

Private Confession and Absolution in the Lutheran Church: A Doctrinal, Historical, and Critical Study P. H. D. Lang	241
The Peace of the Risen Lord: Celebrating Easter in China Henry Rowold	263
Luke the Preacher: Preparing Sermons for the Gospels of Series C Arthur A. Just, Jr.	275
Theological Observer	291
Books Received	296
Book Reviews	297



CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

CTQ

ISSN 0038-8610

Issued Quarterly by the Faculty of
Concordia Theological Seminary

The Concordia Theological Quarterly, a continuation of the *The Springfielder*, is a theological journal of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, published for its ministerium by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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The CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY is indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals* and abstracted in *Old Testament Abstracts* and *New Testament Abstracts*.

The CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY is published in January, April, July, and October. All changes of address (including Missouri Synod clergymen), subscription payments, and other correspondence concerning business matters should be sent to Concordia Theological Quarterly, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. The annual subscription rate is \$10.00 within the United States, \$15.00 U.S. in Canada, and \$20.00 U.S. elsewhere (\$30.00 if dispatch by airmail is desired).

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1992

Private Confession and Absolution in the Lutheran Church: A Doctrinal, Historical, and Critical Study

P. H. D. Lang

The history of confession and absolution from the first to the sixteenth century A.D. necessarily lies outside the scope of the enterprise at hand. Those fifteen centuries have, of course, a bearing on what happened to confession and absolution in the Lutheran Church from the sixteenth century onward. This study makes its beginning, however, with Luther and the Reformation.

I. The Retention of Private Confession and Absolution

That Luther wanted private confession retained as a separate sacramental rite of the church cannot be questioned. In his treatise *Of Confession* he says, "I will let no one take away private confession and would not exchange it for all the wealth of the world, for I know what strength and comfort it has given me."¹ In his eighth sermon against Carlstadt (1522), who had abolished private confession in Wittenberg during Luther's absence, Luther closed with the words, "I know the devil well. If you had known him as well as I, you would not have thrown private confession so quickly to the wind."² In his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* Luther writes, "Of private confession, which is now observed, I am heartily in favor, even though it cannot be proved from the Scriptures; it is useful and necessary, nor would I have it abolished; nay, I rejoice that it exists in the church of Christ, for it is a cure without equal for distressed consciences."³

Here already we see a principle of Luther and Lutheranism which differs sharply from the principle of Carlstadt, Zwingli, Calvin, the Reformed, and sectarian Protestants. We retain the traditional teachings and practices of the catholic church except where these are in conflict with Holy Scriptures. The Reformed and sectarians discard everything in the catholic church and start a new church; only those things that are in the Bible are to be taught and practiced. The Lutheran principle is evangelical, catholic, objective, and scriptural, and it promotes the peace and unity of the church. The Reformed principle is legalistic, subjective, non-catholic, and divisive, and it leads to Pietism, Rationalism, and ultimately Communism.

In 1533 Luther expressed himself as emphatically as possible in his *Sendschreiben an die zu Frankfurt am Main*. There he says, "Wir behalten diese Weise, dass ein Beichtkind erzähle etliche Sünden, die es am meisten drücken. . . . Wenn tausend und aber tausend Welt mein wären, so wolte ich alles lieber verlieren, denn ich der geringsten Stuecklein eines der Beichte aus der Kirche wolte kommen lassen. Ja, lieber solte mir sein der Papstthums Tyrannei vom Fasten, Feyren, Kleidern, Staedten, Platten, Kappen, und was ich koennte ohne Versherung des Glaubens tragen, denn das die Beichte von den Christen solte genommen werden."⁴ Rather than have anything of confession lost to the church, Luther would prefer to endure the tyranny of the pope. Not only did Luther teach, preach, and practice private confession, but he also provided a liturgical form for it in his Small Catechism. It was his deep pedagogical insight that induced him to prepare this "Brief Form of Confession," for according to the title of the Fifth Chief Part of the Small Catechism, the unlearned should be taught to confess. Luther realized that teaching the principle of confession without providing a "Brief Form" would inevitably degenerate into ineffectual theorizing.

The attitude of Luther toward the retention of private confession was also the attitude of the other Lutheran reformers. We find this attitude most clearly and most authoritatively expressed in the confessions of the Lutheran Church, which state over and over again that private confession is not to be abolished in the Lutheran Church, but is to be retained and used with highest reverence. Thus, the Latin version of Article XI of the Augsburg Confession says of Lutherans: "Of confession they teach that Private Absolution ought to be retained in the churches, although in confession an enumeration of all sins is not necessary." The German version is even more forceful: "Von der Beichte wird also gelehrt, dass man in der Kirche privatim absolutionem erhalten und nicht fallen lassen soll." Correlative statements are found in Article XXV of the Augustana; Articles VI, XI, XIII, and XXVIII (14) of the Apology; Part V of the Small Catechism; Part V of the Large Catechism; Article VIII of Part III of the Smalcald Articles; and Article XI of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord.

II. The Lutheran Doctrine of Private Confession

The Lutheran doctrine of private confession and absolution grew out of a critical opposition to the corrupt doctrine and practice of penance as it existed in the Church of Rome at the time of the Reformation. This doctrine of Rome, officially formulated in the Council of Florence in 1439, stated that the *poenitentia* consisted in *contritio*, *confessio*, and *satisfactio*. Actually, the opposition was not at first primarily to this doctrine, but to the shocking abuses in the practice of the Roman penitential system which developed in the Middle Ages. What these abuses were, anyone can learn by reading the article on the "False Repentance of the Papists" in the Smalcald Articles (Part III, Article III, 10-44).

Yet while the Lutheran doctrine developed in the heat of battle against the Roman doctrine and practice, it was not the creation of an opposite doctrine and practice. We must not imagine that Luther and the Lutheran reformers went about establishing a doctrine and practice of confession by arbitrarily creating something new and antithetical to Rome. Unfortunately, there are ignorant people who regard the whole Reformation of the sixteenth century as an attempt by Luther and his coworkers to create a new church. When it dawns on these people that the Lutheran Church retained much that is also found in the Roman Church, they take the attitude that these things must have been retained out of condescension and compromise and that they cannot be a part of the Lutheran Church today. Such a view is, of course, untrue to the facts. At the time of the Reformation the Christian church was in a state of corruption both in doctrine and practice, but the church was still there. It had existed for fifteen centuries. It was not the task of the Lutheran reformers to build a new church, but, on the one hand, to cleanse what had become corrupt and, on the other hand, to retain what had not been corrupted. Here is a point that we today must see clearly if we want to understand the Lutheran doctrine and practice of private confession.

As was said before, the Roman doctrine of penance consisted of *contritio*, *confessio*, and *satisfactio*. As to *satisfactio*, the Lutheran Church spoke only of the full satisfaction made by Christ and the resolve by the penitent to amend his life. And both of these she

related to faith. The satisfaction of Christ is apprehended by faith and the amendment of life is the fruit of faith. At the same time, faith is not a work of man but a gift of God. In regard to *contritio*, the Lutherans desired not only sorrow for sin but also faith in the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake. And this desire had a direct bearing on *confessio*. For sorrow and faith bring a person to confession. But confession is not something that is done for its own sake; it is essentially a seeking for absolution. And absolution must be viewed from the standpoint of the doctrine of the means of grace. The result was that the Roman doctrine of penance gave way to the Lutheran doctrine of confession and absolution.

The Roman *poenitentia* was a work of man. The Lutheran doctrine placed confession, which is the work of man, over against absolution, which is the work of God. In his brief admonition to confession, Luther says, "Now mark well what I have said often, that confession consists of two parts. The first is our work and doing, that I lament my sins and desire comfort and renewal of my soul. The other is a work which God does, who absolves me from my sins through His word spoken by the mouth of man. This is the most important and precious part, as it also makes it lovely and comforting. Up till now the confession has all been our work without going any farther than recognizing a good confession, and the other most important part was not recognized nor preached, quite as if it all were a good work with which to pay God. And whenever the confession was not complete to the last detail, then absolution could not be effective nor sins be forgiven."⁵ And in his *Warning to Certain People in Frankfurt am Main*, Luther wrote, "Therefore those who desire my counsel in this matter should understand me thus, that in confession are two parts: first, the enumeration of sins. . . . The other part of confession is the absolution which the priest speaks in God's place."⁶

It is for this reason that the confessional writings maintain that the chief thing in confession is the absolution and that private confession is to be retained on account of the absolution. Since the Lutheran Church regards the absolution as the chief thing in private confession, she also accepts it as a sacrament if one omits from the definition of the word "sacrament" the necessity (as has now become

customary in Lutheranism) of a divinely ordained visible element. Confession is man's work. But the absolution is God's work. And in the absolution the essence of the Christian religion is present, namely, the dispensing of grace to man. It is a form of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it was "ordained by Christ Himself in the Gospel" (Smalcald Articles, VIII, 1) and is practiced after the example of Christ Himself. Therefore we say in Article XI (60) of the Apology: "Certainly most men in our churches use the sacraments, absolution and the Lord's Supper, frequently . . ." In Article XIII (4) we say: "Therefore baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution, which is the sacrament of repentance, are truly sacraments."

The Lutheran doctrine of private confession differs from the Roman doctrine of penance and especially from the Reformed doctrine of "general confession" in that the Lutheran doctrine sets forth the right relationship that exists between the minister who speaks the absolution and God who bestows this absolution. According to the Lutheran doctrine, there are not two subjects who forgive sins, but only one subject, God. The servant of the word acts only in an instrumental capacity. The power of the absolution lies in the word of God Himself. When the minister pronounces absolution, it is effected by God who speaks in His word.

The Lutheran doctrine of confession distinguishes between general and specific confession as well as between public and private confession. General confession is a confession of sins in general without the mentioning of specific sins. Such a general confession may be made in public, as in the congregation, or in private, as in private confession when no specific sins are mentioned. It is this latter kind of general confession in private of which Luther speaks when, in answering the request, "Pray, propose to me a brief form of confession," he says, "But if you know of none at all (which, however, is scarcely possible), then mention none in particular, but receive the forgiveness upon the general confession which you make before God to the confessor" (Small Catechism, V, 21, 25). So general confession is the confession of sins without enumerating specific sins, and private confession, although it ordinarily involves the naming of individual sins, does not necessarily do so.

In reference to absolution, on the other hand, a clean distinction must be made between private and general absolution. By private absolution is meant the administration of forgiveness to an individual in private confession. It says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." General absolution is the absolution offered and conveyed by the gospel. The enunciation of the gospel may be private or public. It may be done by ministers or, in private, laymen. It is efficacious whenever the gospel is accepted by faith. So private absolution is forgiveness conveyed specifically to an individual by the pastor. General absolution is the enunciation of the gospel in which forgiveness is offered to all.

When the Lutheran doctrine of confession and absolution makes these distinctions, questions are more readily answered. The first question is this: Can absolution be received only from a pastor? The Lutheran Church answers, of course, in the negative. General absolution is offered and conveyed by the gospel. And the enunciation of the gospel is the right and, indeed, the duty of every Christian. Therefore, neither the general enunciation of the gospel nor the general absolution can be restricted to the pastor.

There is, however, a difference between general absolution and private absolution. General absolution is not necessarily consciously sought or administered. The case is different with private absolution. It is necessarily consciously sought and administered. Consequently, he who seeks it will seek it from the appointed steward of the mysteries of God. It is not something that can be equated with the general enunciation of the gospel. Here we deal with the office of the keys as it applies specifically to the appointed servant of the word who has the office and responsibility of the care of souls. The situation here is the same as with the administration of baptism and Holy Communion. So, for example, the *Braunschweigische Kirchenordnung* of 1569 states, "Confession is to be maintained, so that private absolution be sought from the Lord Christ in the word through true confession and faith and from Christ through the medium of the servant of the word."⁷ Martin Chemnitz and John Gerhard state similarly that absolution is to be sought from the pastor.

A second question is this: Is private confession and absolution

necessary to the church? In answer to this question the Lutheran Church denies the Roman doctrine that it is necessary to confess every known sin in auricular confession in order to receive forgiveness. Such an enumeration of separate sins is not required by God. At the same time the Lutheran Church insists in its official confessions that there are subjective and objective reasons which require the retention of private confession by the church; it is not contrary to Scripture, but rather in harmony with its doctrines if it is practised on a voluntary basis.

First of all, there is a subjective or psychological necessity for private confession. Often one cannot find assurance without it. No one knew this fact better than Luther himself. In *Of Confession* he says, "Even if everyone can confess his sins unto God by himself alone and be reconciled to God in secret, . . . it is good that he take God at His word and promise [Matthew 16:19, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' John 20:23, 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.']. One does well to overcome his stubbornness and failure to confess in compliance with God's word, so that he may come freely and boldly before God on the basis of His own truth and say, 'Now, dear God, I have confessed before Thee my sins to my confessor and in Thy name asked for grace. For Thou has promised that what is bound is bound and what is loosed is loosed and that the Father will grant what we desire in unity. Therefore, I cling to Thy promise and do not doubt Thy truth; as my confessor has loosed me in Thy name, so I am loosed as we have desired.' See, such a certainty no one can have who has confessed to God alone. . . . Therefore, I will let no one take away private confession and would not exchange it for all the wealth in the world, for I know what strength and comfort it has given me."⁸

Aside, however, from this subjective reason for private confession, there are also objective reasons. We read in Article XI (63) of the Apology: "It is of advantage to accustom inexperienced men to enumerate some things [which worry them], in order that they may be more readily taught." Likewise we read in Part III of the

Smalcald Articles (VIII, 1): "Confession or absolution ought by no means to be abolished in the church, especially on account of [tender and] timid consciences and on account of the untrained [and capricious] young people, in order that they may be examined, and instructed in the Christian doctrine." Primarily, however, the Lutheran Church sees the necessity of private confession in the very nature of the word of God and in the will of the Lord who gave us His own example. Again and again the confessions state that private confession is to be retained on account of the absolution. The absolution is the work of God, for it is the administration of His word.

