect of the day and in the gradual.
4. Jesus' death is basic to His glorification and ours (verse 9; 2:7-8, John 12:23-33; 13:31-32; 17:1-5; Philippians 2:5-12).

Conclusion: Jesus is the author (*archēgos*) of our salvation. By His death He authors our resurrection. By His cross He authors our heavenly glory. Because Jesus appeared to be less than the incarnate God in His humiliation, suffering, and death, He is able to give us more than we could otherwise ever hope—the forgiveness of sins and the glory of eternal life as God's righteous sons and daughters. Truly, with Jesus, less is more!

Armand J. Boehme
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THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 13, 1991

Hebrews 3:1-6

What is it that gives Christians the tenacity to persevere in the faith through all trials and tribulations? The answer is Jesus Christ and His trustworthiness as Savior. When we lose confidence in Him, we

also lose sight of our heavenly destination. The absence of faith shifts both attention and confidence to the self, which turns hope, once rooted in God's power and promise, into despondence. The objective of repentance is to return the heart and mind to confidence in the one sent from God to save (the apostle) and intercede (the high priest), Jesus Christ. Confidence built upon His abilities is unshakable.

In the text the writer is addressing Jews tempted to return to the old cultus. The persecution of the Christian faith had made their old covenant look superior to the new testament. As with their fathers, tribulation had confused their memories and made the old days appear better than the new. In actuality, a return to the old cultus would not have been a real return to Moses, for Moses had been a servant in the same household over which Jesus now ruled as Son. This unity between Moses and Jesus meant that a rejection of Jesus would be simultaneously a rejection of Moses. The temptation of the fathers to reject Moses was much like, indeed, the temptation of these Jews to reject Jesus. It was imperative that the believers look to Jesus with even more confidence than the Israelites had put in Moses. Moses had been reliable, but Jesus was even more so, as God incarnate. He transcended Moses in glory—as God's spokesman to the people (apostle) and as an intercessor for the people before God (high priest). To promote our own repentance, therefore, we are encouraged to look at our level of excitement in anticipating the heavenly promised land, in order that we may direct our hearts to confidence in Jesus Christ.

Introduction: Travel is a joy. There is nothing that makes us hum and whistle more than the anticipation of some exciting vacation. Sometimes the thoughts can be as pleasant as the vacation itself. Whatever the tedium of our chores or the hardships we face, the opportunity to "get away from it all" on a wonderful vacation can make such a difference in our capacity to endure. This is the secret of Christian endurance: We are going to take a journey to a place that exceeds any earthly vacation. We are bound for heaven. The very thought of our heavenly future brings joy to our daily lives, enabling us to endure life's threats and trials.

FIX THOSE THOUGHTS ON JESUS

I. How blessed we are when we think much of heaven!
   A. We have every right to relish thoughts of heaven and anxiously anticipate arrival there. The text says Christians even "boast" in such thoughts (3:6).
   B. Our delight stems from the certainty of attaining heaven, and such certainty comes from the reliability of our guide and

leader, Jesus Christ. It is not founded upon our own capacities, but upon the one sent by God.

II. How sad we are when we think little of heaven!
   A. God has, indeed, set before our eyes the evidence of His power and presence.
      1. Delivering us from the kingdom of Satan.
      2. Delivering us in the waters of baptism from the deadly force of sin.
      3. Effecting His testament in favor of us all.
   B. We still wonder if heaven can really be true—this paradise of freedom and eternal rest.
      1. We question if it is worth struggling now for the "possibility" of something greater tomorrow. We look at others and we wonder if our life is truly better.
      2. Doubt stems from thinking that heaven is going to depend upon us, our efforts, and our accomplishments. It is no wonder we lose our enthusiasm for heaven! It is not our doing. God is the one who effects salvation.

III. How sure we are when we think always of Jesus!
   A. We fix those thoughts on Jesus the apostle, who in a way infinitely above Moses of old has been commissioned to deliver His people.
      1. Have we not seen Him open up the pathway to eternal life?
      2. Have we not seen His power, not only in changing water into wine, but also in raising the dead and even rising from the dead Himself?
   B. We fix those thoughts on Jesus the high priest, who in a way infinitely above Moses of old now intercedes for us before God the Father.
      1. Did He not share our burdens, suffer with and for us, and lay down His life in our behalf?
      2. Did He not pray for His weak and weary disciples to keep them from falling?
      3 Did He not pray even for His enemies? Moses prayed for the people and only stayed the wrath of God temporarily. Jesus, as the Son of God, has gained forgiveness for all our sins and has obtained the right to lead us into the heavenly promised land.

John Fiene
Norwalk, Connecticut

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 20, 1991

Hebrews 4:9-16

This pericope encompasses an intriguing transition between the writer's discussion of rest (3:7-4:11) and the high priesthood (4:14-8:6), joined together by the well-known and lofty comparison of God's word to a two-edged sword (verses 12, 13). While any of its three divisions would provide ample material for sermonizing, the challenge here is to deal with these verses as the related whole which they are.

While "sabbath rest" is best understood as the eternal rest prepared by God for His people, it is important that sufficient emphasis be given to the present peace and rest which results from the believer's confidence of salvation. Of the many interpretations which have been given to verses 12 and 13, Luther's understanding (*LW*, 29) of these verses as a portrait of the terrifying and condemning law of God is the most reasonable. Then, as Luther says, "no other refuge is left than that one sanctuary which is Christ, our Priest."

Introduction: People today are searching as they have for centuries—searching for tranquility in a world that seldom affords it. While we are encouraged to look for rest in many different directions, there is only one place where true rest is found. In the gospel of Jesus Christ we find rest, both temporal and eternal. There alone we find rest:

REST FOR THE WEARY

I. All people long for rest.
   A. The anguish of our mortal life drives us to this longing and searching.
      1. Our labors are difficult (verse 9).
      2. Our weaknesses are many (verse 15).
      3. Our sorrows are frequent (verse 16).
   B. We tend to trust in people and things that fail to give us lasting rest.

II. No one deserves rest.
   A. The living word of God exposes sin (verses 12, 13).
      1. No one is exempt from or can hide from the law.
      2. The law judges with absolute equity and power.
   B. Sin deprives of rest (verse 11).
      1. It deprives of both temporal and eternal rest.
      2. It deprives because it is rebellion against God's holy will for our lives.

a. Hardened unbelief and its consequent disobedience deprived the Israelites of rest, both in Canaan and in heaven (3:19; 4:11).
b. This rebellious and unbelieving sinful nature is still a part of each of us.

III. God gives true rest.
A. He gives true rest for the sake of His Son, our high priest (verses 14, 15).
1. On the cross Jesus was offered as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.
2. Through Jesus' sacrifice we are declared the people of God (verse 9) and guaranteed an eternal rest.
B. He gives true rest through the means of grace (verse 16).
1. Through these means the Spirit creates faith, which appropriates Christ's sacrifice and the consequent blessings of rest.
2. When we are nourished regularly by these means in the context of worship, our promised eternal rest fosters within us a peaceful present rest.

Conclusion: By faith in Jesus Christ, our great high priest, we rest each day in the confidence of our eternal rest with Him in heaven.

Peter K. Lange
Concordia, Missouri

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 27, 1991

Hebrews 5:1-10

Introduction: All people of all times feel they have problems that are unique. They feel that their problems can best be understood and helped by "one of their own," a person who has lived the same problems, experienced the same difficulties first-hand. We see this feeling manifested, not only in Alcoholics Anonymous, but also in a seemingly endless and ever growing multitude of self-help groups and religious sects. But in all these groups the quest is the same as it is for all of us. We are all asking the same question:

WHO UNDERSTANDS ME?

I. Can someone really understand us if he does not really know us?

A. Can someone understand us if he does not know our problems?
   1. We know that in the workplace the person who ordinarily does a certain task is the one who is best equipped to locate the problem when something is going wrong and make corrections—as opposed to a manager who has never seen the factory.
   2. The listeners in the text understand that the best one to represent them before God is a person who is subject to the same weakness as they are, a man from amongst themselves.

B. Can someone understand us if he does not know our needs?
   1. The person with the problem is usually not the person with the solution.
   2. When we look to ourselves or we appoint someone to find solutions to our problems, we only end up with more problems.

Transition: Jesus understands us because in His state of humiliation He experienced the temptations and the problems we face. Moreover, He understands us as no one else could since in His state of exaltation He is our great high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

II. Jesus understands us.
   A. He knows our problems better than we know them ourselves.
      1. He has endured the trials and temptations of this life, where we have failed.
      2. He understands the full consequences of sin. (He was forsaken on the cross for us.)
      3. He understands our need to repent.
   B. As the source of our eternal salvation Jesus understands our needs.
      1. He understands our need to be forgiven.
      2. He understands our need to be comforted and strengthened in the faith.
      3. He understands our need to be loving.

Conclusion: It is a lonely feeling when we sense that no one around us understands us. The temptation is great to follow anyone or any group that claims to understand us. But the only one who can really understand us is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Micheal Kroll
Winamac, Indiana

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

November 3, 1991

Hebrews 7:23-28

The mortality (verse 23) and sinfulness (verse 27) of the Levitical priests required consecutive priests and continuing sacrifices. The supremacy of the priesthood of Christ stands out as unique. The Levitical priests died; Christ lives! The Levitical sacrifice was temporary at best; Christ is permanent! "Once for all" (verse 27) is the significant thought in this pericope—one time by one priest, for all mankind for all time. There is nothing else to do. His sacrifice was the final sacrifice.

Christ "meets our need" (verse 28). He meets our need in that He is not only the high priest but also the perfect sacrifice. It is this combination that made His sacrifice sufficient to "save completely" (verse 25). Here "completely" may be understood as fully and hence eternally. Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to save eternally since Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to save fully. Nothing else need be added to it now or ever.