Thus, there is no question about the need to maintain—and, indeed, encourage—private confession and absolution. The Lutheran Church does not say that it is necessary to salvation as if the forgiveness of sins could be obtained in no other way. For the forgiveness of sins is bestowed in baptism and in Holy Communion, as well as being offered and conveyed in a general way in the preaching of the gospel. The Lutheran Church does say, however, on the objective side, that the maintenance of private confession and absolution is required by the very nature of the gospel, which demands that it be concentrated on the individual penitent and summarized in the sentence: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." On the subjective side, too, the maintenance of private confession and absolution is necessary, not only on account of the particular sins which trouble individuals, but also because of the need which is common to all men alike, since all are sinners. Thus the Apology (VI, 4) states, "Neither do they understand what the remission of sins or the power of the keys is, if there are any who despise private absolution." The Lutheran Church forces private confession on none, but offers it to all. Such is the Lutheran doctrine of confession and absolution.

In their polemics against this doctrine the Reformed have tried to identify it with the Roman auricular confession. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Lutheran private confession does, to be sure, differ from the Reformed "general confession"; Lutheranism advocates a personal confession—on account of the absolution. The Reformed churches know no real means of grace and no priestly

ministry. The Reformed minister is only a servant of the congregation and not the mouthpiece of Christ as well. Therefore, the Reformed also reject private confession. The Lutheran Church of the sixteenth century opposed this rejection as bitterly as it did the Roman system of penance. The *Calenberg Kirchenordnung* condemns "die Sacramentsschwaermer und etliche andere, welche die Absolution zum Teil verachten, zum Teil gar verwerfen."⁹ At the same time, the Lutheran private confession differs from the Roman auricular confession in this, that it is not compulsory and does not require the enumeration of particular sins. Lutheranism rejects the Roman doctrine that only those sins are forgiven which have been confessed.

III. The Lutheran Practice of Private Confession

Private confession and absolution were formerly integral to the Lutheran Church. All the old Lutheran *Kirchenordnungen* have chapters on the subject and go into detail describing the procedure. This procedure was, in fact, fairly uniform.

The minister, vested in cassock, surplice, and violet stole, sat in a confessional chair at the communion rail or the rood screen. Thus, confessions were made in the open church and yet in a place which afforded the necessary privacy to the individual making his confession. There is a notice of the dedication of such a confessional chair in Neuseidlitz (Erzgebirge) as late as 1719, two hundred years after the Reformation. It is worthy of note that in the Roman Church confessional booths were additions subsequent to the Council of Trent. They were introduced in northern Italy by Charles Baromeo, Archbishop of Milan (who died in 1584), and were prescribed by the First and Fourth Councils of Milan (1565 and 1576). Up to that time movable seats had been used and the confessions had been held in the open church in the choir (the entrance to the chancel) or at the choir screen.

Time was especially set aside for confession on Wednesdays and Fridays, the two station days, and on Saturdays after vespers. The individual making his confession would come up to the confessional chair and kneel, and then both the penitent and the minister would use a prescribed rite of confession and absolution. The formula

most generally used was Luther's "Brief Form of Confession" provided in the Small Catechism:

The penitent says: Dear confessor, I ask you please to hear my confession and to pronounce forgiveness in order to fulfill God's will.

I, a poor sinner, plead guilty before God of all sins. In particular I confess before you that . . . I am sorry for all of this and I ask for grace. I want to do better.

[Let the penitent confess whatever else he has done against God's commandments and his own position.]

Then the confessor shall say: God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Amen.

Furthermore: Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?

Yes, dear confessor.

Then let him say: Let it be done for you as you believe. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.

[A confessor will know additional passages with which to comfort and to strengthen the faith of those who have great burdens of conscience or are sorrowful and distressed.]¹⁰

Children and adults were taught this or another formula and learned to know it by heart. Many *Kirchenordnungen* direct that in weekday services the minister should teach the people the rite of private confession. Thus the *Verdensche Kirchenordnung* says, "Before or after the sermon, the words of the catechism in German plus a short form of confession should be read to the people, so that the common man may learn how to confess his sins."¹¹ The people were also taught that the Lutheran Church retained private confession because of the great benefit of absolution, which is the pardoning voice of God sounding from heaven. In the Lutheran Church no one was forced to confession, nor were penances

imposed; for when our Lord upon the cross cried out, "It is finished," the complete payment for all sins had been made in full. Yet everyone was urged to make private confession in order that in the absolution he might receive the individual, personal, and unconditional forgiveness of his sins, especially such particular sins against God's commandments as might weigh upon his heart and burden his conscience. The church simultaneously taught, of course, Luther's own words in the catechism (Small Catechism, V, 24-25):

But if anyone does not find himself burdened with such or greater sins, he should not trouble himself or search for or invent other sins, and thereby make confession a torture, but mention one or two that he knows. Thus, [he may say]: "In particular I confess that I once cursed; again, I once used improper words; I have once neglected this or that [obligation]," etc.

Let this much suffice. But if you know of none at all (which, however, is scarcely possible), then mention none in particular, but receive the forgiveness upon the general confession which you make before God to the confessor.

The significance of the phrase "general confession" in this last sentence has already been demonstrated.

In the Lutheran Church confession and absolution formed an independent and separate church office. The whole Lutheran attitude to confession naturally called for such an independent office. Private absolution was not merely the proclamation of God's word, but the administration of the word to the individual. Therefore, it was no mere preparation for Holy Communion. To be sure, no one received Holy Communion unless he had made his confession at some time, just as no one received Holy Communion who was not baptized. But this fact does not mean, as so many people think today, that a person had to go to confession every time that he went to Holy Communion, or that confession was a rite preparatory to Holy Communion. Such a practice had, indeed, arisen in the Roman Church in the Middle Ages. But in the Lutheran Church such a practice would have been impossible, since Lutherans reintroduced the celebration of Holy Communion as the chief service of every

Sunday and every feast day and urged every member to partake of it at every celebration. Confessions, therefore, were heard throughout the year, and people were, indeed, admonished to confess throughout the year and not just at Easter-time or when they desired to partake of the blessed sacrament. Since confession and absolution were regarded as an independent church office, it was administered in the church, not in the parsonage or a business room or a private home, except in case of necessity. Nearly all the *Kirchenordnungen* prescribe the use of the sanctuary.

In some places private confession and absolution represented the only specific rite of confession and absolution in use. One *Kirchenordnung*, for instance, says, "Es sollen auch die Pastoren jede Person insonderheit verhoeren und die Absolution sprechen, und nicht einen Haufen zugleich eine gemeine Absolution sprechen."¹² The *Calenberg Kirchenordnung* says, "Es sollen aber die Pastoren einen Jeden nach getahner Beichte aus dem Befehl und der Zusage Christi insonderheit absolvieren, und nicht zwei, drei, oder mehr zugleich."¹³ From the very beginning, at the same time, some Lutheran churches did institute a type of public confession which had developed in the Middle Ages; it was called *Offene Schuld*. There was no intention, however, to have it take the place of private confession. It was originally incorporated into the service following the sermon. We find it mentioned in the Saxon Visitation Articles of 1533,¹⁴ the *Kirchenordnung* of Prussia (1535),¹⁵ and the *Braunschweiger Kirchenordnung* of 1531.¹⁶ (The last of these gives a liturgical formula which is really only a confession and does not contain an absolution.)

Actually even the *Offene Schuld* caused debate. When Osiander and Brenz formulated the *Kirchenordnung* of Ansbach-Nuerenberg in 1533, they did away with the *Offene Schuld* which had become customary in the Nuerenberg service.¹⁷ Some people did not approve and complained to the city council. Brenz then defended his action in a letter to the council.¹⁸ There he argued that the *Offene Schuld* nullified the sermon, since the sermon in itself was a general absolution. It also devalued the rite of private confession, since it made private confession appear superfluous. Thus, it undermined the office of the keys, put the conscience of some

people to sleep, and made other people uncertain. The keys of the kingdom of heaven was the application of the gospel of Christ. The gospel could be applied to a general assembly, and it could be applied to an individual. When it was preached to a general assembly, it worked forgiveness according to the nature of such preaching. Then, if an *Offene Schuld* followed the sermon, it resulted in the false idea that the preaching of the gospel was not really a general application of the office of the keys.

On the other hand, argued Brenz, an *Offene Schuld* was not the application of the gospel to an individual. Nowhere could one find in the Scriptures that a mixed group of people (in which, besides true Christians, there might be unbelievers, hypocrites, impenitents, adulterers, fornicators, usurers, traitors, drunkards, murderers, and those who did not desire absolution, much less were determined to amend their sinful lives) were to be absolved. The old church knew nothing of this sort. Private absolution was the application of the gospel to an individual. Therefore, in addition to the sermon, which was in its own nature a general absolution, it was necessary to have private confession for the individual absolution of the sinner, especially when he was troubled about his personal forgiveness. The fathers called holy absolution the sacrament of penance, and they did so for a good reason. The very nature of a sacrament demanded its administration, not to a group in general, but to individuals who desired it. It was improper to administer the sacrament of absolution to a whole group in which there were people who had given no evidence that they desired it or that they were penitent.

The city council debated the question, but could not agree. The matter was, therefore, referred to Luther. Luther answered in a letter which was also signed by Bugenhagen, Jonas, Melancthon, and Cruciger (dated October 8, 1533).¹⁹ In it he and his colleagues agreed that the sermon was a general absolution, but concluded that an *Offene Schuld* could be used in order to remind the hearers that each of them should believe the gospel as the proclamation of the forgiveness of his own sins. Simultaneously, however, Luther and the others stressed the maintenance of private confession and absolution by all means.

IV. The Exodus of the Practice of Private Confession

To understand the exodus of private confession from the Lutheran Church, we must realize, first of all, that the doctrine and practice of the Reformed Church has had a tremendous influence on the Lutheran Church from the very beginning. Secondly, we must remember that between the sixteenth century and the second half of the seventeenth century came the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). The Lutheran Church was grievously disrupted. Many Lutheran churches were without a pastor, not only for a few years, but for decades. Church orders, church books, and church furnishings were destroyed. Schools were closed. Religious education stopped. Morality sank to a low level. Under these conditions one can understand that the administration of private confession and absolution, which depends on the functioning of the office of the ministry, suffered tremendously.

It is surprising how soon after the Thirty Years War the church orders were again reprinted and put into practice. But the problem of restoring the life of the church was so great that only an outward restoration was possible. This was especially true in regard to confession and absolution. Private confession and the confessional chair were restored, but only the outward forms could be reestablished. This is the time which is called the period of "dead orthodoxy." The church held on to orthodox doctrine and practice but, so far as individual faith and morality were concerned, much was lacking. This situation is not difficult to understand when one considers the conditions of that time.

Two other factors likewise contributed to the downfall of private confession. The first was the immediate association of private confession and absolution with Holy Communion. While the *Kirchenordnungen* expressly stated that people were to come to confession throughout the year, specific times were now prescribed for confession in connection with Holy Communion and feast days. This made private confession practically impossible, because a single pastor could not hear a hundred or more confessions in a short time. Secondly, confession was used for the purpose of church discipline. It was made punitive instead of reconciliatory. For example, a woman who bore an illegitimate child was forced to come before the

congregation and beseech forgiveness before the minister would grant absolution. In this way a stigma was attached to the person who had confessed. The whole practice became legalistic. The main part of the office was no longer the absolution. Consequently, people became afraid of confession and stayed away.

From such conditions as these arose a pietistic aversion to private confession. The first blow came from the theological school at Rostock. Theophilus Grossgebauer published an article in 1661 entitled "Waechterstimme aus dem Verwuesteten Zion," in which he stated that private confession was unscriptural and unnecessary, because those who go to confession are either penitent or impenitent. If they are penitent, they already have forgiveness; and if they are impenitent, the absolution will do them no good anyhow.²⁰

After Grossgebauer's death, Philip Jacob Spener became the leader of the movement known as Pietism.²¹ He was a pastor in Frankfurt and later a professor of theology in the University of Halle. He inaugurated prayer meetings in private houses which devalued the liturgical services of the church, the sacraments, and the office of the ministry. His spirit was different from that of the sixteenth-century Lutheran reformers—also in regard to confession and absolution. They had said, "Das ganze Beichtwesen ist vornehmlich um der heiligen Absolution willen da." Spener said, "Das Hauptwerk des ganzen Beichtwesen geht vornehmlich dahin, dass die noetige Pruefung der Kommunikanten recht befoerdert werde, und der Beichtfater eine berueme Gelegenheit habe, mit seinen Beichtkindern notduerftig und vertraulich zu handeln."²² He declared himself in favor of abolishing confession and absolution altogether and substituting something else which would suit his pietistic purposes.