Introduction: What have you done to earn your salvation? Have you done enough? Is there more that you could do? Is there more that you should do? On whom do you depend for your salvation? Do you depend upon your pastor? Do you depend upon your parents? Do you depend upon mankind's self-fulfillment or upon mankind's "coming of age"? These and other questions like them are answered in many different ways by the many different religions that we find around us today. The text this morning points us to the answer to these questions with this assertion: "He sacrificed for their sins once for all, when He offered Himself."

A SACRIFICE SUFFICIENT FOR ALL

I. There is nothing that we can do to save ourselves.
   A. The first question asked by sinful man is this: "Can I be saved?"
      1. I have rejected God.
      2. I have sinned against God and man.
   B. The second question asked by sinful man is this: "What can I do to save myself?"
      1. Can I earn my own salvation?
      2. Can others (pastors, priests) intercede for me?

Transition: Man's knowledge of his sinful condition brings him to this question: "Can I be saved?" The world offers man many ways to save himself, such as works-righteousness, self-transformation, and general human cooperation. But these efforts all fail. They do not bring comfort. Where does man find comfort?

II. Christ's sacrifice is able to save completely.
  A. Christ meets our needs.
    1. He was the perfect sacrifice.
    2. He did that which we are unable to do.
  B. Christ lives forever.
    1. He is there to intercede for sinners now.
    2. He is there to intercede for sinners always.

Transition: We can find our comfort in the knowledge that Christ was the perfect sacrifice and is able to save completely. However, one question remains: Whom is He able to save?

III. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient "for all."
  A. Whom does Christ save?
    1. Those who come to God through Him.
    2. All who come to God through Him.
  B. How does He save? His own blood is a ransom for all.

Conclusion: The law and so too all worldly remedies for salvation are unable to clear the conscience of the worshipper. But "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God." Christ gave Himself up for us, thereby freeing us from the guilt of sin and allowing us to give ourselves up to Him.

Myles R. Schultz
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

THE THIRD-LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR

November 10, 1991

Hebrews 10:11-18

This text is the third in a row concerning Christ as priest. To avoid repetition Pentecost 23 could focus on God's choice of Jesus as priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," Pentecost 24 could focus on Jesus' priestly work of intercession, and this week could focus on the

completed task of Jesus' priesthood, namely, His once-and-for-all sacrifice for sins. This text concentrates on the results of Christ's completed sacrifice.

Many concepts in the text provide unusual ways to proclaim the gospel. The phrase "sacrifice for sins" (verse 12) is a more concrete picture than "atonement" or "redemption." The word "perfected" (verse 14) is not meant as a moral statement, but rather expresses the idea that Christ's sacrifice "brought us to completion," adding to us the imputed righteousness which we lack by nature. Likewise, "those who are sanctified" (verse 14) are not those who lead a holy life but those whom Christ's sacrifice makes holy in God's sight. (We note the passive voice of "sanctified.") The *diatheke* of verse 16 is not a "covenant," but rather a last will and "testament" (cf. Appendix 2 to *God's Word to the Nations*). This translation allows us to emphasize the monergistic grace of God in His promise to forgive. God's promise to "not remember" our sins (verse 17) provides an explanation of "forgiveness" (verse 18). All these terms allow us to preach a justification sermon on Luther's birthday without even using the term "justification."

The malady addressed in the outline below consists in doubts about our forgiveness and attempts to make up for our lawless deeds with something other than the sacrifice of Christ. Satan always tempts us to believe that we must somehow add something to the salvation Jesus purchased for us. The goal is to assure ourselves of forgiveness on the basis of the completed sacrifice of Christ.

Introduction: Lutheran Bible Translator David Drevlow reports that the Vai people of Liberia, Africa, still offer animal sacrifices, even though their Islamic religion does not. Americans usually consider such practices uncivilized. A couple of years ago we heard reports of a drug ring in Mexico that offered human sacrifices to insure the "success" of its members. Most Americans considered them crazy. Yet Jesus' own parents sacrificed two small birds after His birth, and the Book of Hebrews tells of how Jesus Himself offered a human sacrifice. What is it that leads people to make sacrifices? And why do we *not* offer sacrifices any more? The epistle today tells us:

WHERE THERE IS FORGIVENESS,
THERE IS NO LONGER AN OFFERING FOR SIN

I. We needed an offering for sin.
   A. God demanded an offering for sins (e.g., Leviticus 4:3, 13-15; Hebrews 9:22b).
   B. Animal offerings could not in themselves make amends (verse 11).

C. Animal offerings reminded people of the need for amends to be made (Hebrews 10:3-4).

II. Jesus made our offering for sin.
   A. He offered one sacrifice for sin (verse 12a).
   B. His session at God's right hand shows that God accepted this sacrifice (verses 12b-13).
   C. His offering perfected us forever (verse 14a).

III. We no longer need an offering for sin.
   A. Through faith in Jesus we are sanctified (verse 14b).
   B. We have forgiveness.
      1. The Holy Spirit bears witness to this truth in Scripture (verse 15).
      2. God's testament assures us of this truth (verse 16).
      3. He promises not to remember our sins (verse 17).
   C. Therefore we simply remember Jesus' one offering for sin (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).
   D. And there is no longer an offering for sin (verse 18).

Conclusion: Do not waste your time looking for ways to make amends for your sins. Jesus completed the necessary sacrifice for sins, and God says you are forgiven. You are free to use your time usefully, doing good works. You have forgiveness from Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the cross.

Mark Eddy
Shumway, Illinois

THE SECOND-LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR

November 17, 1991

Hebrews 12:1-2

Introduction: Whenever I contemplate the divine message in chapters eleven and twelve of the Letter to the Hebrews, I must admit that I am somewhat taken aback at the analogy drawn for the Christian there. In chapter eleven many of the Old Testament's mighty champions of faith are set out as examples for us to follow. They are a rather exclusive group, to say the least, and yet God would have us imitate their faith in the living out of our own lives. Chapter twelve follows with the advice, "Let us also rid ourselves of every burden and the sin into which we easily fall" (*GWN*). Our struggle is to try to answer God's call despite the continued presence within us of the "old Adam," whose every inclination is to sin. The answer to our dilemma coincides nicely with the liturgical position of the text.

Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith helps us in the race toward our eternal home by this means:

REMOVING THE STUMBLING BLOCKS TO FAITH

I. A faithful race is one begun in Christ.
   A. Trying to run a race without keeping one's eyes on the finish line would be foolish. In the Christian's life sinful pride causes him to look everywhere for shortcuts to the finish instead of faithfully running the course laid before him.
   B. In baptism Christ has planted the seeds of faith and focused our eyes on His kingdom. He is the one that enables us to begin the race in faith that is straight and true. He removes the stumbling block of pride which seeks to direct our attention to the "shortcuts" which our sin would have us follow.

II. A faithful race is one already run by Christ.
   A. Jesus ran the race of faith for us knowing full well the great obstacles which lay before Him. He willingly faced the world's rejection of Him and His own death on the cross in our place in order that we might partake in His victory.
   B. Jesus ran the race for us, so He is aware of the obstacles which we need to avoid. When we stumble and fall, He is the one who refreshes us with His word and His precious body and blood so that we may continue the race.

III. A faithful race is one completed in Christ.
   A. A race begun in faith is only completed through patient endurance. Our eyes must always be focused on the finish line, eternal life with our Lord. It is the joy which is set before us.
   B. A faithful runner will overcome much in order to win the prize. Because Christ dwells in us, we too are equipped to overcome the stumbling blocks of pride, self-reliance, and weakness of the flesh in order to obtain the victory won for us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He gives us the tools of word and sacrament, which give us the strength to run the race successfully.
   C. There is the witness of the Old Testament saints to whom the text refers. They had a great faith, not because of the quantity of faith they possessed, but because of the object of their faith. Their faith was great because it trusted in a great God. They completed their race in faith and received their reward. This is the example God would have us follow.

Conclusion: Are you facing a particular stumbling block in your life that is hindering your faith? Is the race which you have been running

making you weary? Are you using the tools which God has given you to keep your faith on track? Be assured that your Lord knows your every need and stands ready to rescue you from your weariness, refresh you with His word and sacrament, and bring you home to the finish. He gives you the victory so that like the Apostle Paul you may say, "I have fought the good fight; I have completed the race; I have kept the faith. Now there is waiting for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who are longing to see Him come again" (1 Timothy 4:7, 8).

Michael W. Wollman
McFarland, Kansas

THE LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR
THE SUNDAY OF THE FULFILLMENT

November 24, 1991

Revelation 1:4b-8

The text is reproduced here from *The New Testament: God's Word to the Nations* (GWN; Biblion Publishers, Cleveland, 1988) by reason of its informative format as well as diction:

4b. Grace and peace to you from
the One-Who-Is and
the One-Who-Was and
the One-Who-Will-Be,
and from the Seven Spirits who are before His throne,
5. and from Jesus Christ—
He is the faithful witness,
the first of the dead to live again,
and the ruler over the kings of the earth.
To Him who loves us
and by His blood has freed us from our sins
6. and has made us a kingdom, priests to God and His Father—
to Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen

7. Look, He is coming in the clouds,
and every eye will see Him,
even the men who pierced Him,
and all the groups of people on earth will mourn because of Him.
So it will be. Amen.

8. "I am the Alpha and the Omega [the A and Z]," says
God
the Lord,
the One-Who-Is and
the One-Who-Was and
the One-Who-Will-Be,
the Almighty.

While the text spoke in the first instance to the seven churches of Asia (4a), the Holy Spirit speaks also to us in this concise salutation, announcement of theme, and certification of the Book of Revelation. The three-part division is highlighted by the format of GWN, which also stresses the Trinity in verses 4 and 5. The occurrences of *kai* connect the three persons; the Father and the Son each receive three special epithets with the Spirit as the cohesive one joining them together. That the "Seven Spirits" represent the Third Person appears from Isaiah 11:2 and Zechariah 3:9; 4:2; and 4:10b. The differences in the phraseology in the KJV and NIV are noteworthy.

In verse 5 "freed" represents a better reading than "washed" in the KJV. The word translated as "sins" means literally "instances of missing the mark." The "kings of the earth" receive whatever authority they have from Jesus Christ, the king of kings.

In verse 6 "kingdom" involves, not geography, but rather God's active reign in the lives of His people. As priests we have access to the presence of God to bring sacrifices of praise and confession of faith. The Greek phrase translated here as "forever and ever" is literally "the ages of the ages" and is much stronger than the Old Testament Hebrew phrase which the KJV usually renders "forever and ever."

Verse 7 states the theme of the whole Book of Revelation. The phrase "all the groups of people on earth" represents exactly the same Greek words which appear in Matthew 24:30 and means literally "all the tribes of the land." Here the phrase refers to the whole unbelieving element of humanity. In verse 8 Jesus certifies Himself as the center of all things.

Introduction: We call a wheel eccentric when the axle is off center. People living "near the edge" have lives that are off center. When our lives seem most off center, we rejoice in John's call in the Book of Revelation:

KEEP JESUS CENTRAL

I. Jesus is the center of God's language.
   A. Jesus is the center of all the revelation of God.
      1. "My word will accomplish My purposes" (Isaiah 55:10-11).

2. "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14).
3. "I came to fulfill the law" (Matthew 5:17-18).

B. Jesus is "the Alpha and the Omega," the A and Z.
1. Jesus is "the faithful witness."
2. Jesus is the beginning and end of the Book of Revelation (21:6; 22:13).
3. Jesus is the beginning and end of Scripture.
4. Jesus is the beginning and end of revelation in general.

II. Jesus is the center of human history.

A. Jesus is the speaker in verse 8:
"the One-Who-Is and
the One-Who-Was and
the One-Who-Will-Be."
1. He is the eternal God (Exodus 3:14-15).
2. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).
3. As the "Gloria Patri" says, He "was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be."

B. The cross is the central tree of history.
1. There was once a tree of knowledge of good and evil.
2. There will one day be again a tree of life.
3. There is in between the tree of most importance.
a. It is the tree on which hung the one "pierced" by human sin (verse 7; Psalm 22:16; Isaiah 53:5; Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34,37).
b. It is the tree on which hung the one cursed with all the punishments which we deserved (Galatians 3:13).

C. Jesus is "the ruler over the kings of the earth."
1. He is above all rulers and authorities (Ephesians 1:20-21).
2. He is the king of kings (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14).

D. Jesus is coming again to bring an end to this world, "and every eye will see Him" in glory (verse 7).
1. The unbelievers will "mourn."
2. The believers will rejoice.

III. Jesus is the center of God's work.

A. Jesus "by His blood has freed us from our sins."
1. We have missed the mark and moved off center.
2. Jesus has freed us to be on center in our lives once again.

B. Jesus is "the first of the dead to live again."
1. We already live as a holy nation (Exodus 19:6).
2. We already live as a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9).
3. We live to love (in action) (1 John 3:16-18).

Conclusion: Keep Jesus central. He is the center of the revelation of God. He is the center of all history. He is the center of God's work

for you and through you. As one church year ends and another begins, keep Jesus central.

Warren E. Messmann
Fort Wayne, Indiana

APPENDIX

The editors of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* have decided to draw to a close with this issue the publication of complete annual series of homiletical studies. When the *CTQ* began the production of complete series in 1975, the aim was to render the pastors (and so the congregations) of this synod a service which no one else was then providing. The editors hope that the sixteen full years of homiletical studies which have now reached completion have, indeed, been of some assistance to the readers. It is, however, no longer necessary to allocate the same number of pages to sermonic material as during the past decade and a half. Concordia Publishing House has now begun publication of a periodical called *Concordia Pulpit Resources* which the editors here have seen and can highly recommend as dedicated to the same goals as we have had. Indeed, since many of the contributors to this new periodical have been ours for many years, we have no difficulty in extending them fraternal wishes of success in this promising enterprise.

The homiletical program of the last sixteen volumes of the *CTQ* was a joint project, not only of the members of the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, but also of pastors serving in parishes spread throughout this synod. There were even contributions from pastors overseas. We especially remember the late Professor Gerhard Aho, the first homiletical editor of the *CTQ*, who supervised the initiation of the program now reaching completion. He was succeeded by Dr. Donald Deffner, visiting professor in pastoral ministry. During all these years the bulk of the editorial work fell into the capable hands of Professor Douglas Judisch, whose arduous labor and concern for precision are deeply appreciated. None of the contributors or editors received any compensation for their services; this notice will have to serve as the only—and a wholly inadequate—expression of the thanks which is due them. The homiletical studies of the past sixteen years constitute a vast pool of theological wisdom and homiletical experience. Some readers have suggested gathering together some or all of these studies into a special volume. Until such a collection emerges, pastors are, or course, welcome to make photocopies of past issues wherever they may find them available.

David P. Scaer

Book Reviews

CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN DOGMATICS. VOLUME VI: CHRISTOLOGY. By David P. Scaer. Fort Wayne: International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1989.

Hermann Sasse says, "Always it is from the cross that everything is understood, because hidden in the cross is the deepest essence of God's revelation" (*We Confess Jesus Christ*, p. 39). Christology apart from the cross degenerates into abstract speculation. It is from the perspective of the cross that we see Christ's birth, preaching, atonement, resurrection, ascension, and return. Scaer's exposition of the doctrine of Christ is by way of the cross. Justification is reduced to a bloodless theory if it is severed from the reality of the incarnation: "If the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is the center of Christian theology, then Christology is the foundation upon which rests justification and all other articles of faith. Only that doctrine of justification is Christian which is based on the Christology revealed in the New Testament and later confessed in its creeds and councils" (p. 1). It is only through the theology of the cross that Christology "from below" and Christology "from above" rightly converge. Such a perspective informs Scaer's prolegomena in chapter 1, "Christology in the Post-Enlightenment Era." Growing out of this prolegomena is a chapter which summarizes past and present christological controversies. Scaer aptly tells the story of past attempts to pull apart the two natures in Christ, noting how these heresies resurfaced in the Reformed insistence on the *finitum non capax infiniti* in the debate with Luther on the Lord's Supper as well as in the later attempts to split the "Jesus of history" from the "Christ of faith."

One of the most outstanding features of this volume is the author's treatment of Christology in the preaching of Jesus. Evidence for the virgin birth is seen not only in the classic texts that attest to this fact, but also in the words of Jesus Himself (pp. 35-38). Scaer sees the virgin birth as "a sign of divine monergism in the work of conversion" (p. 39). Scaer notes that "the threefold distinction of the offices of Christ as prophet, priest, and king has not been without difficulty in the history of Lutheran theology" (p. 50), yet argues on the basis of Matthew 12 that each of these three offices is expanded and fulfilled by the Lord. In this treatment the author demonstrates his skill as an exegete as well as a systematician.

The death of Christ is set by Scaer within its trinitarian context: "The cross is an affirmation of God's triune essence and not incidental to it. Only when God is thought of in majestic and transcendental categories and not in terms of love and compassion is the cross with its suffering a contradiction or a paradox" (p. 75). The work of atonement is accomplished in Calvary, but Calvary is seen within the framework of the Trinity: "Jesus' death as sacrifice is a Trinitarian

event" (p. 79). It comes as no surprise that Scaer's critique of the "moral example theory of atonement" is thoroughly trinitarian.

Like the crucifixion, the resurrection of Jesus is also seen in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity. Scaer aptly notes: "Christ's resurrection confirms to His followers that His death for sins was necessary and that it was satisfactory atonement offered to God. The resurrected One presents Himself as the One who was crucified and this provides the church with its foundation. The church has no immediate access to the meaning of the death of Christ by crucifixion except through the resurrection" (p. 99). Following Luther and the Formula of Concord, Scaer's exposition of the ascension underscores the fact that the ascension does not strip Christ of His humanity, but rather puts our flesh at the Father's right hand.

The classic catholic and confessional christological vocabulary (the three *genera*) is concisely and helpfully defined. Luther is quoted just often enough to whet the appetite for more. Those desiring a more ample treatment of Luther's Christology should consult Ian Siggins' *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (Yale, 1970) and Norman Nagel's "Martinus: 'Heresy, Doctor Luther, Heresy!' The Person and Work of Christ," in *The Seven-Headed Luther*, edited by Peter Newman Brooks (Oxford, 1983). In the light of Scaer's critique of Calvinism it is interesting that he tilts his hand in favor of a convenantal understanding of the Lord's Supper (p. 73) rather than a testamental one. Dogmatics stands as a servant of pulpit and altar. *Christology* should prove to be a very useful servant as the church continues to confess and proclaim the incarnate Son of God as Savior of the world.

John T. Pless
Minneapolis, Minnesota

DIE THEOLOGIE MARTIN LUTHERS NACH SEINEN PREDIGTEN. By Ulrich Asendorf. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1988.