That something else necessarily involved, of course, doing away with the confessional chair in the church. Spener proposed that everyone who desired to partake of Holy Communion on Sunday should come individually to the pastor's study during the week before to announce his intention. There in the pastor's study, he claimed, there would be opportunity for a heart-to-heart talk, something much better than private confession and absolution, according to Spener's pietistic ideas. By instituting communion

announcements in the pastor's study, Spener did, indeed, contribute mightily to the fall of such confession and absolution into disuse in the Lutheran Church.

Spener advocated many more practices tending to the same end. He urged pastors to hold a confessional service for all wishing to partake of Holy Communion, in which the pastor should give a confessional address, followed by the confession and absolution of all as a group. Only after these things had been done was the pastor to offer private confession and absolution to those in attendance. In this way Spener formally retained private confession and absolution (since it was an office of the church, which he could not legally abolish), but he added something which would effectively kill it. For since the addition was more convenient for the people and the pastors, the new soon displaced the old. Spener likewise attacked prescribed forms of private confession. He wanted everyone to pour out his heart in his own words. The result was that the once familiar forms of confession were lost. Since most people did not have the ability to confess in an individual way, they did not confess at all.

The influence of Spener resulted in the substitution of Reformed practice for the traditional practice of the Lutheran Church. An instructive instance is the case of Johann Casper Schade, who was pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Berlin and an ardent follower of Spener. He both spoke and wrote against private confession and absolution, sometimes using such harsh language as "Beichtstuhl, Satanstuhl, Hoellenpfuhl."²³ In his congregation, consequently, he completely abolished private confession and absolution. Those who came for confession were given only a confessional sermon and absolution as a group. This action caused trouble in the church, and the matter was referred to the office of the elector of Brandenburg. At the time the elector was away and appointed a commission to handle the case. This commission would have restored the Lutheran practice of private confession and absolution, but in the meantime the elector returned. He himself was inclined toward the Reformed Church and in a subtle way had already begun to unionize the Lutheran and Reformed elements in Berlin. In consequence, Schade and those inclined to the Reformed Church felt free to publish an

"Apostolischer Bericht und Unterricht von Beichte und Abendmahl," in which they treated confession and Holy Communion in the same way as such free-thinkers as Dippel did, when they rejected the office of the ministry, called confession and absolution "ein babylonisches Monstrum und Ungeheuer vom narrischen Menschenhirne ersonnen," and called Holy Communion a mere memorial feast.²⁴ This approach had the backing of the elector, and so the Lutherans had to be satisfied with communion announcements, public confession, and general absolution.

Pietism sought freedom from private confession and absolution. The leaders of the church followed the trend, partly out of sympathy, partly out of fear, and partly out of desire for peace and political gain. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the denunciation of private confession and absolution by Lutheran sectarians was loud and vehement. Rosenback called private confession "eine verfluchte Abgoetterei und Gaukelei."²⁵ Tuchtfield called it "Satzungen unter welchen der Menschen Seele gefangen gehalten werden."²⁶ What the Pietists started was carried to its logical conclusion by the Rationalists. To them absolution, involving the speaking of divine words, made no sense at all, because they rejected the inspiration of Scripture and the power of the word of God. For them forgiveness of sins was obtained through the resolution to live a better life.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century one church after another abolished private confession and absolution. An example is the edict issued in Mecklenburg on 27 November 1790. Things became worse when catechisms, hymnbooks, and agendas were rationalized. The Wuerttemberg *Liturgie* of 1809 no longer gave the people an opportunity to learn the prescribed form of confession.²⁷ (Sadly enough, the Synodical Catechism of 1943 similarly deleted the form of private confession provided by Luther in the Fifth Part of the Small Catechism.)

V. The Implications of the Loss of Private Confession and Absolution

These doctrinal and historical observations now raise this question: Is the present practice of the Lutheran Church as to confession and absolution satisfactory or unsatisfactory? The Lutheran Confessions

say again and again that private confession and absolution are not to be abolished in our churches or allowed to fall into disuse. How, then, can confessional Lutherans be satisfied with the present usage of our churches—which is, in fact, the disuse of private confession and absolution? If, then, we are dissatisfied with the present situation, what shall we do about it? In the first place, we must restudy what God has revealed to us about the means of grace and what our confessions state on the basis of Holy Scripture about private confession and absolution. Secondly, we must do something about restoring the Lutheran practice of private confession and absolution.

There are many things we can do. Chaplain Delvin E. Ressel, in an article which appeared in the *Lutheran Chaplain* in 1949, makes the following suggestions:

Having properly taught Part V of the Small Catechism, and remembering what the other confessions teach and enjoin on the same subject, the Lutheran pastor or chaplain will make such practical arrangements as to enable his spiritual children to derive maximum benefits from holy absolution. First, he will announce a regular time and place for the hearing of confessions. Then he will see that the ecclesiastical appointments are proper and inviting for private confession. Unless he makes these provisions, his teaching of confession will remain barren theorizing and the important confessional principle of the renewal of the baptismal covenant will lie fallow. Blessed Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, in his *Pastorale*, directs that confessions be heard in the clergy seat next to the communicants' rail or the rood screen, thus being in the open church and yet affording the necessary privacy to the penitent. Blessed Wilhelm Loehe has the following on the practical arrangement of the confessional: "In the nave, either against a pillar on the south side or at a corner of the wall usually separating the chair from the nave, about opposite the place where the pulpit can be placed, is the confessional [chair], a necessary appointment, if private confession is practiced. Since private confession is the heaviest work of a pastor and also

the most tiring physically, the pastor must be able to sit. The confessional, moreover, must be so placed as to be seen by all, yet not so as to permit anyone to hear the voice of the penitent." . . . The object of all these arrangements, in accordance with confessional teaching and practice, is to make confession, not a torture, but a welcome opportunity to receive divine grace for one's self and one's own particular need. Of course, the most thorough instruction and the most adequate and inviting facilities will avail little if the pastor or chaplain neglects to cultivate the spirit of a true evangelical father confessor.²⁸

One might add that the pastor should be properly vested in surplice and violet stole in order to symbolize that he is administering the means of grace and is the mouthpiece of God in this official act of the church. Furthermore, there should be a printed form of the confession at the place where the penitent kneels to say his confession. This form should be used with all reverence and sincerity. It should be taught to the catechumens and all members. In fact, the catechumens should be required to learn it by heart, so that they may confess without the help of a printed form when they come for confession and absolution.

Such externals are important if private confession and absolution are to be restored to the Lutheran Church. But they will present no difficulty when the more important problems have been solved. Among these is the problem of re-educating clergy and laity. The Fifth Chief Part of Luther's Catechism must be emphasized, including, of course, Luther's "Short Form of Confession." Then there is the problem of overcoming the prejudice which has been built up against private confession and absolution. Traditions which go back hundreds of years, no matter how bad, cannot be corrected overnight. If, however, the position of the Lutheran Church is correctly stated in its confessions, then to restore private confession and absolution will always remain the goal of all true Lutherans.

Endnotes

The Rev. P. H. D. Lang, who died in 1981, was one of the foremost liturgical scholars in the history of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In 1960 he provided Dr. Donald Deffner with written permission to arrange the publication of this article. The editors wish to thank the Rev. Peter Cage for the research on which the following footnotes are based. Any reader who can supply additional information on the citations which remain unspecified below is welcome to send such data to the assistant editor of the *CTQ* [D. McC. L. J.].

1. Lang is here translating Luther's *Von der Beicht, ob die der Papst macht habe zu gebieten*, WA 8:178, 28-30. Lang uses this same reference again at the end of a larger quotation at note 8.
2. Lang is here translating WA 10 III:64, *Ein Kurtzer begriff des Sermons D. M. L. geprediget am Sonntag Reminiscere, von der heimlichen beicht* (March 22, 1522), WA 6:58-64. The translation in the American Edition reads, "I know him [the devil] well, and he knows me well, too. If you had known him, you would not have rejected confession in this way." LW 51:100.
3. Lang is here translating *De Captivate Babylonica Ecclesiae* (1520), WA 6:546; LW 36:86.
4. It is not clear which edition of the original (German) text the author is citing here, but the *Sendschreiben an die zu Frankfurt am Main* (1533) is found in WA 30 III:554-571. The *Concordia Journal*, 16:4 (October 1990) provides an English translation of the letter by Jon D. Vieker, pp. 334-351. The ellipsis represents several paragraphs of Luther's letter. The specifically cited sections correspond to WA 30 III:566, 29-30, and 569, 6-11. The corresponding sections in Vieker's translation are pages 342 and 345.
5. Another English translation of Luther's "brief admonition on confession" (to which the author refers) is found in Theodore Tappert's edition of the *Book of Concord*, as an appendix to the Large Catechism's section on the Lord's Supper. It is entitled "A Brief Exhortation to Confession," LC, V, 15-16. The *Concordia Triglotta* does not contain this section.

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6. Lang's translation again corresponds to sections of WA 30 III:554-571. Before the ellipsis the reference is to WA 30 III:566, 9-10, and, after the ellipsis, is to WA 30 III:569, 14-15. In Vieker's English translation (see note 4) the corresponding sections are paragraph 23 on page 342, and paragraph 30 on page 345.
 7. The *Braunschweigische Kirchenordnung of 1569* is found in *Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI Jahrhunderts*, VI:I (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1955), p. 120, compiled by Emil Sehling.
 8. Lang is here translating WA 8:178, 8-30.
 9. This specific reference in the *Calenberg Kirchenordnung* could not be identified.
 10. The editor is here employing, in place of Lang's rendition, portions of the same section in the new synodical translation, *Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), pp. 25-26.
 11. The church order to which reference is made here could not be found.
 12. The church order to which reference is made here could not be found.
 13. The church order to which reference is made here could not be found.
 14. The *Saxon Visitation Articles of 1533* are found in *Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI Jahrhunderts*, I, compiled under the direction of Aemilius Ludwig Richter (Leipzig: Ernst Julius Günther, 1871), p. 229.
 15. The church order to which reference is made here could not be found.
 16. The church order to which reference is made here could not be found.
 17. The *Kirchenordnung* of Ansbach-Nuerenberg by Osiander and Brenz (1533) is apparently the same as the *Brandenburg-Nuerenberg Kirchenordnung* (1533) by the same men. Both Richter and Sehling include it in their compilations. As indicat-

ed, no *Offene Schuld* appears after the sermon in the aforesaid order of service (Richter, p. 206; Sehling, XI, p. 195).

18. This letter could not be identified.
19. *Luther, Bugenhagen, Jonas, Melanchthon und Cruciger an den Rat zu Nürnberg* (October 8, 1533), *WA Briefe* 6:527-530.
20. Confirmation of this statement and other details which follow appears in Heinrich Schmid, *Die Geschichte des Pietismus* (Nordlingen: C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1863), p. 269.
21. See Schmid's section on "Der Beichtstreit," pp. 259-274, on Spener's role in the history of confession.
22. Schmid, p. 269.
23. This specific description of the practice of confession is again reported by Schmid, p. 262.
24. Reference is again made to the work of Schade and others by Schmid, p. 267.
25. The source of this quotation could not be determined.
26. The source of this quotation could not be determined.
27. The edict and liturgy to which reference is made here could not be found.
28. The reference could not be identified more specifically.

The Peace of the Risen Lord: Celebrating Easter in China

Henry Rowold

It has never been easy for people from the West to understand China, not even the church there. The Chinese measure their history by events and epochs very differently than we do. Their language, even their names, are not just unrecognizable but unpronounceable. Their political system has always been an enigma, whether in imperial days or now under communist rule. Adding to these things all the animosity that divided our countries a generation or so ago, and there is not much basis for understanding. Even what we hear about the church in China is so fragmented and contradictory that we do not understand much about it—although what we do hear makes us want to know more.

While this article cannot solve the whole problem,¹ I should like to make a start by inviting its readers to join a medical team from the Wheat Ridge Foundation and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as we shared Easter with Christians in Huai Yin. My hope is that by sharing my notes of the sermon we heard that day, together with some introductory comments and some reflections, the readers will obtain some insight into the life and ministry of the Christian church there.

The Connection

The occasion for being in China was an invitation to send a medical team to spend a month in a hospital in Huai Yin, doing surgery, performing therapy, instructing doctors and nurses, and sharing our lives and love there. The key to this enterprise, of course, was the medical team itself. There were five members: Dr. Marcy Ditmanson (a retired orthopedic surgeon, born in China of Lutheran missionary parents, interned there by the Japanese during World War 2, a long-term missionary in Taiwan and Bangladesh), his wife Joyce (raised in China and also interned there, an Australian, a nurse), Margaret Klein (a physical therapist), and Pat Shiltgen (an occupational therapist) and her husband. What made this team so valuable was the conjunction of professional expertise (which was formidable) and experience in China (the Ditmansons speaking Chinese with ease and grace) with a commitment to Jesus Christ and to the fullness of life that He gives. Aside from the medical and

training agenda, in other words, the members of this team were coming to China to express their gratitude for salvation and life in Christ (1.) by sharing the healing touch and expertise which God had given them with sufferers in China, (2.) by extending that touch in training doctors and nurses in China, (3.) by giving their spoken witness to the love of Christ wherever possible, (4.) by encouraging local Chinese Christians, and (5.) by providing Christians in the United States and elsewhere a way to bring the love of Christ to China also.

We should mention others involved in this venture aside from the team itself. The Wheat Ridge Foundation has already been mentioned. The agency of the LCMS involved was the China Coordinating Center, established by the LCMS in 1987 to explore and develop just such forms of ministry and witness in China. The other major partner was the Amity Foundation, a social-ministry agency established by Christians in China in 1985 to provide outlets for witness and service in society not otherwise open to the church in China. This seminar was the fourth in a series designed in conjunction, beginning back in 1987.