In exploring the theology of Luther the preacher, this volume by the distinguished founder of the *Lutherakademie* in Ratzeburg, Germany, renders a genuinely ecumenical service. Strange as it may seem, no systematic study of the thirty-odd volumes of Luther's sermons—nearly one third of the Weimar edition—had as yet been undertaken. Monographs on particular themes have, of course, dealt with Luther's sermons, but in tackling this material as a whole, Asendorf has broken significant new ground. While it is to be hoped that an English translation of this book will appear before long, a good sample of Asendorf's method and work in English may be seen in his charming opening contribution to the *Festschrift* of 1985

honoring Robert Preus, *A Lively Legacy*, under the heading, "Luther's Sermons on Advent as a Summary of His Theology."

In our age of shallow sermonizing Luther has much to give us preachers both for our own nourishment and for that of our hearers. The freshness and vigor of Luther's preaching leap up at the reader from virtually every page. One example will have to suffice. Preaching on the gospel for Trinity XVI (concerning the young man of Nain), Luther brings out the resurrecting power of Christ's word: "So those in the cemetery sleep much more lightly than I do in my bed. I could be called ten times and still not hear it. But they are awakened with one word. So we sleep much more soundly than those in the cemetery, for as soon as the Lord calls, 'young man,' or 'young maid,' they hear it at once" (p. 126).

Asendorf does not, however, simply string together a catena of illustrations of Luther's concrete and vivid imagery, in the manner of an anthology. His is rather an incisive *systematic* treatment, which brings out the connections and complexities in Luther's theology. Luther's "theology is itself essentially preaching" (p. 22). But this is nothing to do with the thoughtless cliché that "Luther is no systematician." On the contrary, says Asendorf, "Luther is in fact a systematician of imposing power and consistency" (p. 16).

Ebeling is right in seeing the "*exclusively* christological interpretation as the basic hermeneutical principle" already in Luther's lectures on the Psalms. The "literal sense," therefore, "aims exclusively at Christ" (p. 20). But this assertion does not mean the thin verbalism of a "kerygma" (in Bultmann's sense) divorced from "dogma." On the contrary, the whole trinitarian-christological dogma is the absolutely indispensable presupposition for justification in Luther's sense (pp. 75 ff., *passim*). Moreover, Luther's understanding of preaching as an act of war, whereby Christ presses and imparts His victory here and now, differs *toto caelo* from Barth's false objectivism-universalism, which sees preaching simply as the imparting of information (p. 20).

One-dimensional or even merely paradoxical schemes fail to capture the richness of Luther's grasp of the biblical reality. The gospel as Luther understood it is a multidimensional whole, full of cross-references and dynamic relations among constitutive constants like the Trinity, the two natures, justification, law and gospel, sacraments, and eschatology (p. 16). In other words, textual vividness and concreteness in Luther do not create striking little masterpieces standing in splendid isolation from each other and from the dogmatic whole. Rather, just because "preaching is the preaching of Christ in the eminent sense, therefore every sermon is *in nuce* the entire Holy Scripture" (p. 16).

There is, of course, much more. We close with the simple hope that this work will soon be available in English, and this this sort of serious thinking about preaching will become widespread also among American Lutheran pastors. Only so shall we escape the frightful judgment of a creeping famine of the word, in which preaching and worship are "renewed" to death in a grotesque imitation of pop-entertainment.

Kurt Marquart

THE CONCISE DICTIONARY OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION. Edited by J.D. Douglas, Walter A. Ellwell, and Peter Toon. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989. Hardcover, $19.95.

Many find that dictionary-type reference books can be a blessing in getting definitions or basic information quickly and efficiently. Two of the editors of the volume under review have already proven themselves to be very capable in producing this kind of reference work. J.D. Douglas has edited *The New Bible Dictionary* (Inter-Varsity Press), a resource for biblical studies, and *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Zondervan Publishing House), a resource for studies in church history. Walter Ellwell edited the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker Book House) as an aid in the fields of "systematic theology, historical theology, biblical theology, philosophical theology, and theological ethics." All of these have been excellent theological reference works with entries signed by expert contributors. This new dictionary gives concise, unsigned definitions and descriptions of "nearly three-and-a-half thousand terms and names from the history, the teachings, and the liturgy of the church." One of the goals is to treat "terms and names that are difficult to find in standard dictionaries."

This dictionary does well in achieving its goals. The entries are well chosen and reasonably comprehensive. It is probably impossible to have articles on everything that someone might seek. There is, for example, no entry on tenebrae, the two kingdoms (although there is an entry entitled "Two Swords"), unionism, or hypocrisy. The book is, however, very thorough, and the entries on significant names and events are very good, including coverage of important names connected with the Reformation. Lutheran names and events have not been overlooked. There are, for example, entries on Chemnitz, the Galesburg Rule, Marburg, Muhlenberg, and Walther. The choice of the names included and those excluded might be challenged at some points, but basically the selection is quite good. Although brief (as advertised), the entries often contain significant information about problems, controversies, and other viewpoints regarding the subjects they treat. There is also information about the etymology of theological terms.

Errors in the dictionary include the failure to note that the title "archangel" is exclusively bestowed upon Michael in the Bible and not on Gabriel as is done in extra-biblical literature. The term "consubstantiation" is applied to the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper (as is done in various reference works, such as Peter Angeles' *Dictionary of Christian Theology*, published by Harper and Row) in spite of the protests of Lutheran reference works (e.g., Lueker's *Lutheran Cyclopedia*) (Concordia Publishing House) and Bodensieck's *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* (Fortress Press). Other minor weaknesses include the mention of only English concordances in the article on concordances and the omission of Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* in the same article. The article on calendars is very narrow and does not give the reader an awareness of the many different calendars used in the ancient world. Of more serious concern is the notion that the condition of homosexuality is not sinful, only the practice of it. These criticisms, however, do not deny the value of the book. It is a good purchase for anyone interested in a serious study of theology, although those looking for terms connected specifically with biblical theology should consult instead *A Student's Dictionary for Biblical and Theological Studies* by F.B. Huey, Jr., and Bruce Corley (Zondervan Publishing House), *A Handbook for Biblical Studies* by Nicholas Turner (Westminster Press), and *A Handbook of Biblical Criticism* by Richard N. Soulen (John Knox Press).

Robert A. Dargatz
Irvine, California

HOPE FOR ALL SEASONS. By Daniel J. Simundson. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988. 174 pages. Paperback, $9.95.

The author received his doctorate from Harvard University and is professor of Old Testament exegesis at Luther Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. He has written a number of books on different aspects of suffering by believers; now he concentrates on the related concept of hope. Dr. Simundson reveals a pastoral heart and proves himself to be a keen observer of life's events. He distinguishes between law and gospel fairly well. These points are countered by his many allusions to literary, form, and redaction criticism, which he utilizes in the biblical study underlying this book.

The book poses three stages in life with regard to hope. The first stage is naiveté, an optimism that everything in this life will work out well if we walk in the path of God. The second stage is disillusionment when problems plague the righteous. The third stage is one that gives up the hope of the ideal in this world but which looks

with confident hope toward the life which Christ promises in the resurrection. This paradigm is applied to the many hopes that people have in life (e.g., justice, health, life's necessities). A number of worthwhile spiritual insights are shared. Dr. Simundson reiterates a point made in one of his previous books, a commentary on Job—that well-meaning Christians in the first stage of naiveté can hurt those undergoing trials by applying a simplistic idea of how God works with people in this world. There are problems of injustice in this world that people must face without trying to defend God at the expense of the reputation of the ones undergoing trials. Another especially helpful thought is the encouragement that is given to those in the midst of suffering to keep the lines of communication with God open, even if it means arguing with Him and complaining to Him. Such communication is itself a sign that faith has not entirely died.

On the other hand, the Book of Proverbs is demeaned when it is seen as largely a "stage one" book and described as sometimes "too simple, too naive, perhaps even too authoritarian," a book that "is like Job's comforters," and a book that "could be valuable for premarital counseling" but "would not be so useful for marital counseling" (p. 88). Simundson assails the unity of Amos (p. 116), dates Job very late (p. 86), seems to apologize for the imprecatory psalms (p. 95), and sees the "writer" of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 as mistaken about the timing of the events of which he writes (p. 151). Those sharing Dr. Simundson's hermeneutical principles will find the work an excellent one. Those holding to biblical inerrancy will find some good pastoral thoughts here, but a number of other books deserve priority in terms of the investment of time and money.

Robert A. Dargatz
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PAUL AND THE TORAH. By Lloyd Gaston. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987.

The chances are that the reader has always interpreted, "he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6), to mean that God reckoned Abraham's faith to Abraham as righteousness. Gaston has news for us. As the "natural" translation he proposes: "And he [Abraham] put his trust in YHWH. And he [Abraham] counted it to him [YHWH] righteousness" (p. 47). There are many similar exegetical surprises in the book. Toward the beginning of the chapter in which this exegesis of Genesis 15:6 is to be found, Gaston concedes that he is proposing an interpretation "against a major thrust of the entire Chrisitan exegetical tradition." One may ask: why bother with such radical exegesis, which Gaston

himself characterizes as "playful"? There is an answer: one can learn a lot—perhaps not a lot of positive, acceptable interpretations, but at least one can learn the character of recent, liberal Pauline studies and interpretation. Also, jousting with the erudite author just might help to firm up flabby cerebral muscle, which has a way of showing up in some "conservative" heads.

One is aware of the guilt-ridden obsession with the holocaust and anti-semitism haunting many contemporary Christian theologians. Gaston's "Retrospective Introduction" clearly and emphatically places him in this distraught company. He states that "it is the task of exegesis after Auschwitz precisely to expose the explicit or implicit anti-Judaism inherent to the Christian tradition, including the New Testament itself" (p. 2).

After this programmatic definition, the reader is prepared to encounter some radical interpretations. He is not disappointed. The reader will be told, for instance, that Paul's opponents are not adherents of Judaism but "seem to be in every case rival Christian missionaries"; "even if some to Paul's argumentation should be directed against individual (Christian) Jews, Judasim as such is never attacked"; "Justification is not a central Pauline *doctrine* (emphasis original) but language which is used whenever the legitimacy of the status of his Gentile converts is being discussed"; "Jesus is then for Paul not the Messiah." Such and similar radical theses are explicated and defended with massive eruditon and much exegetical subtlety in a series of essays subsumed under the book's title, *Paul and the Torah*. To these essays is appended a translation of Romans.

How can a scholar undertake to vindicate such radical conclusions? Broadly speaking one can do so by engaging in some radical hermeneutics. For instance, in making his case Gaston totally rejects the witness of Acts, rules out the Pastorals, and admittedly places himself in opposition to the history of Christian exegesis. In high-handed fashion he dismisses biblical evidence that confounds his theories. Here are some instances from chapter 9, "Israel's Missteps in the Eyes of Paul." Every one of Paul's letters is said to be addressed explicitly to Gentile Christians so that it cannot be known what he would have said to Jews. Acts should be put "rigorously to one side," and "there is no evidence from Paul's own hand that he ever preached to Jews." Galatians is discounted, since the troublemakers are Jewish *Christians*. Also in 2 Corinthians Paul's rivals are supposed to be Jewish *Christians*. Philippians does not count. 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 is rejected as an interpolation. Romans 11 is not a good chapter on which to base a Christian theology of Israel, purportedly because of its "many tensions." One wonders, however, whether the

concessions by the scholars quoted in note 26, to the intent that in Romans 11 Israel has been somehow displaced, may not indicate the real reason for Gaston's dismissal of the chapter. The citation of Psalm 69:23-24, which clashes with Gaston's exegesis, is arrogantly rejected because he believes it is a scribal interpolation after 70 A.D.

What then is the thesis being defended with this bewildering argumentation and sometimes giddy exegesis? Gaston is intent on demonstrating that the traditional understanding of Paul as witnessing to Jesus as the one and only Savior for both Jew and Gentile has misread Paul's authentic epistles. Gaston concedes that Acts attempts "to present Christianity as true Judaism" (p. 20). But then he describes the witness of Acts as secondary and hence to be rejected. According to Gaston, Paul's passionate concern was with the legitimacy of his mission to inlcude Gentiles as full-fledged members of the people of God. "Paul's major theological concern I understand to be not justification of individuals by their faith but the justification of the legitimacy of his apostlehsip to, and gospel for, the Gentiles" (p. 57). "What is at issue between Paul and Judaism is not the torah of Israel but Paul as apostle to the Gentiles" (p. 138). And then the enemy turns out to be, not Judaism, but certain aberrant individuals guilty of flagrant violations of the Torah (cf. pp 139, 152).

After hearing this, one is not surprised (although surely not in agreement!) when Gaston contends, in his interpretation of the veil in 2 Corinthians 3:15, that the Corinthian *Christians* "are the one whose thoughts have been dulled and over whose heart lies a veil" (p. 164). The book bristles with similar provocative exegesis. A brief review cannot enter into a detailed *Auseinandersetzung*. Suffice it to note a broad principle and one exegetical illustration.

Broadly speaking, one finds Gaston intruding *disjunctions* where Paul preaches *conjunctions*. Gaston's repeated disjunctions between Jews and Gentiles clashes with Paul's repeated conjunctions. Noteworthy are Paul's *te kai* (for instance, Romans 1:16; 10:12) and how Paul proclaims the abolition of theological disjunctions between Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11).

One example of startling exegesis is the chapter, "Works of Law as Subjective Genitive." If the *erga nomou* are what the law does to us rather than what we do in response to the requirements of the law, and if *erga nomou* refers to "a positive power which works disastrous consequences" (p. 104), one wonders how the tempation to boast ever became a problem. Does one boast because some power has worked "disastrous consequences" on him? Gaston's *locus classicus* for this novel exegesis is Romans 4:15, "the law works (*katergazetai*) wrath."

In a previous book, *No Stone on Another*, Gaston undertook to reconstruct an earlier tradition underlying the Synoptic Gospels. In

a footnote (16, p. 222) he concedes: "My attempt. . .has not seemed convincing to very many." For all its display of erudition, I wonder whether a similar fate does not await *Paul and the Torah.* In the attempt to sustain his novel theses Gaston indulges not only in "playful" (p. 47) exegesis but actually turns to violent exegesis. As noted above, he arbitrarily discounts much of the New Testament witness and proclaims interpolations when encountering evidence that confounds his propositions. In effect, he eviscerates the witness (the New Testament), slashes its throat, and then finds that it cannot contradict his novel interpretations. This is hardly a convincing procedure. Besides, this witness, the New Testament, has a way of recovering from murderous assaults and rising up again to speak its message another day. (There is, for instance, Stephen Westerholm's recent defense of more traditional exegesis in his *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith, Pual and His Recent Interpreters,* Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1988. Despite his problems with antinomianism, Westerholm proves most helpful.)

A *prima facie* reading of Paul leaves one with the definite impression that Paul is convinced Jesus is the one and only Savior for one and all, Jew and Gentile. During the centuries the church has so understood Paul. After reading Gaston one may at first find his head spinning. But then, after re-reading Paul, one is convinced that it is Gaston's head that is spinning.

H. Armin Moellering
St. Louis, Missouri

EZRA-NEHEMIAH: A COMMENTARY. By Joseph Blenkinsopp. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988.

This commentary by the noted Notre Dame scholar represents a welcome addition to the library of scholars, pastors, churches, and others interested in the Old Testament. The post-exilic Old Testament books are neglected largely because they are considered inferior to the lofty theology of the pre-exilic prophets. Blenkinsopp argues persuasively that the great importance of these books is brought into focus through the canonical approach pioneered by Yale's B.S. Childs.

Theologically, Blenkinsopp argues that Ezra-Nehemiah continues the Priestly theme that the world was created as a temple for the worship of God. Though mankind is exiled repeatedly because of sin, from the sanctuary of Eden, from the earth of the flood, and then from Jerusalem, Ezra-Nehemiah chronicles the history of individuals who sought to restore the original purpose of creation by reconstituting the community of faith centered in temple worship. While the

Deuteronomic History (Genesis through 2 Kings) narrates mankind's history from creation to catastrophe, the post-exilic history of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah narrates the return, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the community of faith around the law of Moses. Ezra-Nehemiah interprets these as salvation events parallel to the exodus, conquest, and establishment of the first sanctuary in the promised land. Though Blenkinsopp stops here, it is a small additional step to interpret these events as also parallel to our own salvation in Christ.

Isagogically, Blenkinsopp stresses the structural unity of Ezra-Nehemiah with Chronicles, allows for the authenticity of the first-person narratives by Ezra and third-person accounts by Nehemiah, and dates the arrival of Ezra (458 B.C.) prior to that of Nehemian (445 B.C.), against those critics who in recent years have argued for a reverse order of Nehemian-Ezra. Hermeneutically, the canonical approach presupposes the validity of historical-critical reconstructions. The conservative reader certainly will want to disregard such reconstructions when they appear in this commentary. However, the canonical approach emphasizes that it is the final form of the text which is theologically significant, and it interprets the text in the light of the rest of the canon, letting Scripture interpret Scripture, and expounding the message off the canon for the community of faith. For this reason, commentaries such as this one are helpful for the conservative reader seeking to comprehend the message of the text and its relevance for us as members of the Christian Church today.

Christopher Mitchell
St. Louis, Missouri

THE MIRACLE STORIES. By Herman Hendrickx. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

In this study the author attempts to develop a methodology for interpreting synoptic miracle stories and illustrate it with representative exegesis. The opening pages are filled with warnings regarding "how-to" and "how-not-to" interpret miracle stories: we are to view miracles in a "biblical" sense rather than a modern sense; miracles are signs of God's saving activity, not violations of nature; the evangelists were concerned with faith and not history; we need to distinguish between the miracle *event* and the miracle *story;* and, theological meaning does not depend on historicity. From such warnings the nature of the exegesis that follows is readily apparent.

Father Hendrickx, in this sixth volume of his "Studies in the Synoptic Gospels" series, relies heavily on form and redaction criticism to demonstrate how the evangelists shaped miracle

tradition. The result is that these miracles are often divorced from the historical roots given them in the gospels. Hendrickx is not bothered by this and even asserts: "The miracle stories are not really true for us when what they tell us really happened in Jesus' time, but only when what they proclaim happens today" (p. 32). With the author's so-called "prophetic approach" to miracle stories, one seeks to understand the salvific and spiritual meaning apart from their historical base. While Hendrickx does not deny the historicity of some of the miracles, he does grope for meaning for those considered post-resurrection creations. For example, to explain the stilling of the storm in Matthew 8:23-27 he uses allegory by asserting that the boat saved by Jesus, in the mind of the evangelist, is the ship of the church!

While the effort expanded by Hendrickx to put this volume together is very visible, his writing is not lucid and easily understood. Perhaps the most ironic statement of the study is that faith is not based on the historicity of every miracle, but is based in the truth that Christ has been raised from the dead (p. 22). Is this not a miracle, too? Fortunately, for the reader, Father Hendrickx does not address the resurrection accounts in his exegesis.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

JESUS: ONE AND MANY: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORS. By Earl Richard. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988.

The title of this volume is a window to its content: an anthology of the diverse christologies of New Testament authors. Richard lays aside many questions related to historic christology by espousing the classic dichotomy proposed by M. Kähler between the "Jesus of history and the Christ of faith." While affirming the importance of the former, his focus in this study is an exposition of the latter. He states: "Since the proper approach to these books is a literary-critical rather than a historical-critical one, the focus of the reader and scholar's effort should not be the quest of a historical event or authentic saying, but rather appreciation of early Christian works and comprehension of their message" (p. 51).