The point is that the Wheat Ridge medical team was not in Huai Yin by accident, and was not there simply to demonstrate and share medical techniques. What was really happening was that, under the Spirit's guidance, Christians in China were inviting Christians in the United States (from the LCMS and the Wheat Ridge Foundation) to come and serve both the church and the nation of China. The team, in other words, was there in the name of Christ, one part of the body of Christ responding to the call of another, to join in service and praise of the Lord's name.

The Place

Although Huai Yin is a small city by Chinese standards (300,000 people), it was an ideal location for this seminar for several reasons. Its claim to fame, aside from being a major city of northern Jiangsu Province, is that it is the birthplace of Zhou Enlai, premier of China for many years (interestingly his given name literally means "may grace come"). In addition, its comparative isolation means it receives few Western visitors—and thus was very receptive to our

visit. Another reason that the Amity Foundation chose it, however, was that Huai Yin forms one of the strongest concentrations of Christians in central China. As we learned subsequently, it was also the birthplace of Ruth Bell, daughter of a well-known medical missionary, L. Nelson Bell, and wife of Billy Graham. Aware of some but not all of this background, our team boarded a plane in Hong Kong on Good Friday bound for Nanjing. We completed our journey on Holy Saturday with a four-hour ride by van to Huai Yin, where we met our hosts and settled into our quarters.

Easter Sunday

The one other thing which we did on Saturday was to meet the escorts assigned to us while we were in Huai Yin. This form of "hospitality" is not uncommon in China, particularly when a group of guests from overseas visits a more out-of-the-way place in China. To put the best construction on things, this is a way of protecting us from anything awkward or unpleasant. One suspects, however, that it is a way of keeping us from getting too close to the common people—and of keeping tabs on whatever we do. This escort service did have one ironic turn, however, which simply shows how the Lord can turn most anything to His purpose. When the members of our team said that we wanted to worship at the Christian church on Easter Sunday morning, "escort duty" meant that the escorts had to walk into church along with us and sit there beside us in the front pew—when as members of the Communist Party they otherwise are forbidden to come anywhere close to a church.² (The readers may keep these escorts in mind, as they read the sermon printed below.)

On arriving at the church I must admit that my first impression was some disappointment. Having seen quite impressive church buildings elsewhere in China, I was assuming that in this Christian stronghold we should have the joy of joining hundreds, perhaps even upwards of a thousand, in a sanctuary decorated to reflect the festive Easter message. The reality was that the church there had no real sanctuary, only an old ramshackle residence, gray and quite austere.

When we arrived, we were escorted inside, into what might have been a living room, one end of which served as a small chancel. Other rooms opened onto this one, as well as porches and walk-

ways. I counted some four to five hundred people in sight, tightly packed, fully aware that there were probably others outside on all sides. There was a small organ, which was helpful because the student leading the singing was seemingly blessed with more exuberance than musical skill. After several hymns (sung by congregation and choir), prayer, and readings from Scripture, a Pastor Lin, from one of the churches in Nanjing arose to preach. The congregation settled down, with hardly a distracting sound anywhere, for the full fifty minutes of the sermon. (As others read my notes of the sermon, they would do well to imagine themselves surrounded by hundreds of people, many of whom suffered for the Lord during the Cultural Revolution, who talk of a resurgence of the church with joy, and who are hungry to hear the gospel rather than the worn-out and empty slogans of the Communist Party.)

**The Sermon (in Abridged Form):
"The Peace of the Risen Lord"**

"Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, may the peace of the Lord be with you. How wonderful it is to be with so many of you today to celebrate our Lord's resurrection. Can there be a stronger witness to His resurrection than this church bursting with people today? The number of people who claim Him as Lord is increasing daily, and each person adds another voice to the chorus of people praising Him. Today that chorus is even stronger, with the presence of several foreigners worshipping with us. May you all have the peace of the Lord.

"Today we are celebrating the second of our two great Christian festivals, Easter. In reality, however, they are really one inseparable festival of our Lord giving Himself and His peace to this world. At Christmas Jesus came to bring 'peace on earth.' After He gave His life on the cross for our sins, and rose again, His first words were 'Peace be with you.' That Lord and that peace are ours. We who believe in Him truly have the peace of reconciliation with God, the peace that comes only from the love of God, the peace that kindles in us also love among each other, the peace that makes and characterizes us as His disciples. That peace and love of God in Christ have brought our foreign brothers and sisters among us in

China (to share the love of God with the ill and suffering), and that peace and love of God has called each of us here to worship him this morning.

"The will of Christ, of course, is that the entire world have peace, the peace which He has come to bring. We are the Lord's. We have His peace. We live to share that peace, the peace of His gospel, with all people in this world. After all, our Lord's first word after He rose from the dead was this proclamation of His resurrection: 'Peace be with you!'

"Indirectly, that peace also means stability in society. We all know, of course, that the more Christians there are in society, the more stability society will enjoy, because Christians live by peace and love, and they desire to give a good witness to our Lord. What our nation needs, obviously, for real stability is a full measure of the gospel and a steady increase of Christians.

"Indirectly, too, Christian peace results in a concern for the wholeness of the body, physical health. In fact, Christians, like our foreign guests also, have always helped give and sustain health, so that people may have a tangible witness to the love of Christ. When one of my classmates needed to see a doctor, he always went to a Christian doctor, because he knew that doctor prayed before he began any operations, and always viewed each patient as a special gift from God and an opportunity to share the love and peace of God.

"When one of my friends, who happened to be a Communist (and as such forbidden to believe in God) was close to death, he said that he felt a deep sense of peace, because of his Christian wife, her love for him and her trust in God. Although he had not been allowed to believe in God or practice religion, he knew that now, at the point of death, he was beyond the control of the Communist Party. His request was that when he died he be given a Christian funeral. As it happened, not long after he died, his wife also lay at death's door, suffering from cancer at only fifty years of age. I went to visit her and pray with her. What does a person pray for in such a situation? We spoke our farewells, and I could not keep the tears from forming. She told me not to cry, however, because 'I know where

I am going.' She encouraged her child to continue her faith and worship of God, and she eventually died. In this family, we see one of the clearest marks of a Christian. In knowing a depth of peace beyond mere physical and temporal life, a Christian has something a non-Christian does not.

"I have another classmate who also understands that he lives to bring the peace of God into the physical lives of others. He is a farmer, who understands that his work of providing food and health to people is his form of service to both God and his fellow human beings. God has certainly given different gifts to different people, so that each of us has different ways of glorifying God, serving Him, and sharing His peace. We also recall that before the liberation,³ the Christian church operated many hospitals, where it provided healing for many people. The doctors who served there, even the medicine they prepared, were gifts of God for healing and for peace.

"There is always, however, a peace of the heart which is even more fundamental than the peace of the body. Luke 10 (18-19) talks of preaching the gospel to the poor—the poor of heart, the poor of soul. It is only the gospel which can truly fill the heart and give peace. It gives sight to the spiritually blind and life to the dead. We have a peace that enables us to give our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord. That kind of giving, that kind of peace is what a true Christian has.

"What makes that giving possible is the freedom Christ in His death and resurrection gives us, freedom from sin, freedom from death. A person may have physical health, but if his heart is burdened, what kind of freedom or peace is there? In fact, when that peace of the soul is missing, we hear about suicide, inner torment, mental and physical illnesses, and other problems. Thanks be to Christ, however, who rose to give us a peace that cannot be threatened by any problem now, not even by death!

"How much people want a peace like that can be seen in the Lunar New Year custom of pasting sayings on door-frames expressing hope for peace.⁴ What a joy it is for Christians to write on theirs, 'May God give you peace.' This wish is an echo of the

Lord's peace, the peace He brought at Christmas, the peace He gave on the cross, the peace He proclaimed at Easter. 'Peace I give to you, My peace.'

"I recently received a sad letter from an old friend. He found in his old age that he had cancer of the colon, and needed an operation. 'I am concerned about my family, especially about the children who are still not on their own. This is my last letter.' I felt badly because he died with a heavy burden, without peace.

"By contrast, I have another friend in Heilungjiang, a member of the Communist Party for more than forty years. He told me, 'I believe in Jesus, but how, after all these years and especially in retirement, can I resign from the party?'⁵ 'What decision you make,' I told him, 'is up to you. You certainly have the greatest treasure in the world in Jesus. He not only changes hearts, but changes lives. By comparison everything else in the world is worthless. In Christ God has given Himself to us and for us. We have forgiveness, reconciliation, life and peace eternal. When He gives His blessing of peace, that is also a blessing of power.'

"Brothers and sisters, that blessing of peace was our Lord's first word after His resurrection. It was also His final word before His ascension. Rejoice! The Lord is risen. The Lord lives among us—in our church, in our homes, in our hearts. May the peace of the Lord which passes all understanding be yours now and forever."

The Afterglow of the Peace of Christ

Things did not end with the sermon. As if to punctuate the message of the Lord's resurrection, ten people came forward to be baptized into name of the Lord—not more than ten feet from those members of the Communist Party who represented a different power, an atheistic power. After that, another seven people from mission stations of the surrounding countryside came forward to be installed as evangelists of the one proclaimed dead by that party. It is truly a powerful peace that passes not only all understanding, but all parties and powers, one that even passes borders and unites people of all countries into one Father's family—a peace that even reaches out to slightly ill-at-ease members of the Communist Party who were

unsuspecting guests of honor at a divine party.

More, however, was still to come. Once the peace was proclaimed in the benediction, people flocked around to share greetings and shake hands—toothless old grandmas, shy high school students, seminary field workers, doctors from local hospitals, people from all ages and walks of life. It seemed as though there was no end. Those I could see when I sat down in church numbered about five hundred. I did not realize that there was an upstairs; actually it was just a bunch of bedrooms cleared of all furniture, except for very crude benches and a loudspeaker. There was even a basement—dank, dark, uninviting, but also filled with benches. In addition, there were still people standing! What seemed like a grossly inflated estimate of some three thousand people worshipping together was perhaps right on the mark.

The rising awareness of the power and manifest presence of the risen Lord in the heartland of China led me to rethink my sense of disappointment when we came to an aging, bleak residence rather than a festive sanctuary. There was still room for disappointment, to be sure; conversation quickly uncovered the fact that it was only official intransigence that was keeping the church from having the kind of sanctuary for which they yearn—where they could all see each other and bounce their praises back and forth off the walls. On the other hand, there could hardly be a clearer reminder that the church is never a sanctuary, but is the living, praising, glowing company of God's holy people, gathered around (and, in the case of the church in Huai Yin, also above and below) God's word. We finally left church, some three hours after we arrived there, and we were beaming, seeming hardly to touch the pavement as we walked back to our hostel. We had heard a powerful and joyful proclamation that the Lord is indeed risen—and that the Lord is indeed Lord.

The Peace of Christ in Perspective

As we reflected on the word we had heard and celebrated that day, we were constantly impressed at the crystal clarity of the gospel message. All eyes were pointed to the Risen Lord. Try as I might, I could detect no trace of any political overtones, nor could I sense any attempt to blunt the gospel or to short-circuit the message of the

resurrection. In fact, the presence of those members of the Communist Party seemed a divine catalyst to draw out implications of the Christian gospel with transparent clarity: the participation of Christians in a global family (including also non-Chinese); the contrast of the peace which the party desires and promises with the peace which only Christ can give, the peace which the Communist on his death-bed (out of the control of the party) could know; the need of China for the gospel (and by implication the lordship and presence of Christ). Although a seminary professor might have shortened the sermon and tightened it up a bit, there were few wasted words spoken.

The church in China, of course, does not always live on such a high plane, nor does the church anywhere. In fact, it is aware that it is only a pilgrim church, very vulnerable and very fragile. It is facing almost impossible problems—training leaders for its next generation (with an average clergy age of more than seventy years), feeling heavy (and occasionally capricious and hostile) pressures from the government, dealing with tensions in the church about how to deal with those pressures, dealing with heresies and schisms in more remote areas of China, trying to preserve the unity of the church in the face of forces seeking to split it.

Problems aside, however, the church of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, is very much alive in the People's Republic of China. To see that church at worship is both a very humbling and exhilarating experience. It is humbling because we realize how much many have sacrificed for their Lord and their faith. It is exhilarating for the same reason—now that these people are celebrating, shouting the praises of the risen Lord openly.

Our Part in the Peace of Christ

Although the LCMS cannot, because of political realities, enter China as a church body and begin residential missionary work in the traditional way, there is much that the LCMS can do and is presently doing. Through medical teams (or social workers) the LCMS is providing strength, encouragement, and added credibility to the Christian church there—to say nothing of bringing occasional members of the Communist Party along to church. Through our

three English teachers, we are doing even more, because they are able to live in China for two years, not just a month, all the while relating to future leaders of China as respected—and Christian—teachers.⁶ We also share religious and theological literature with pastors, leaders, and students of the church, and in the process we provide the voices and pens of servants like Luther, Walther, and others through whom the Lord continues to build up His church. Mention should also be made of the worship resources which the International Lutheran Laymen's League provides through its cassette ministry.

As China continues to open, the opportunities will expand, and the LCMS is well-poised with its China Coordinating Center in Hong Kong to continue to develop and expand them. The readers of this article are invited to pray for the church in China and for ways in which we can enhance its ministry, to alert us to people who can serve as short-term workers in China (English teachers, people with medical, social, or other expertise), to share with us contacts among Chinese people who have connections in China, to include on tours of China time to worship with local Christians (the CCC can provide details and even orientation), to invite Chinese people into local churches, and to inform the CCC of how it can support the ministry of others. For the present, however, it is enough simply to have shared this brief record of Easter in Huai Yin—as a reminder that Jesus Christ is Lord of all people and is worshipped as such by a growing church in China.