Earl Richard, from the faculty of Loyola University in New Orleans, employs the tools of source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, composition analysis, and the sociological approach to discern an array of christologies within the New Testament and give readers an introductory textbook on the subject. Because this volume is written for the non-specialist, specific christologies are explained in the much broader context of the

isogogical and theological issues of each New Testament document. Following a lengthy introduction, Richard delineates the christological concept of the gospels, Paul and "Paulinist authors," the General Letters, and Revelation. The study concludes with an epilogue discussing the presentation of Jesus in the opening centuries of the Christian era.

Surprisingly, christology does not dominate the contents of this volume. At times the reader finds it buried among the discussions of introductory questions. Some fine insights arise from these discussions—for example, the role of Wisdom in the development of christology, Luke's concern with Hellenistic biographies, and the central nature of "Christ crucified" in Paul's christology. Some unbalanced judgment is also visible; for example, the author states that the Johannine readers would not connect the "I AM" sayings with the septuagintal usage and Paul adhered to a low christology centered on Jesus as divine agent. It is certain that Richard's treatment will be lauded in many circles because it is very representative of the current state of New Testament studies. While his focus on the text (rather than what is behind the text) is commendable, he probes with critical presuppositions that lead to some unacceptable conclusions. Perhaps the most bizarre of these is his composite proposal for 2 Corinthians, which is the supposed compilation of five separate documents (see p. 277).

No attempt is made to synthesize these christologies. This is understandable. With such an approach the New Testament is no longer a revelatory word that presents Christ, but is an illustrative word presenting Christian perspectives. The reader of this volume will learn much more about the New Testament authors who shaped christological tradition than the Christ who brought the tradition into being.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

COUNSELING AND SELF-ESTEEM. By David E. Carlson. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1988.

When one attempts to combine the nuances of psychology with the nuances of theology one inevitably reaches an impasse. David Carlson's offering, *Counseling and Self-Esteem,* is an example of such an impasse. His text is basically an effort to wed a few faulty constructs of social work to even faultier—indeed illiterate, understandings of basic biblical truths. The result is yet another annoying confusion of law and gospel, a mishmash of "do this and you, too, can have self-esteem."

Carlson's basic "pick yourself up by the bootstraps and try harder" approach to self-esteem is evident in his five-stage process to greater self-esteem. The author sees change, and hence a greater self-esteem, as an intentional process undertaken by intelligent people. "Plan your work and work your plan" underscores much of his thesis. People change, he maintains, as they learn new ways of thinking, perceiving, expressing, and believing. The basic "man can help himself" approach to gaining greater self-esteem involves suffering, understanding, choosing, acting, and maintaining. His twelve-step implementation of these stages includes such sage-like pieces of advice as "Believe God Chooses to Need You," "Validate Yourself," and "Give Yourself." To the author's (or editor's) credit there is an occasional reference to God's grace, but even that discussion comes across as another "help yourself" witticism that sadly drains the real content and the real significance of God's act in Christ. As is the case with many contemporary "Christian" offerings, this text lacks insight into the true nature of man, the means by which God rescues man, and the resources God uses to forgive and to sustain failure-fraught people.

The editor, Gary Collins, prefaces the text with these words: "Committed believers who sincerely seek to obey the Scriptures should and can have healthy self-concepts..." How trite! Unfortunately, this offering in the "Resources for Christian Counseling" series is, indeed, trite. Carlson offers a familiar combination of self-help suggestions, legalistic prescriptions, a token reference or two to Jesus, and the always popular step-by-step simplistic "Here's How to Do It Yourself" diagram. It would seem that any attempt to integrate such a presentation with an accurate understanding of God's good news would be futile. The results would be neither "Christian" nor "Counseling." For my money this one is not worth the price of admission.

Jan Case

A NEW CHRONOLOGY FOR THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR BIBLICAL HISTORY AND LITERATURE. By John H. Hayes and Paul K. Hooker. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988.

These two capable academicians lead the reader through the tangled maze of historical datings in 1 and 2 Kings with a thoroughness that few Bible students could muster. The conservative exegete must respectfully decline the authors' interpretive methods, in which they presuppose the Documentary Hypothesis and often discount the biblical text because of perceived strata of editorial work.

Likewise, many of their conclusions cannot be accepted: it is supposed, for example, that the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 21-23) was a product of King Ahaz' time, that under political pressure Ahaz used this document to initiate religious reform, and that Ahaz is given a fitting tribute in Isaiah 11:1-6. However, this booklet contains much historical raw material which can be used in the reader's own investigative work. Each chapter is headed by an extensive bibliography, and particularly helpful are the reconstructions of the respective falls of the northern and southern kingdoms, accounts that weave together the Mesopotamian annals and the biblical record.

James Bollhagen

THE COUNSELING SHEPHERD. By Armin W. Schuetze and Frederick A. Matzke. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1988.

Many Lutheran pastors have, undoubtedly, longed for a pastoral counseling textbook written from a confessional Lutheran viewpoint. Professor Armin Schuetze and a professional counselor, Mr. Frederick Matzke, both from the Wisconsin Synod, have attempted to fill this need. In preparing the volume, the authors have also included comments from over forty Lutheran parish pastors. In some cases these comments can be viewed as mini-case-studies.

The book is clearly written. It is printed on paper of good quality, and is well-bound to stand up to years of use. Chapters are included which cover many of the counseling situations which a parish pastor will typically encounter. The theology of the volume is of the conservative, confessional Lutheran type. The book is filled with Bible verses that can be used in a variety of counseling situations. Counseling insights are also provided from contemporary psychological theory.

My reactions to this book are mixed. On the one hand, I am pleased to see a Lutheran counseling text in print. On the other hand, I think there is still a need for a similar book to be written and published within our synod. (Is there no one in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who is willing to provide us with a contemporary textbook of pastoral counseling, as well as a new textbook of pastoral theology?)

Certainly there must be a major place for the confrontational use of Scripture in pastoral counseling. Yet Schuetze and Matzke seem to have embraced the counseling approach of Jay Adams. In their counseling system the pastoral counselor seems, in general anyway, to function mostly as a directive "theological answer-man" who provides just the right Bible verses to "solve" the counselee's problem.

Such an approach to pastoral counseling makes me uncomfortable. My years of counseling experience would indicate that such an approach is likely to alienate the counselee early in the counseling process. It is also unlikely to lead to lasting insight or problem-resolution.

At the same time, Matzke and Schuetze have provided Lutherans with a major counseling textbook. Pastors can definitely profit from this book. The volume can also find use in seminary-level counseling courses. (Hopefully students will also use *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* by Clinebell to learn a less directive counseling approach.) The authors seem to confuse pastoral counseling and pastoral care. Schuetze also appears to advance an almost "sacramental" view of marriage, in what is, otherwise, a helpful appendix on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Despite these reservations, *The Counseling Shepherd* is a book Lutheran pastors should purchase, read, and consult in their counseling efforts.

Gary C. Genzen
Lorain, Ohio

NARRATIVE AND MORALITY: A THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY. By Paul Nelson. University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987.

Theologians and ethicists alike have come to a renewed appreciation of the formative role played by a community's founding narrative or story. In today's jargon this is a postliberal phenomenon and one which finds George Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach to church doctrines preferable to the cognitivist assumptions of orthodoxy or the experiential-expressive model of liberalism. Paul Nelson assumes that narrative is indispensable to self-understanding and that the history of moral philosophy is intelligible only when comprehended within such a larger, coherent narrative. In short, narrative affords a community a single, commonly acknowledged conceptual framework within which moral themes are an integral component.

Two of Nelson's chief paradigms are Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanely Hauerwas, the former notable for his philosophical study of narrative and morality, and the latter celebrated for his narrative theological ethics. MacIntyre's refurbished Aristotelianism argues that virtue is fundamental to morality, and virtue in turn depends on a conception of the human *telos* or an account of the meaning and purpose of life. Narratives, at once historically and culturally diverse, provide this account. Hauerwas, more than any of the other Christian writers considered (e.g., James Gustafson, James Childress, Charles Curran), seizes narrative as the vehicle through which virtue and

character might be restored to their appropriate places of prominence. Narrative provides the metaphors, categories, and concepts requisite to an overall vision of life. Further, narratives show the "connectedness" of intentional actions (or their lack) and in this way display character.

Nelson correctly notes that narrative is no methodological panacea, nor will it conclusively resolve moral conflicts. While Hauerwas' emphasis on character is a corrective to MacIntyre, neither writer successfully confronts the issue of narrative diversity and its concomitant pluralism. In ethics a "plurality of readings" easily devolves to relativism. To be sure, none of Nelson's subjects countenances relativism, but such potential liabilities lead him to opt for a combination of narrative-dependent and narrative-independent elements in a concluding anticipation of his own moral theology. The narrative-independent elements, while not diminishing the contributions of one's narrative, provide the basic rules that admit the possibility of moral discourse across communities with competing narrative traditions. (For Nelson, such narrative-independent components are particularly important in forging a coherent social ethic.)

Narrative and Morality is not a primer in either narrative theology as a movement or in normative ethics. Nelson does not even broach the perennial moral dilemmas *per se*. Difficult going in places, it is a sophisticated and challenging study of how the "resourcement" characteristic of postliberal writers can help inform theological ethics. Numerous issues still cry for resolution—biblical hermeneutics vis-a-vis an endemic multiplicity of narrative readings, to name the most obvious. Nevertheless, Nelson succeeds in introducing knowledgeable readers to an ethic rooted in the story of creation, fall, redemption, and resurrection.

David A. Lumpp
St. Paul, Minnesota

INTRODUCING THE OLD TESTAMENT. By John Drane. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

John Drane, a lecturer in religious studies at Stirling University in Scotland, has made a worthy contribution to the numerous introductions currently available. It is one of the most lucid, engaging, and well-organized books of this sort that I have ever seen. Drane has a knack of bringing the Old Testament to life by forthright presentations of pertinent topics, succinct summaries of recent scholarly opinions, and dramatic use of maps, charts, and photographs which are well-correlated with the text. This introduction is a vast improvement over all critical introductions of the past.

The book consists of two parts which originally appeared separately: *The Old Testament Story* and *The Old Testament Faith.* Drane's focus in the first section is on understanding the Old Testament in its original historical, cultural, and social context on the basis of contemporary, "scientific" scholarship. He makes especially good application of recent archaeological data to highlight and support the biblical material. In this respect he is much closer to the "Albright" (American) approach than to more radical (German) critical scholarship. Herein lies the greatest strength of the book. It is very useful for reviewing the Old Testament and for considering it in the context of the ancient world.

But Drane is not totally "conservative" or orthodox. While he does not uncritically adopt typical critical positions and is quite aware of conservative alternatives, his conclusions often cautiously lean away from the latter while maintaining strong reservations about the critical positions. He basically views the Old Testament as "story" which is more factual than fictional, yet without insisting on full accuracy. While generally capturing the mood, message, and setting of the Old Testament books, he fails the big isagogical litmus test regarding date and authorship of Isaiah and Daniel. This book, therefore, may not serve well as an introductory textbook, especially since insufficient details are presented for a full understanding of either the critical or conservative conclusions. At the same time this relative lack of specific technical detail limits its use in more advanced contexts (seminary). The layman at times may have difficulty in sorting out fact from fiction in Drane's discussion.

The last part of the book presents much good and useful information on Old Testament faith and worship. This presentation is mostly descriptive and basically free from presuppositional prejudices. Drane makes frequent reference to New Testament connections and Christian applications. In discussing the connections between the two testaments, he rightly rejects a dichotomy of Old Testament as law and New Testament as gospel, a view which he unjustly attributes to Luther. Drane affirms a Christian reading of the Old Testament but is cautious about reading things into the Old Testament from a New Testament point of view. Drane's work would have been greatly enhanced for evangelicals had he affirmed the unity of both testaments as equally the inspired and authoritative revelation of God, the primary message of which is the gospel of Christ.

Paul L. Schrieber
St. Louis, Missouri

ISAIAH THE EIGHTH-CENTURY PROPHET: HIS TIMES AND HIS PREACHING. By John H. Hayes and Stuart A Irvine. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.

Twentieth-century scholarship has left the Book of Isaiah in a state of fragmentation unparalleled in almost any other piece of literature. After dissecting the work into First, Second, and Third Isaiahs, critics have further divided each Isaiah into various strata and layers. The net result of this process is a book of which the existence in its present form can only be explained by divine intervention or inspiration, a concept contradictory to critical presuppostions.

Several scholars have entered the fray to argue for a different way of reading Isaiah. One of the latest entries is *Isaiah the Eighth-Century Prophet* by John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine. The authors propose ten theories about Isaiah 1-39, all of which depart in some degree from critical orthodoxy. The first and broadest of these is the thesis that practically all of Isaiah 1- 39 derives from the eighth-century prophet. The major exception to this is 34-35 which, according to the authors, is from the same period as Isaiah 40-66. Thus, while the authors certainly do not adopt a traditional, non-critical approach, new arguments for the unity of Isaiah 1-39 are arising within the critical camp itself.

One of the most helpful sections of the book is chapter one, "The Historical Background—750-700 B.C.E." This section functions well on two levels. First, it serves as a good review of the history of the eighth century. Second, it becomes the point of departure for the authors' subsequent arguments that the bulk of 1-39 comes from the eighth century. In broad strokes Hayes and Irvine use the historical situation to propose the following order of chapters: 1-5,6 (Isaiah moves to a new phase of ministry), 7-18, 28-33, 19, 20-22 (contemporary with 38-39), 23-27, and 36-39. The attribution of the bulk of 1-39 to the eighth-century prophet arises from the alignment of the chapters to historical events of the century.

Hayes and Irvine have made a substantial contribution to the on-going debate on Isaiah. Using critical methodology, they nevertheless display an ability to criticize the manner in which such methodology has been used by others. While traditional interpreters of Isaiah can still rightly find much about which to differ with the authors, we will also find much which is worthwhile and helpful.

Isaiah the Eighth-Century Prophet is especially recommended for those who wish to keep up with the current debates on Isaiah. Each chapter is preceded by a concise, current bibliography of primarily critical literature. The major problem for many readers will be access to a theological library in which to find the bibliographic entries, many of which are in German and French. The serious student of

Isaiah will find the effort worthwhile because Hayes and Irvine's book will undoubtedly play a role in the future scholarship on Isaiah.

Daniel L. Gard

ISAIAH. By Wolfgang Roth. Knox Preaching Guides. Edited by John H. Hayes. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988.

In the introduction Professor Roth of Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary paraphrases Ecclesiastes 12:12 with these words: "Of the making of commentaries on Isaiah there is no end!" To this massive and growing body of literature we now can add Roth's own contribution. Part of the critically oriented *Knox Preaching Guides*, this brief homiletical commentary may still be used judiciously and profitably by preachers within more conservative traditions. Judicious use is called for by Roth's mainstream critical views of Isaianic authorship and dating. It is maintained that the book of Isaiah was composed shortly after the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple in 520 B.C. by "prophetic visionaries" who were responsible for the redaction of their master's work into the longer work of Isaiah 1-66 (p. 16). The eighth-century Isaiah is more mythological than historical. "In short, the presentation of Isaiah, man and prophet, is not so much biographical-historical as thematic-theological" (p. 14). Roth's methodology is quite at home with this; through his discourse analysis (semiotics) Isaiah and his disciples themselves are "signs and portents" in Israel (p. 14).

The conservative reader of this commentary might be further frustrated by Roth's non-christological reading of the text. Classical messianic prophecies (e.g., 7:14 or the Suffering Servant of chapter 53) are not truly prophetic but merely texts interpreted by the New Testament authors as illustrative of their own christology. Roth includes five suggested sermon series on Isaiah; the fifth, entitled "The Work of Jesus in Isaiah's Words" (pp. 23- 4), cites several texts from Isaiah with New Testament parallels . Yet the body of the commentary on the Isaianic material either neglects or downplays the messianic nature of the texts themselves.

On the positive side Isaiah is less atomized by Roth than by other modern commentators, both internally and in its relationship to the broader work of the law and the prophets (Genesis-Malachi). While conservative interpreters might take issue with Roth's critical presuppositions, it is refreshing to read a critical interpretation which takes seriously the "vision of the whole."

There is much which is insightful and thought-provoking in this homiletical commentary. Roth identifies a central theme in Isaiah, the Lord's deliverance of Jerusalem (p. 4), developed through Isaiah's

portrayal of three successive escapes by Jerusalem due to the Lord's intervention. From the point of view of preaching (which is, of course, the purpose of the commentary) Roth offers suggestive comments on each pericope. Particularly helpful are the numerous citations of biblical parallels and the author's suggestions for homiletical application. With careful use and a little creativity on the part of the homilist, those comments can prove to be quite stimulating and useful and well worth the purchase of the book.

Daniel L. Gard

MELANCHTHONS BRIEFWECHSEL, 5: REGESTEN 4530-5707 (1547-1549). Edited by Heinz Scheible. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1987.

Historians delight in the correspondence of their subjects since letters can provide access to the thought and emotions behind public deeds and published works. However, such letters are not always extant, and where they are, especially for early modern figures like Melanchthon, it is often difficult to determine their chronology since dating private correspondence was not so customary as it is today. Therefore, the publication of a critical edition of Melanchthon's correspondence is a major undertaking in Reformation studies and promises students of the period of wealth of new data for interpreting the role of Melanchthon and his correspondents in the great events of the sixteenth century.

In his introduction to the first volume (1977), the editor of the work, Heinz Scheible, outlined the background and plan of the project that includes, in addition to publishing the texts of 9200 pieces (not only letters to and from Melanchthon but also prefaces, acknowledgements, legal instruments, and *Gutachten*), producing a critical apparatus in four other parts as well: (1) summaries *(Regesten)* of the letters; (2) indices of persons, places, and subjects; (3) a catalog of the manuscripts upon which the work is based; and (4) commentaries on the texts themselves. Since a major goal of the work is to make sense of each letter by determining its date and provenance as accurately as possible, the decision was made to publish the fruits of that labor even before the texts. Accordingly, the five volumes to appear thus far have been the *Regesten* of Melanchthon's correspondence from 1514 to 1549. When this part is complete, the publishers will proceed to the indices and the catalog of manuscripts and only then to the actual texts.

Of what value, then, is the work at hand, volume 5 of the *Regesten*, summaries of letters from 1547 to 1549? Actually, it is of great value since the date of each letter permits us to place it in its precise

relationship to the tumultuous events of these years (e.g., the defeat and capture of Elector John Frederick at Muehlberg by the forces of Charles V, the imposition of the Augsburg Interim, and the negotiation of the Leipzig Interim). Furthermore, the contents' summaries enable us to see at least somewhat Melanchthon's reactions to and involvement in such great events. Finally, for each letter the editors have also included a brief discussion of their rationale for dating and the like and references to earlier editions where the printed text is available.