Endnotes

1. A summary view of the church in the PRC (People's Republic of China) is given in Henry Rowold, "God's Miracle of Life: The Church in China," *Concordia Journal*, XV (1989), 1, pp. 10-28. Although this article needs updating to reflect the tensions surrounding the democratic movement of the spring of 1989 as well as ongoing developments in the church, it is still a helpful overview of major features of the church in China.

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2. The policy currently governing religious matters in the PRC states that "the policy of freedom of religious belief is directed towards the citizens of our country; it is not applicable to party members. Unlike the average citizen, the party member belongs to a Marxist political party, and there can be no doubt at all that he must be an atheist and not a theist." Cf. "The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period" (Document #19 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China), *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice*, edited by Donald MacInnis (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 20.
 3. "Liberation" is the term universally used in the People's Republic of China to refer to the takeover of China by the Communists in 1949.
 4. Pastor Lin refers to the Chinese New Year associated with the custom of pasting onto door-frames red sheets of paper on which are written auspicious words or blessings. Although it may have religious or magical roots, it is seen merely as a folk custom by many, especially in the PRC, but has been used by Christians as a form of witness. Any connection with the daubing of the blood of the Passover lamb on door-frames, which some have suggested, is doubtful.
 5. This is the second reference to the reality that members of the Communist Party are forbidden not only to be a member of a religious group but even to have a religious faith. The fact that an increasing number of members is ignoring that prohibition is a cause of no small embarrassment to the party, which in turn prompts an otherwise unexpected, if localized, tightening of pressure on the church.
 6. Those English teachers include Jonathan Rowold, son of the author, Anastasia Wilch, from the Lutheran Church-Canada, and Pamela Shaper, former teacher in Merrillville, Indiana. Jonathan is completing his second year, while Anastasia and Pamela are beginning their first.

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Luke the Preacher: Preparing Sermons for the Gospels of Series C

Arthur A. Just, Jr.

The advent of the three-year lectionary series has given each evangelist a significant place in the church's liturgical life. Luke the evangelist is a preacher and theologian who records the words of Jesus and organizes them to proclaim the gospel. As the third of the synoptics, Luke gives the church a different perspective on the life of Jesus than do Matthew or Mark. He is the most thematic of the evangelists, utilizing the best literary techniques of his day to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. He structures his gospel around specific themes that "will be developed, dropped, then presented again,"¹ and brought to completion at the end of the gospel. The historical-grammatical method of exegesis encourages this thematic view of Luke, building on a syntactical and linguistical analysis by observing how the structure of the language is patterned to aid the reader in seeing the author's intentions. Tracing Lukan motifs through the gospel assists us in word studies by letting Scripture interpret Scripture through the use of parallel passages.

A thematic approach to the gospel is *historical*, discovering the original context of meaning and addressing the specific historical and cultural context of Luke's gospel. The first concern of the interpreter is to consider carefully the first century reader's understanding of Lukan themes, that is, how the original audience would have understood Luke's words. Early Christian readers traced the themes of Luke's gospel to discern the purpose of God as it is reflected in Luke's narrative. By perceiving Luke's gospel as literature, today's preacher may use structural and thematic analysis of the gospel to assist him in the formation of a sermon theme or structure. Thus, the preacher is able to see the value of the gospel for preaching and catechesis.²

The goal in any interpretation of the New Testament for preaching is first to assess the *theological significance* of the text for the original audience, and then from there to see the appropriate application for today's world. But the application must correspond to the theological significance so that one may both preserve the original intention of the words and apply that original intention to congregations today.³ As Luke preaches to his congregation by relating to them the preaching of Jesus, so we today as preachers of the gospel

proclaim to people the words of Jesus by means of the preaching of Luke. Thus, the more we know about the evangelist and his literary, structural, and thematic intentions, the more we shall be able to discover accurately the theological significance of his text for the original audience and apply that significance to congregations today. In preparation for preaching on the gospels of Series C, this overview of Luke will focus on the theological significance of Lukan structure and themes.

The Prologue (Luke 1:1-4)

Luke is the only gospel with a literary prologue that begins as the Hellenistic world begins good literature. In one brilliant periodic sentence, using some of the best Greek prose in the New Testament, Luke tells the reader what the gospel is about, what his research methods are, and what the goal of his work is. This gospel is an apostolic work, received from eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, proclaiming the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation in the events of Jesus' life. Luke writes this work to Theophilus as catechesis (κατηχήσις), confirming for him what he has already been taught, so that he might have assurance concerning this word about Jesus. (The prologue is part of the gospel for St. Luke's Day, October 18.)

The Infancy Narratives (Luke 1:5-2:52)

Immediately following the prologue, Luke shifts from brilliant Hellenistic Greek to archaic Septuagintal Greek. Something is communicated by this drastic shift in literary style that Luke wants the reader to note. This is no ordinary narrative about any ordinary man. It sounds like the Old Testament Scriptures because it is a continuation and fulfilment of those Scriptures in the person of Jesus Christ. The story of Jesus is ancient history with a long pedigree, tapping into Israel's history and completing it. As Luke's genealogy will relate, the seed of Jesus goes back to the first man, Adam. The Hellenistic world would have been impressed by this point. One of the reasons that people tolerated the Jews was their ancient roots. Luke appeals to this history apologetically so that the reader may give this life of Christ a serious reading. Even the language will

suggest this appeal.

Luke begins and ends his gospel in Jerusalem in the temple to indicate that Jesus' Jewish roots are important. The infancy narratives show in the fashion of step-parallelism⁴ that John and Jesus are the two great figures of biblical history, and their relationship shows how the old gives way to the new. This theme will be carried out throughout the gospel (Luke 3, 5, and 7 in particular).

The identity of Jesus is firmly established in the first two chapters. He is called Jesus (1:31) and given the strongest characteristics: "He will be called great (μέγας) and Son of the Most High (υἱὸς ὑψίστου), and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (1:32-33). The angel goes on to tell Mary that the child conceived in her womb will be called holy, the Son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ). At Jesus' birth the angels announce to the shepherds that Jesus is the Savior (σωτήρ) who is Christ the Lord (χριστὸς κύριος). Simeon says that he will not die until he sees the Lord's Anointed One (τὸν χριστὸν κυρίου). The entire infancy narrative is filled with themes of the gospel that proclaim that now, in John and Jesus, God's final end-time salvation is breaking in.

The infancy narratives are also filled with superb representatives of the Old Testament remnant. Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna are all witnesses to the faith of those who wait in expectation for the coming of God's Anointed One to be the suffering righteous fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. The canticles in Luke's first two chapters, which announce themes that will be carried through the rest of the gospel, build upon the canticles of the Old Testament. Since the Magnificat, Benedictus, Gloria in Excelsis, and Nunc Dimittis now serve as liturgical songs, the church transcends time when it uses in its divine liturgy and prayer offices Old Testament hymns found in a New Testament context. The church is a church of both the Old and New Testaments. During the Advent and Christmas cycle, Luke's infancy narrative dominates all three series, for Luke is the Christmas gospel.

The Preparation of Jesus (Luke 3:1-4:13)

Luke has a brief but significant transition from the infancy narratives to the ministry of Jesus. From 3:1 to 4:13, John and Jesus take center stage once again, but this time they are featured as actively engaged in their biblical roles. John prepares the way for the Christ by "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (3:3, κηρύσσω βάπτισμα μετανόας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν). The step-parallelism between John and Jesus is highlighted in Jesus' baptism, where only Jesus is mentioned (3:21-22). Jesus now stands alone as Savior, for John, who is "great before the Lord" (1:15), has prepared for this moment and now gives way to the "Great" One (1:32) who stands in the Jordan anointed by the Spirit and declared as the beloved Son by the Father. It is here that Luke places the genealogy of Jesus so that the reader sees that the ancestral heritage of Jesus has significance for both Jewish (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David) and world (Adam and Noah) history. The movement from the genealogy to the temptation is clear to the reader: the Son of Adam, son of God (3:38), is now tempted to doubt His sonship ("if you are the Son of God," 4:3, 9). But Jesus' defeat of Satan sets the tone of His entire ministry, a foreshadowing of the "opportune time" (4:13) when Jesus will meet Satan once and for all in Jerusalem and achieve His ultimate victory. In the lectionary Luke 3 occurs in Advent II and III and in Epiphany I, the Baptism of our Lord; and Luke 4:1-13 is the Gospel for Lent I, the Temptation of our Lord.

The Galilean Ministry (Luke 4:14-9:50)

The Galilean ministry of Jesus begins with a simple introduction in 4:14-15. The same Spirit who anointed Jesus in His baptism filled Him up and led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan; now Jesus returns in the power of that Spirit to Galilee to begin His ministry of teaching and miracle-working. His first sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth in Luke 4:16-30 is foundational for the rest of Jesus' teaching (Epiphany III and IV). Based on the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 61, where the messianic ministry is described as proclamation, it outlines what He would preach throughout His ministry. Three of the four infinitives in

Luke 4:18-19 deal with preaching: proclamation of good news to the poor (εὐαγγελισασθαι πτωχοῖς), proclamation of release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind (κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεπιν), and proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord (κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν). The fourth infinitive speaks of setting free those who are oppressed (ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἁφέσει). "Today," Jesus says, "this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Isaiah 61 and Luke emphasize the notion of release, or what we often translate as forgiveness (ἁφίτημι). The essence of Jesus' proclamation was release—release from the bondage of sin, sickness, and Satan. The good news is that this release is present in Him who was to be crucified to accomplish that release and raised from the dead to proclaim that in Him all of creation would be freed from the bondage of its fallenness.

Jesus' ministry is a continuous expression of this release to those who are captive. After the episode in Nazareth, Jesus continues teaching and healing, making no distinction between physical sickness and demonic possession. In 4:35 He rebukes the man possessed with demons, and in 4:39 He rebukes the fever of Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus will rebuke both fevers and devils and say, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God (εὐαγγελισασθαι με δεῖ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ) to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (4:43). The kingdom comes with the proclamation that in Him all things are to be released from bondage and that a new era of salvation is now present. "Which is easier," Jesus asks the Pharisees, "to say, 'your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'rise and walk'?" (5:23). Jesus tells them that the Son of Man has authority both to forgive sins and heal paralytics; both demonstrate that the Creator has come to His creation to release it from its fallenness.

In His sermon in Nazareth Jesus announces through His use of Isaiah that He is now present to complete the prophetic pattern of teaching and miracle-working. His Galilean ministry is a demonstration of this pattern. But there is another element to the pattern that is also marked here in Nazareth and will continue until He arrives

in Jerusalem. Part of the prophetic pattern is rejection, seen here in Nazareth's rejection of Jesus, the only time before the cross when Jesus is physically assaulted with the intention of death. In Moses, of course, one already finds the pattern of those prophetic characteristics that mark the Messiah as well: He was a great teacher and miracle-worker who was rejected by the Israelites for His prophetic proclamations. But Jesus chooses Elijah and Elisha to illustrate this pattern in His sermon in Nazareth, two prophets known for their teaching and miracles; but as His illustration points out, two prophets who were rejected by Israel and sent to Gentiles—Elijah to the widow of Zarephath, Elisha to the leprous Syrian Naaman. This same pattern may be seen in Abraham, David, John the Baptist, and the apostles in Acts. Jesus fits the pattern of the prophets in His life and death and completes it (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-18). Jesus, therefore, is the teacher who completes the teaching of the prophets; He is the miracle-worker who demonstrates the presence in the world of the new era of salvation; He is the rejected One who fulfills His own prophecy that "a prophet should not perish away from Jerusalem" (13:33) and makes atonement in Jerusalem for all the people.

During the Galilean ministry, Jesus demonstrates that the kingdom of God is present in Him by His teaching and miracles, but there is yet no explicit mention of His death and resurrection. The evangelist alludes to the death of Jesus by his numerous references to His rejection by Israel, particularly by the religious establishment (such as the Pharisees in 5:17-26 and 7:29-30). Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees foreshadows the complete rejection of Israel at the time of His crucifixion. As the gospel moves towards its climax, this rejection becomes more obvious as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and elders (the Sanhedrin) plot His death, a plot which the people join in Jerusalem.

But it is not until Luke 9 that Jesus explicitly ties the freedom He proclaimed in His teaching and demonstrated in His miracles to His suffering, death, and resurrection; the shock of the means of accomplishing this release was too much even for His most intrepid disciples. Luke 9 is the watershed chapter because of the juxtaposition of pericopes that lead to a climax. The theme of proclamation

and healing is carried over from Jesus' Galilean ministry into the commission of the twelve to accomplish the same things which Jesus did. With the gospel now spreading everywhere (9:6), the identity of Jesus is becoming an issue, even for Herod the tetrarch. Jesus is considered by Herod and the people to be a prophetic figure. Thus, He is placed in the same category as John the Baptist, Elijah, and the prophets of old (9:7-8). Is Jesus a great prophet or is He something more?

This question is answered in the very next pericope. The feeding of the five thousand is the great messianic miracle that helps identify Jesus as the Christ. Here the differences prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15 come to light. In Jesus God has raised up a prophet like Moses but greater than Moses. In the days of Moses the people were fed with manna, sufficient for the day, with all leftovers turning to rot. But Jesus the Creator comes to His creation, feeds His people, and there is abundance, leftovers, twelve baskets full. The people are satisfied (ἐχορτάσθησαν). (The same word occurs in the beatitude, "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied [6:21, χορτασθήσεσθε].)

It is this great miracle that elicits Peter's confession in 9:18-21. But the confession that Jesus is "the Christ of God" comes only when the prophetic categories are reiterated at the prompting of Jesus. Here comparing Luke to Mark is worthwhile; after the feeding of the five thousand, there is the so-called "great omission" of Mark 6:45-8:26. Luke 9 connects the feeding of the five thousand, the confession of Peter, and the passion prediction in one seamless narrative (cf. the grammatical link between 9:21 and 22 in Nestle's twenty-fifth edition). With the passion prediction (9:22) the rejection of Jesus as Messiah is now given historical dimensions; the religious establishment will reject Him through suffering and death, and on the third day He will be raised. This announcement of the Messiah's suffering carries over to the disciples; just as they follow in His pattern of preaching and healing, so they too will follow the pattern of His suffering by taking up His cross daily. They will suffer rejection for proclaiming Jesus as the Christ who must suffer and rise (9:18-24, Pentecost V). Luke makes clear that there is an order to the kingdom, suffering before glory, demonstrat-

ed by the juxtaposition of the passion prediction (Jesus' suffering), the call to discipleship (disciples' suffering), and the transfiguration (Jesus' glory). Even within the manifestation of glory at the transfiguration the passion inserts itself as the way to that glory, for Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets, converse in glory about Jesus' "departure, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem" (9:31, τὴν ἐξοδὸν αὐτοῦ, ἣν ἡμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, the "exodus" referring to His death, resurrection, and ascension, with a reminiscence of the greatest event in Israel's history). The words of Deuteronomy echo in the command of the Father: "Listen to Him!" (9:35)

The Galilean ministry occupies the attention of five Sundays in Epiphany (V, Luke 5:1-11; VI, Luke 6:17-26; VII, Luke 6:27-38; VIII, Luke 6:39-49; and Transfiguration, Luke 9:28-36) and four Sundays in Pentecost (II, Luke 7:1-10; III, Luke 7:11-17; IV, Luke 7:36-50; V, Luke 9:18-24). Thematically, this section includes the calling of the disciples (Luke 5), the sermon on the plain (Luke 6), the discourse on John and Jesus (Luke 7), and the transfiguration (Luke 9).

The Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:27)

Most scholars distinguish between the Galilean ministry of Jesus (4:14-9:50), the journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27), the ministry in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38), the passion narrative (22:1-23:56a), and the resurrection narrative (23:56b-24:53).⁵ The big turning point is in 9:51 where Jesus turns His face to go to Jerusalem (Pentecost VI, using Luke 9:51-62, being a turning point in the lectionary as well). Jesus' journey to Jerusalem extends until His entrance into the temple in 19:45. When Luke uses the expression ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας, he describes the inexorable destiny of Jesus in Jerusalem. Between 9:51 and 19:45 Jesus' journey is marked by notices in 13:22 and 17:11, two structural breaks within the narrative. Jesus' being "received up" (τῆς ἀναλήψεως αὐτοῦ) refers to the passion, resurrection, and ascension in Jerusalem, an expression similar to one used at the transfiguration in 9:31 to describe Jesus' departure (τὴν ἐξοδὸν αὐτοῦ). Luke graphically describes Jesus turning His face to Jerusalem (αὐτὸς

τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστήρισεν), the place of destiny, and journeying (τοῦ πορεύεσθαι) towards His goal of death and resurrection.

From this point Jesus moves towards Jerusalem. But in the opinion of many scholars His movement is haphazard and without purpose. They do not perceive the inner thematic unity of Jesus as He teaches and prepares His disciples for the events in Jerusalem. Throughout this journey Jesus develops the themes of His Galilean ministry, showing how the rejection of His Messiahship and its content intensifies. The lines are being drawn in Israel between those who accept by faith the presence of God's kingdom in Jesus and those who reject it. Those who accept His messianic ministry and violent destiny are the outcasts in society who see in Jesus God's humble solution and have humbled themselves before God. The so-called "roles of reversal" dominate this journey—the first will be last and the last first (13:30); the exalted will be humbled and the humble exalted (14:11; 18:14). Tax collectors represent this group of sinners, and Luke frames Jesus' ministry with two significant pericopes on tax collectors, namely, Levi (5:27-39) and Zacchaeus (19:1-10), the "chief tax collector" (ἀρχιτελώνης, a *hapax* in the New Testament and all of Greek literature). The prophetic words of Luke 7:29-30 are illustrated repeatedly in the teaching of Jesus: "When they heard this all the people and the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John; but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him."

The hostility of the religious establishment heats up as Jesus' own teaching becomes more and more directed against it. During the Galilean ministry the negative response was rather mild: in 5:17-26 the Pharisees and teachers act in a confused way about His claim to forgive sins and accuse Him of blasphemies; in 6:11 they are filled with fury and plot against Him after a miracle on the Sabbath; and in 7:36-50 the same confusion exists about His forgiving sins. It is not until Luke 9:22 that this rejection is given substance in Jesus' prediction of the passion; the members of the Sanhedrin are declared to be the ones who will put Jesus to death. From this point on the conflict between Jesus and the religious establishment intensifies.

But Luke makes clear that there is a division in locale within the Sanhedrin itself—the Pharisees (including the lawyers and the scribes, who were "leaders" among the Pharisees) representing Jesus' opposition outside Jerusalem, the Sadducees His opposition in Jerusalem. As He journeys to Jerusalem, Jesus comes up against the opposition in chapter after chapter (e.g., 10:25 and 11:37).

Some significant texts summarize this opposition in a vivid way. Jesus' most poignant words occur in Luke 13-15. His eschatological discourse in 13:22-35 shows Israel that those to be included in the future feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are Gentiles and that there is no guarantee that the Jews and their leaders will be present. In 14:11-24 Jesus gives a lesson in humility to the Pharisees while dining in a Pharisee's house, concluding with a parable that shows the rejection of God's messianic banquet by Israel and the entrance to the feast by Gentiles. Luke summarizes all these things in 15:1-2: "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" The parable of the prodigal son demonstrates that repentance and joy mark the essence of the kingdom and those who are members of that kingdom. The older son represents the Pharisees and their cohorts, the prodigal all sinners who repent and believe in Jesus. Other stories that are uniquely Lukan illustrate a similar theme, such as the rich man and Lazarus in 16:19-31 and the Pharisee and tax collector in 18:9-14. Jesus' presence at Zacchaeus' home in 19:1-10 summarizes all of Jesus' teaching about sinners and the self-righteous with the telling proclamation of Jesus that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

The Ministry in Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-21:38)

The ministry in Jerusalem is the climax of Jesus' teaching, coming to an end in Luke 19:44, where Jesus, having drawn near to Jerusalem, weeps over the city "because you did not know the time of your visitation." The last word from the Pharisees in Luke's gospel is heard in 19:39: "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." This is in response to "the whole multitude of disciples" who praise God in 19:38 for the "mighty works" (δυνάμεων) they had seen in Jesus

by saying: "Blessed is the King who comes (εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ βασιλεὺς) in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" This final opposition by the Pharisees to Jesus results from the people assigning to Jesus the messianic title ὁ ἐρχόμενος and designating Him as ὁ βασιλεὺς. The Pharisees reject the fulfilment in Jesus of the messianic promises of the Old Testament, the very type of rejection Jesus experienced at the beginning of His Galilean ministry in His hometown of Nazareth in Luke 4:16-30.

When Jesus finally enters Jerusalem in 19:45, He immediately goes to the temple to take possession of it as the place of His final teachings (Luke 20-21). These teachings will be the basis for His rejection by the Sanhedrin. Only Luke among the synoptics makes this point explicit by stating twice in three verses that Jesus was teaching in the temple. In 19:47-48 the daily teaching of Jesus in the temple (καὶ ἦν διδάσκων τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ) prompted the chief priests, scribes, and principal men (Sanhedrin) to plot "to destroy Him" (ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν ἀπολέσαι), but they were handcuffed because "all the people hung upon His words" (ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἅπας ἐξεκρέματο αὐτοῦ ἀκοῶν). In 20:1 (the very next verse) Luke describes Jesus as "teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel" (καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν διδάσκοντος αὐτοῦ τὸν λαὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ εὐαγγελιζομένου). Luke's use of εὐαγγελίζομαι links it to Jesus' sermon in Nazareth in 4:18 and His travel summaries in 4:43 and 8:1, where Jesus preaches the gospel of the kingdom of God (4:43, εὐαγγελίσασθαι με δεῖ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ). Again the chief priests, scribes, and elders (Sanhedrin) challenge His authority. Luke concludes this section in 21:37-38 with another summary statement concerning Jesus' teaching in the temple: "And every day He was teaching in the temple (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ διδάσκων) . . . and early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him" (καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ὠρθρίζεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ ἀκοῦειν [an infinitive of purpose] αὐτοῦ). Jesus' teaching in Jerusalem in Luke 20-21 is framed by these references to His teaching in the temple and the positive response of all the people (ὁ λαὸς referring to Israel) to Him. Thus, Jesus has entered into the

temple and replaced the Sanhedrin's authority with His.

The teaching of Jesus in Luke 20-21 is directed against the religious establishment of Jerusalem, as is evident in the climactic parable of the workers in the vineyard in Luke 20:9-18. It is prophetic of what Jesus will soon suffer in Jerusalem (Lent V). Jesus' citation of Psalm 118, "the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (20:17), and His interpretation, "every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one it will crush him" (20:18), is an ominous sign to the establishment and is interpreted by them as such: "The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that He had told this parable against them" (20:19). The death of Jesus is now imminent.

The Passion Narrative (Luke 22:1-23:56a)

The passion narrative begins with the passover meal, which serves as the occasion for the Jerusalem authorities to make the final plans for the death of Jesus. On the basis of Jesus' opposition to the religious authorities of Jerusalem in His teaching at the temple, the chief priests and scribes set in motion the arrest of Jesus, in 22:1-6, through Jesus' disciple Judas "as the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the passover." The connection between the passover (πάσχα) and the passion (πάσχω) is unavoidable. The meal as the place of betrayal is a firm part of the eucharistic tradition of the church. Paul introduces his narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23 with "on the night when He was betrayed" (ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἣ καὶ παρέδωκε). The intentions of the authorities in Jerusalem reach a climax as Jesus prepares for His final teaching at the meal with His disciples. Only Luke records the five dialogues between Jesus and His disciples after the words of institution in Luke 22:21-38, an unfortunate lapse in the lectionary (Maundy Thursday includes only the Lukan institution narrative of 22:7-20 [the longer text]). These final teachings of Jesus look back and encapsulate much of what Jesus taught in Galilee and as He made His way to Jerusalem.

Jesus is put to death by the chief priests, His antagonists in

Jerusalem, and the Pharisees, His antagonists outside Jerusalem. Four charges against Jesus may be discerned in His trials, and it is the fourth charge, in Luke 23:5, that seals His death: "But they [the members of the Sanhedrin] were urgent saying, 'He stirs up the people, teaching (διδάσκων) throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.'" Such a charge encompasses Jesus' teaching from its beginning in Galilee in His sermon in Nazareth (in Luke 4:16-30) down to His teaching in Jerusalem in the temple (in Luke 20-21), illustrating the Lukan geographical perspective of moving Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, the city of His destiny. Jesus is rejected for His teaching that He is God's anointed Messiah, present in the world to fulfill the Old Testament promises of salvation.

The passion material naturally occurs during Holy Week. The preacher's temptation at the beginning of Holy Week is to avoid the suggestion of the new lectionary to preach on the entire passion story (Luke 23:1-49) and to focus instead on one isolated incident within the passion story. But there is great wisdom in considering the entire passion on the newly named "Passion Sunday," for it not only sets the tone for the entire Holy Week vigil, but also brings to a conclusion the entire church year up to this climactic point. Passion Sunday begins a liturgical rhythm that carries the church along to its climax. The gospels themselves are nothing more than a long introduction to the passion story, and the same thing is true of the church year.

The Resurrection Narrative (Luke 23:56b-24:53)

Luke's final chapter is composed of four climactic pericopes, all of which summarize themes that he has developed in his gospel: 24:1-11 is an appearance of the angels to the women that announces the resurrection (Easter Day); 24:13-35 is the appearance of Jesus to the Emmaus disciples (Easter evening and Easter III A); 24:36-43 is the appearance in the upper room with the eating of fish; and 24:44-53 is the Lukan great commission (Ascension). Luke 24 is structured around three passion statements that figure significantly in three of the four pericopes. In 24:7 the angels tell the women to remember the words of Jesus in Galilee—that is, the words recorded in Luke 9:22 in the first passion prediction. The words here are

reminiscent of those words: ". . . that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise."

In the Emmaus story in 24:26, Jesus rebukes the disciples for not believing the prophets: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" Here the passion statement uses shorthand for Christ's crucifixion ("suffer these things") and resurrection ("enter into His glory"). And there is a new element added in 24:27 to the statement in 24:7, that this must take place in fulfillment of Scripture: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." It is this opening of the Scriptures that causes their hearts to burn within them, but it is only in the breaking of the bread that they recognize Him. This is the climax of the gospel, the first time in Luke that anyone recognizes Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Christ.