For example, number 5130 is a summary of a *Gutachten* by Melanchthon, Caspar Cruciger, Georg Maior, and Johannes Pfeffinger to Duke Moritz regarding the Augsburg Interim. The editors concisely summarize the opinions of these theologians under headings like justification, the sacraments, and intercession of the saints and include the theologians' fears regarding persecution and schism if the interim is not changed. Moreover, for anyone desiring the complete text there is a reference to the appropriate volume in the *Corpus Reformatorum*. Obviously, summaries like these are an excellent guide to any one doing research on Melanchthon's attitude toward the interims or anything else in this period. Of course, one longs for the completion of the entire project; but we rejoice in the publication of yet another volume since it provides a wealth of information regarding three critical years in Melanchthon's life and gives promise that the whole work is still on course.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

LUTHER'S SCOTTISH CONNECTION. By James Edward McGoldrick. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989. 192 pages.

John Knox, the Calvinist reformer of Scotland, followed in the footsteps of several precursors "who had laid the foundations upon which he built" and who "were, for the most part, disciples of Martin Luther," the author states in his preface. Without claiming originality, McGoldrick continues, he wishes to support his thesis with information gathered by other scholars. He succeeds in doing so. After two chapters sketching the background of Scottish political and ecclesiastical affairs in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the stories of Patrick Hamilton and several of his countrymen who were influenced by Luther demonstrate Luther's early appeal to young Scots of his time. The fact that persecution kept some, such as John Gau and Alexander Alesius, in exile for most of their careers may partially explain why the Lutheran movement failed to gain momentum in Scotland.

More stories could be told. It is regrettable that McGoldrick only mentions John and Robert Wedderburn and their *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* and does not show in what ways "its theological character is Lutheran." The reader also wishes that McGoldrick would develop his intriguing hints of Lutheran leanings in John Knox's thought.

Twice errors muddle McGoldrick's presentation slightly. His description of German Lutheran controversies following the Smalcald War confuses the Majoristic and the Crypto-Calvinist controversies and at the same time misrepresents them both. He suggests that the Ave Maria remained a part of most Protestant catechisms. I know of no Lutheran catechism which retained it. Readers interested in the spread of Luther's influence will find here a handy compilation of accounts of his contributions to the Scottish Reformation and a helpful analysis of them in easily readable and edifying form.

Robert Kolb
Saint Paul, Minnesota

CONCORDANCE TO THE BOOK OF CONCORD. Edited by Kenneth Larson, with the assistance of James R. Schoech (computer programmer). Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989. xx + 602 pages. Cloth, $24.95.

Only a profound love of the gospel, as one finds it so evidently believed, taught, and confessed in the Book of Concord, could motivate a busy parish pastor, his parishioners, and a dedicated computer programmer, to complete a Herculean labor like this *Concordance to the Book of Concord.* The introduction provides a clear explanation of the code used to list the occurrences of each entry in the concordance. For example, under the word "concord" on page 98 we find the following: "AL:28:071:(093):[0093] that the bishops restore concord at the expense of." Thus we learn that the word "concord" is found in the Latin version of the Augsburg Confession (AL), in Article XXVIII (28), in paragraph 71 (071), on page 93 of Theodore Tappert's translation of *The Book of Concord* (093), and on page 93 of the *Concordia Triglotta* ([0093]). The word is then placed in its context, set off in bold type. It is a very manageable system.

While it is unfortunate that the concordance does not refer to the original German and Latin of the Book of Concord, it is still very helpful to those studying the book in original languages. The *Concordance to the Book of Concord* will remain an indispensable tool for the study of the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. The serious

student of the Lutheran Confessions will want to acquire this concordance for his library.

Paul T. McCain
Waverly, Iowa

AUGSBURG COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT: 2 CORINTHIANS. By Frederick W. Danker. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989. 223 pages.

The author of this commentary, Frederick Danker, is best known to biblical students as the most recent contributor to a prominent tool of New Testament exegetes, the lexicon of New Testament Greek descending from Walter Bauer through William F. Arndt. In this study Danker attempts to bring new light to the words and message of 2 Corinthians with a myriad of illustrative references to Greco-Roman literature. It is problematic that this volume was included in a basic homiletical commentary series written for "laypeople, students, and pastors" (p. 7). It fails the criteria of such a series for at least three reasons. First, there is an inordinate number of citations from Greco-Roman literature within a limited treatment of the text. Some of these citations prove interesting and enlightening; others detract from the flow of Paul's argument or seem to have little relevance (e.g., the nine-point connection between Nero's Corinthian Declaration and 2 Corinthians on pages 21-23). Secondly, Danker loses sight of the necessary balance between Judaism and Hellenism in expounding the Pauline letters. Certainly Paul was writing to a hellenic congregation and was himself "hellenized," yet his roots in Judaism and the Old Testament which surface in the letter are not adequately addressed. Thirdly, the philological emphasis of this commentary leaves "laypeople, students, and pastors" wanting more theological reflection to ponder. For example, where is a discussion of theology of the cross in the treatment of 2 Corinthians 4? In addition, a minor irritation for this reader arises from the author's abundant use of "benefactor" terminology (and numerous citations of his own work by that title).

The strength of this commentary is visible in Danker's impressive command of word meaning and etymology. The author is at home in the philological world and shows it. Often the meaning of words or phrases is enhanced with reference to primary source documents of the first-century Hellenistic world (e.g., Danker contrasts Paul's "boasting" with that of Empedocles, p. 60). This volume could withstand much of the above criticism if it stood outside a basic commentary series and was entitled, *Understanding 2 Corinthians in the Light of Greco-Roman Literature*. As it is, the author's treatment is incongruent with the stated objectives of his series.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

ORDNUNGEN DER ALLMACHT. PAUL ALTHAUS DER JUENGERE UEBER DIE ORDNUNGEN. By Walther Mann. Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums, founded by Werner Elert and Karl Heinrich Rengstorf and edited by Bengt Haegglund, Heinrich Kraft, et al., Neue Folge, Band 7. Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1987. 149 pages.

A pupil of Herbert Olsson at Uppsala and of Bengt Haegglund at Lund, Mann offers here the publication of his Swedish doctoral dissertation. Although it suffers from having been written in rather heavy language and style, it is a brilliant study of Althaus' doctrine of revelation together with criticisms of that teaching by Werner Wiesner, Kurt Leese, Richard Hauser, Rudolf Gebhardt, Paul Knitter, and others, whereby much light is shed on the reasons for accepting and rejecting various forms of natural religion or natural theology. Of course, the position of Karl Barth and the Barmen Declaration is considered as well as the theology of other contemporaries, such as Emil Brunner, Walther Kuenneth, and, more sparingly, Werner Elert. As a German expatriate living in Sweden, Mann also brings useful insights from Scandinavian thinkers such as Anders Nygren and Herbert Olsson.

Althaus' doctrine of revelation distinguished between *Ur-Offenbarung*, a kind of natural revelation, and the special revelation of God in Christ. A theology of *Ordnungen* ("orders") has to do with social institutions anchored in divine creation, such as the family, marriage, nationality or race, the state, society, and the church. Such an order is something like a "given" quality—one's estate in life, one's calling, one's place in life as given by God and as measured by His act of creation. A theology of orders has to do with conditions under which people live, conditions that are a part of God's creative action, past and present.

In the 1920's Althaus, politically a conservative and a supporter of the monarchy, like many other Germans had rejected the Weimar Republic forced upon them by their conquerors after World War I. During the rise of Hitler after January of 1933 Althaus thought that the new leader would deliver Germany and give it prosperity and dignity again, and he became an enthusiastic supporter during the first years of the Third Reich. He updated his theology of orders with special emphasis upon family, folk, and race in a way which made his thinking seem to support National Socialism. Although Althaus withdrew his support of Hitler around 1937, after World War II he was blamed for the course he had followed. Statements such as these were criticized: "State and politics are orders given and willed by God. However, something of the demonism of power clings to them, and this in itself is somewhat evil" (Mann, p. 36). "Therefore, in the

political power struggles of the peoples, most things are allowed, even things which we should otherwise find dishonorable and immoral" (p. 56). The Roman Catholic critic, Hauser, noting that in Althaus these "demonic powers" became needful and progressive powers of historical development, complained that this development implied ". . .a strangely divided conception of the term of *Ordnungen*, according to which God's creative will and the might of sin occur simultaneously in the same view" (Mann, p. 87). As Mann notes, this conception is connected with Althaus' basic antinomy in the person of God as hidden and revealed. Here, the reader may also recall some statements in Luther's *Servitude of Choice.*

A number of studies critical of Althaus have come out in recent years. However, he is to be blamed more for political naivete than for malice, considering that he also accepted risks when he openly rejected Nazi concepts of eugenics, euthanasia, and abortion. Perhaps the underlying error in Althaus lay in his misunderstanding of Luther's doctrine of the *zwei Regimente* as a distinction of "two kingdoms" in which the secular "kingdom" is placed outside of God's jurisdiction. This misunderstanding of Luther, based upon Troeltsch, was widespread among Germans, and it influenced even so renowned an opponent of Hitler and Rosenberg as Walther Kuenneth (Mann, pp. 77-79).

The loudest critics of Althaus have come from the camp of Karl Barth. Althaus, like Elert and Sasse (also at Erlangen after 1933), had been critical of the *Barmen Declaration* because it identified the gospel with the law and made of Christ the giver of a new law. At stake was therefore the whole confessional Lutheran concept of the distinction of law and gospel. During the Third Reich mistakes were made by Lutherans as well as others. But such mistakes do not justify attempts to discredit all who rejected the *Barmen Declaration*, nor do they give us any reason to canonize the teaching of Barth. Lutherans need to show the fallacies of these tactics and to support sound doctrine. This book by Mann can be a helpful resource in upholding the proper distinction of law and gospel.

Lowell C. Green
Buffalo, New York

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