In the final pericope of Luke 24, Jesus gives a commission to His disciples that is also in the form of a passion statement. He begins where He left off in the Emmaus story, with the fulfillment of Scripture (24:44) and the opening of their minds to understand the Scriptures (24:45). Then He says: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." It is this final element, repentance and forgiveness, that rounds out the kerygma and gives the disciples the form for their preaching in Acts. It is the perfect outline for preaching the gospel, for it contains the two kerygmatic parts of the gospel: the objective facts—His suffering, death, and resurrection—and the application of the gospel—our forgiveness. This gospel must be preached in a trinitarian context, as Jesus does, for He, the Son, sends the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, upon the disciples to preach the gospel. The gospel ends as it began—in the temple in a liturgical worship of praise to God with joy for His redemption.

For the preacher of Luke, a number of recent commentaries and monographs may be helpful in formulating textual sermons. The two major commentaries are still Joseph Fitzmyer's two volumes and

I. Howard Marshall's single volume.⁶ Fitzmyer is exhaustive in his bibliography (predating 1980) and very higher-critical in his commentary. His discussion of Lukan theology, comprising 283 pages, is an excellent introduction to the gospel. Marshall is less higher-critical and very insightful. Tannehill's aforementioned *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* is much more helpful for the preacher, although it is not organized as a traditional commentary. These three commentaries will give the preacher access to monographs that treat individual Lukan themes.

Endnotes

1. Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: Volume 1: The Gospel According to Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 3.
2. For an excellent treatment of motif analysis, see Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts 1-9*, and Robert J. Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 5-8.
3. See Sidney Gredanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), who offers insights into the relationship between exegesis and preaching.
4. J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 313-314.
5. See J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, p. 134.
6. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978).

Books Received

Martin Hengel. *The Johannine Question*. London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989. xvi + 240 pages. Cloth. \$24.95.

Jack O. Balswick and J. Kenneth Morland. *Social Problems: A Christian Understanding and Response*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. 357 pages. Paper.

Richard A. Muller. *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. x + 309 pages. Paper.

Devora Steinmetz. *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis*. Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 214 pages. Paper. \$15.95.

J. J. M. Roberts. *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 223 pages. Cloth. \$19.95.

Leon Morris. *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*. Revised Edition. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991. xvi + 278 pages. Cloth. \$27.95.

Richard Shaull. *The Reformation and Liberation Theology: Insights for the Challenges of Today*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 136 pages. Paper. \$11.95.

William H. Lazareth. *Two Forms of Ordained Ministry: A Proposal for Mission in Light of the Augsburg Confession*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1991. 92 pages. Paper.

Jacques Ellul. *Anarchy and Christianity*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991. vi + 109 pages. Paper. \$9.95.

Robert W. Jenson. *A Large Catechism*. Delhi, New York: ALPB, 1991. 62 pages. Paper. \$5.00.

Gerard S. Sloyan. *What Are They Saying about John?* New York: Paulist Press, 1991. iii + 125 pages. Paper.

Robert L. Ferm. *Piety, Purity, Plenty: Images of Protestantism in America*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. vii + 135 pages. Paper.

Walter A. Elwell and Douglas Buckwalter, editors. *Topical Analysis of the Bible: With the New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. xiii + 894 pages. Cloth.

Jeffrey S. Siker. *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy*. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 296 pages. Paper. \$18.95.

Theological Observer

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7 AND TITUS 1:5-9 AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

I. Qualifications for the Office of Overseer

Not long ago I received a copy of *Different Voices/Shared Vision*, published by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau and written for members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with contributions justifying and promoting the ordination of women within the Missouri Synod.¹ While several thoughts came to mind concerning this publication which will not be explored here, one major thought came to the fore, namely, there is no reference to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 or Titus 1:5-9. How can this be? How can one endorse the ordination of women and make no reference to these texts? This lack seems peculiar as these passages speak directly about what we today would call the office of the public ministry, the office of pastor. Yet they are not mentioned. This oversight also seems to be a common one in the discussion of the ordination of women. Our Lutheran Confessions tell us that to settle theological controversies the problem must be stated precisely and then passages from the Bible which speak to the question must be sought in order to reach a God-pleasing conclusion. The question is "May a woman be a pastor?" or, even better, "What are the biblical qualifications for an overseer?" There are two Bible passages which specifically address this question: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Too often other passages are brought into the discussion which are secondary, such as 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-36. In her article on 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 Elizabeth Yates concludes: "... this passage cannot responsibly be used as a proof-text for anything as significant as the role of women in the ministry of the church."² We do not agree with most of her exegesis and conclusions but, even if we did, this passage is secondary to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Marva J. Dawn in her article on 1 Timothy 2:8-15 carries out her exegesis without the slightest hint that 1 Timothy 3:1-7 immediately follows.³ Others rely on Galatians 3:28 as their support for the ordination of women as pastors, even though the text has nothing to do with the pastoral office.⁴ It speaks about justification and thus may have something to say about the priesthood of believers, but not about the pastoral office.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are the *sedes doctrinae* for the office of pastor. The language is clear and straightforward in giving the qualifications for the office of overseer. These texts cannot be dismissed as non-Pauline. They belong not to the antilegomena but to the homologoumena. They may not be dismissed on the basis of the vocabulary used, since all the key words are found in such early writings as

Philippians (1:1, ἐπισκοπος), 1 Thessalonians (5:12, προσηλυτισμῶν), James (5:13, πρεσβύτερος), as well as in Acts (20:28, ἐπισκοπος).

II. Eligibility for the Office of Overseer

Paul says that the overseer is to be a "one-woman man" (v. 2). Clearly he is referring to what we today would call the pastoral office. He alternately describes this office with ἐπισκοπος (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7) and πρεσβύτερος (Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5). The descriptions of this office are closely associated with the pastoral office today, consisting of the public oversight of God's people and their spiritual care by the ministers of the word of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; 1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:2, 24; Titus 1:7, 9; Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2, 3).

Paul says that only males are candidates for the office of overseer. Whether the phrase "one-woman man" refers to how many wives the overseer may have at one time or whether the overseer is allowed to be married more than once is not germane to the issue of whether a woman may be an overseer-pastor. Clearly Paul is speaking with the assumption that only men are candidates for the pastoral office. This impression is reinforced as Paul compares the care of the church provided by the overseer with the care that a husband gives to his family (1 Timothy 3:4-5: "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" [NIV]; cf. Titus 1:5). Paul's use of προσηλυτισμῶν ("manage") is worthy of note in verses 4 and 5. He uses this verb in reference to the husband's role in the family and, in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 (and possibly Romans 12:8), to the overseer's function in the church. In classical Greek προσηλυτισμῶν was usually predicated of a position which involved the responsibility of protecting those over whom one was placed.⁵ In the Septuagint προσηλυτισμῶν occurs eight times, rendering a Hebrew word meaning "to be the head of a household," "to govern the people."⁶ Thus, in the New Testament the word involves "... the picture of the patriarchal head of the household or father of the family. If he is capable of fulfilling this role well, he fulfills a vital qualification for being leader in the church."⁷ The biblical teaching which holds these concepts of home and church together is the male headship involved in the order of creation. Indeed, Paul lays the groundwork for 1 Timothy 3:2-5 at the end of chapter 2 (verses 11-13)

when he says: "For a woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (NIV).

Clearly the existence of an order of creation is pivotal in the debate over the ordination of women. If one believes that the order of creation is a biblical teaching, not bound by time and culture, then the Apostle Paul is being scripturally and logically consistent in excluding women from the pastoral office even as they are excluded from being the head of the home. This is no isolated or obscure teaching. Paul makes reference to male headship not only in 1 Timothy 2 and 3 and Titus 1, but also in 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22, and Colossians 3:18. That the Apostle Peter is in agreement with the Apostle Paul is seen in 1 Peter 3:1-6. In 1 Timothy 3:2-5 Paul certainly makes the connection between the headship of the husband and the office of overseer in the church. If a woman is not to lead the family household, she is not to lead the household of God.

III. Culture and Time

Other than one's own cultural biases concerning the roles of men and women, there is no reason to believe that what Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is bound to culture or time. How can one take only the descriptions of overseers as males as being culturally bound and not the other qualifications listed? In the greater context of the whole letter there is every reason to believe that what Paul writes in these verses is applicable in the church for all time. In 1 Timothy 1:13 he appeals to the account of the creation of Adam and Eve, which is something historically true in all times and places. It relates facts of history which cannot be changed: Adam was formed first, then Eve. At the beginning of 1 Timothy 3 Paul says, "Here is a trustworthy saying" (v. 1). He uses these same words in chapter 1 in reference to Jesus coming into the world to save sinners (1:15) and again in chapter 4 in reference to our hope in the living God who is the Savior of all people, especially believers (4:9). In chapter 3 Paul tells Timothy that he has given these instructions so that he would know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's "household," a word that would bring to mind again the office of overseer (3:5, 15). And in Titus we see that what Paul says to Timothy concerning the church in Ephesus applies equally to the church on the island of Crete. Such other passages as 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5, Colossians 3:18, and 1 Peter 3:1-6 support and are consistent with 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. In addition, Jesus picked twelve males to be apostles and

only a male was eligible to take the place of the Apostle Judas.⁸ There is a consistency here that cannot be overcome without resorting to "creative exegesis" or removing certain passages from consideration by claiming the existence of problems in interpreting them. One cannot simply by fiat bind a passage of Scripture to culture and time. There must be clear evidence; otherwise all of Scripture would be susceptible to such subjective eisegesis. And it is inappropriate to appeal to passages which talk about the equality of all Christians, that is, the priesthood of all believers. This priesthood is not the issue. Those who believe that only males are candidates for the pastoral office also believe in the priesthood of believers. The necessary questions are these: "What does Scripture say about women and the office of overseer?" "What are the biblical qualifications to be a pastor?" Both 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 answer these questions.

IV. Conclusion

The discussion of the ordination of women is only confused when the pertinent passages are ignored. It only confuses the issue when passages such as Galatians 3:28, dealing with justification and the priesthood of all believers, are used to affirm women as pastors. It will not do to call secondary passages such as 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 "obscure," ignore 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and then claim justification of the ordination of women. The gospel, the teaching of justification, does not tell us whether women may be pastors-overseers. To answer this question the pertinent passages of Scripture must be examined. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are such passages, and an overseer is to be a male who manages any family of his own well and likewise cares well for the household of God.

1. Meyer, Marie, et alii, *Different Voices/Shared Vision* (Delphi, New York: ALPB Books, 1992), 96 pp.
2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. Ibid., pp. 21-25.
4. Ibid., p. 85.
5. Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament*, I (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 193.
6. Ibid., p. 194.

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7. Ibid., p. 198.
 8. In Acts 1:21 one of the qualifications for the successor of Judas was to be a male (άνήρ). In verse 23 two males are put forward for consideration.

Ernie Lassman
Seattle, Washington

Books Received

Nils Alstrup Dahl. *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*. Edited by Donald H. Juel. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. 249 pages. Cloth.

Duane W. H. Arnold. *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria*. Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 6. Notre Dame-London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991. xvi + 235 pages. Cloth. \$24.95.

James S. Jeffers. *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. viii + 215 pages. Paper.

Gerhard F. Hasel. *Understanding the Book of Amos: Basic Issues in Current Interpretations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. 171 pages. Paper.

Thomas Edward McComiskey. *Reading Scripture in Public: A Guide for Preachers and Lay Readers*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. 196 pages. Paper.

Jim Wilhoit. *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986, 1991. 181 pages. Paper.

Roger E. Hedlund. *The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. 300 pages. Paper.

Calvin J. Roetzel. *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*. Third Edition. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991. 217 pages. Paper. \$14.95.

Daniel L. Migliore. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991. xiv + 312 pages. Paper. \$18.95.

Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli. *Unplug the Christmas Machine: A Complete Guide to Putting Love and Joy Back into the Season*. Revised Edition. New York: William Morrow, 1991. 207 pages. Paper. \$9.00.

Karl P. Donfried, editor. *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1977, 1991. lxxii + 372 pages. Cloth. \$19.95.

Charles B. Puskas. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1989. xxii + 297 pages. Cloth. \$19.95.

Jerome H. Neyrey, editor. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991. xviii + 436 pages. Cloth. \$19.95.

An additional list of "Books Received" by the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* is found on page 290 of this issue.

Book Reviews

MEMOIRS IN EXILE, CONFESSIONAL HOPE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONFLICT. By John H. Tietjen. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.

There is an advantage often in reviewing a book after it has received other reviews. There is also a bit of guilt involved in procrastinating so long. In the present case I am glad, because the reviews I have read of Dr. John Tietjen's *Memoirs* have not been kind or fair to him nor empathetic to his struggles and situation; and, with the exception of a review by Leigh Jordahl, they have shown little understanding of what was happening before, during, and after his tumultuous administration as president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. With this review I wish to give John Tietjen and his many colleagues, friends, and followers a fairer hearing and a fairer commentary on his memoirs. I am well qualified to do this because I was his colleague and next-door neighbor while he led the seminary and because I know the background and all the principals, all the issues and events of those turbulent years (1969-1974) which changed more than most realize—or might care to admit—the LCMS and the lives of Tietjen and all of us involved.

Tietjen, the historian, writes not a history, autobiography, apology, or hagiography of himself, but his memoirs, a unique genre. One's memoirs may be limited to only part of one's life, and may be selective and presented in any way and for any purpose the author desires. But there is a risk in writing memoirs, especially if one's readers choose to judge one's memoirs by strictly historical and critical standards. For memory is often fragile and not always accurate, even in the most honest and most scrupulous of men. "We construct meanings and remember our constructions," Jeremy Campbell points out in his *Grammatical Man* (p. 226). And he goes on to say:

There is evidence, too, to suggest that we reconstruct information when retrieving it from memory. Only the gist of the information is stored. The details are added at the time of recollection, on the basis of what we expect to have been true. Reconstruction may seriously distort that original information, but the rememberer may be quite unaware of the distortion. If the material given to us is consistent with our knowledge and expectations, it is more likely to be recalled correctly, but if it is inconsistent, then there are likely to be systematic distortions.

This will be true of Tietjen's memoirs or those of Vespasian or Benvenuto Cellini or any one else. But allowing for this, Tietjen's *Memoirs* will be of great value to the historian, the Lutheran theologian, and anyone who cares to know what happened at Concordia Seminary

and at Seminex while John Tietjen was president or how it feels for a minister of the word to be put out of his call and to undergo such extreme experiences as John Tietjen did. For John Tietjen is without doubt a principled, sincere, and honest man—that is clear from his *Memoirs* and his history. And so, although employing a narrative style throughout, reminiscing and, like Herodotus, reconstructing past conversations as they would probably have taken place, Tietjen offers the reader a true account of things and the reader will learn much from his book.

Tietjen briefly outlines the purpose of his book in a preface. He owes a debt to posterity, to tell what happened as he experienced it and to give his side of a very partisan struggle. His purpose is to write without recrimination or self-justification. Throughout the book he traces a recurring theme in the history of the church, the tension between "confessional hope and institutional conflict." I think he succeeds, and better than one would expect from one so deeply involved in "institutional conflict," that is to say church war.

The book is written in an epic form. The obvious theme of the story is a great contest or war between two individuals, each with large followings, representing two divergent ideologies, loyalties, parties, theologies, and theories of politics in the church. Each side is in search of its own "confessional hope" in the midst of institutional conflict. The protagonists or heroes in the unfolding drama are Dr. John Tietjen, newly-elected president of Concordia Seminary, and Dr. J. A. O. Preus, newly-elected president of the Missouri Synod. Each of the two great warriors has his own army, his elite or scraggly "troops" (as they were so often called during the controversy), his inner council of strategists, and his own machinery and style of warfare. This is the plot of Tietjen's epic.

There is a little understandable *schmaltz* and occasional rhetoric in the book—and some errors as Tietjen at times recounts not his, but others' perceptions and stories. For instance, early in his memoirs Tietjen relates at least one fictitious account provided him by Fred Danker, a highly original and imaginative professor who believed in redaction criticism—and practiced it. According to Danker I had engaged in conversation with Jack Preus, my brother, in my seminary office commencing at 3:15 p.m. on March 29, 1970. From outside my window in Sieck Hall Danker allegedly heard us speaking. During this conversation I had told Jack that members of the exegetical department were "clamming up," not publicly admitting what they really believed and had taught. Jack had told me that he was planning to conduct an investigation of the theology at the

seminary. Now this account is clearly fictitious. Jack never visited me in my office at the seminary. My home with its privacy was quite near by. It was physically impossible to listen to a conversation through my office window. Danker, two offices down the hall, could, if he wished, listen through my door, which was, conveniently, almost always open. But, more importantly, the date is wrong. It was half a year before that Prof. Martin Scharlemann and I had told Jack that the exegetical department was no longer speaking openly about its uncritical use of the historical-critical method. And almost immediately after he was elected president of the synod Jack had made it clear that he was going to investigate the theology of the seminary—at least the exegetical department—according to the criterion of the *Book of Concord* (see preface, p. 14). Perhaps Tietjen inserted this piece of fiction for literary purposes. At any rate it illustrates the danger one faces when one writes memoirs and cites as fact other people's recollections.

But I am getting sidetracked and ahead of myself. Tietjen's plot itself is right on target. It fits the facts in the controversy and the events through which we all lived, as well as his basic theme. Like many epics Tietjen's *Memoirs* start *in medias res*. To understand the plot the reader will require some background and context. Early in 1969 Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer unexpectedly retired from the presidency of Concordia Seminary, while remaining on as a non-teaching professor. The process of calling a new president was immediately implemented by the Board of Control; and Dr. John Tietjen, who had received few nominations compared with many others, including Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, a young professor, and Dr. Martin Scharlemann, a seasoned professor, was chosen—a surprise to almost all. The electors were the Board of Control; the Board for Higher Education; Kurt Biel, president of the Missouri District; and synodical president Oliver Harms, who in the nature of the case could control the election. Harms, who was strongly pushing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, was persuaded that Tietjen would be an ideal president to lead the seminary and thus also the synod to a more open posture toward the ALC and world Lutheranism. At the 1967 New York Convention Harms had tried (unsuccessfully) to bring the LCMS to declare fellowship with the ALC. This was to have been the first step in an elaborate scheme, devised by Dr. Richard Jungkuntz, executive secretary of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and Dr. Walter Wolbrecht, executive secretary of the LCMS, and others, to bring the LCMS into membership in the Lutheran World Federation and ultimately into the orbit of the World Council of

Churches. If not clearly delineated and outlined, the plan had at least been adumbrated in a book written by Tietjen in 1966, entitled *Which Way to Lutheran Unity?* In this book Tietjen clearly broke with the historic Lutheran doctrine of church fellowship and offered a "union" definition of "confessional Lutheranism" and a new formula for inter-Lutheran relationships. Harms was under the influence of Wolbrecht and Jungkuntz and other leaders at the seminary. And they were following Tietjen's prescriptions. There was always the outside chance that Harms would not be re-elected at the synodical convention scheduled to meet in Denver in 1969; so the election was held, and the call was extended and accepted with celerity.

But things went wrong at Denver. Harms had not counted on the mounting dissatisfaction throughout the LCMS toward the seminary faculty in St. Louis. Except for Scharlemann and a few professors in the department of systematic theology, the exegetical department had taken over the theological leadership of the school. The so-called historical-critical method with its fuzzy, non-Christian presuppositions and its ever-changing, bizarre, sometimes irrelevant, sometimes heretical conclusions was used with uncritical abandon by the members of the department; and the faculty and students were confused by this departure from the *sola scriptura* principle and the canons of responsible exegetical scholarship.

But many of the pastors and lay people in the synod were not confused; they were suspicious and angry. Harms was defeated at the convention. On the primary nominating ballot he received only 417 votes while Preus received 436, with a small sprinkling of votes going to other candidates. Wolbrecht (who had been pounded and largely discredited in the pages of *Christian News* by Dr. Waldo Werning and other anonymous writers as "Boss Wolbrecht" and who had been informed by a "mole" in the floor committee on elections that Preus was ahead in the balloting, something which the convention and Preus did not know) then made the supreme mistake of issuing an impassioned *ad hominem* philippic from the floor of the convention against Preus. Jack was permitted to take the floor to defend himself and disavow Wolbrecht's charges that there had been illicit politicking by *Christian News* and others in campaigning for his presidency. In this way Jack was given more exposure. In the first ballot Harms received fewer votes than he had received nominations. In the second ballot Jack won decisively by 55 votes, 471 to 416.

The Harms-Tietjen forces understood far better than the disorganized Preus supporters the significance of Jack's election. It meant the setback

and possible disintegration of the entire ecumenical program which had been so carefully planned for Missouri. Even if the LCMS in Denver established the first step of fellowship with the ALC, Preus would do nothing actively to implement it. But worse—and something not fully realized by Wolbrecht, Harms, Tietjen, and others outside the seminary community—Preus was committed to find out what was taught at the seminary concerning biblical authority, inspiration, and inerrancy and just how the Bible was being interpreted—and to do something about it.

There was a tremendous amount of positioning and politicizing before and after the Denver Convention. On the Harms-Tietjen side, meeting before and during the convention, were prestigious pastors, leaders, and officials: Dr. A. R. Kretzmann, Dr. O. P. Kretzmann (in his last appearance at an LCMS convention), Pres. Rudolph Ressmeyer, Pres. Bertwin Frey, Rev. Dean Lueking, Rev. Harlan Hartner, Prof. Richard Caemmerer, Tietjen himself, and lesser figures (few of whom are mentioned in Tietjen's book). On the Preus side, meeting before and during the convention, were, in the main, active laymen and pastors who had not gained a great deal of renown: Mr. Larry Marquart, Mr. Glen Peglau, Mr. Richard Hannenberg, Rev. O. A. Gebauer, Pres. Edwin Weber, Rev. Waldo Werning, Mr. Art Brackebusch, and many others. Tietjen's supporters were convinced that Jack was using Rev. Herman Otten, which was not true. Although Jack had some communication with Otten, others (e.g., Peglau and Werning) were writing regularly for Otten's magazine. Jack's supporters were worried that Harms would somehow steal the elections; Tietjen's were concerned that Preus was controlling Otten. Both concerns were unfounded.

And now the Tietjen epic unfolds. With force and pathos he tells his story, relating the events and battles of the war as he experienced them. Anyone who went through these struggles, as I did, a foot-soldier on the other side—bitter struggles between good friends and colleagues and Christian brothers—cannot fail to be impressed by Tietjen's story. The dispassionate outsider, too, will learn much about the dynamics and phenomenology of theological warfare. And anyone at all who reads Tietjen's memoirs, whatever his theological or personal predilections may be, will find himself in sympathy with a man who is thrust into leadership of a cause he does not fully understand, a position (the presidency of Concordia Seminary) for which he has no experience, and a church war which from the outset (one perceives from his *Memoirs*) he senses he will not win. I lived through these events of Tietjen's tenure at the seminary and never saw him compromise or bend. From his book I see something

different: how hard it is for a man and how hard it is on a man to go through five years of bitter theological and ecclesiastical warfare and then to be put out of his divine call. Tietjen, who always seemed to me to be a strong and private man, bares his soul in his book. He reveals his deep feelings, his frustrations, his disappointments, even his bitterness at times. His *Memoirs* are worth reading for that reason alone. Church wars take a heavy toll.

But now I wish to offer some observations and commentary on the book and on the war. I hope that they may be helpful to Lutherans who seek to retain their confessional identity and to anyone who might read these pages.

1. Tietjen, for all his background in Lutheran church relations and as director of the Division of Public Relations for LCUSA, really did not understand what was happening in ecumenical endeavors worldwide or at the seminary. Fellowship with the ALC was foisted on the LCMS. The rank and file, engrossed in their own parochial interests, did not really care. Outreach and missions had slowed down. The "glory days" of the seminary were coming to a close, although the faculty was unaware of the fact. The seminary, with its embarrassment over its past (Pieper was not even used as a textbook in some dogmatics classes), its pedantic, unproductive interest in "scholarship" (few books of substance were produced by faculty members in the years preceding Tietjen's arrival), its preoccupation with un-Missourian and un-Lutheran theological fads emanating from just about any source and touching just about any topic, and its exalted opinion of its own uncommon consequence impressed Tietjen long before he received his divine call to be president. Like the faculty, he failed to see that the seminary had grown apart from the synod and had lost the synod's confidence. Like the faculty, he was unaware of the poverty of the ecumenical movement, the continuing involvement in fellowship negotiations, and the historical-critical method. Lutheran pastors and people were not interested in those kinds of things, not even if they were baptized with "Lutheran presuppositions" or the predicate "confessional." Thus, Tietjen started off in the wrong direction.

2. A word about the two combatants is now in order. Tietjen seemed to exude self-confidence and determination. According to his *Memoirs* he was strong on the latter, weak on the former. Jack, folksy, hesitant, and jocular in demeanor, seemed almost to lack confidence and purpose. But underneath was a man of supreme self-confidence and iron determination. Jack was a chess player, moving pawns and bishops and knights back and

forth, always protecting the king. Tietjen, like Shakespeare's Henry V at the battle of Agincourt, was always haranguing and leading his troops. Each knew exactly what the other's goal and game plan was. Tietjen's goal, in brief, was to lead the seminary and the synod into fellowship with nominal Lutherans world wide on the basis of formal confessional loyalty and into a more open posture toward new and progressive theological trends (i.e., the historical-critical movement). Jack's goal was to maintain the authentic confessional Lutheran doctrine and practice which had characterized the synod since its inception. To achieve this goal he had to turn the seminary around, if not like Saul of Tarsus, then like a ship at sea. And to achieve this goal he had to remove Tietjen and to keep the faculty majority always off balance.

To carry out their objectives neither saw fit to employ theological means. There was a reason for this. Jack saw and insisted from the very first that there was a serious controversy in the synod, emanating from the seminary and centering in the doctrine of Scripture, but spreading out to articles touching the gospel itself. But Tietjen, egged on by a militant faculty majority, which was alarmed by the threat of a full-scale investigation, adamantly and without making any investigation himself refused from the outset to admit that any false doctrine was taught at the seminary. He canceled all meetings between the exegetical and systematic departments, saying that it would be disastrous if the church learned how great the cleavage in the faculty was regarding the historicity and reliability of such pericopes as Genesis 3 and the stories of Jesus' miracles and sayings. His actions were too late. The students knew what was being taught, and so did the pastors throughout the synod. The faculty opposition to an investigation only made Jack more suspicious and determined to find out what was really being taught. Tietjen's *Memoirs* trace the many meetings and negotiations which were calculated to blunt an investigation, but which inexorably led to what was finally a fair and honest inquiry.

Since it was not possible to debate according to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, both adversaries employed the strategies possible for them. Tietjen, a master in media and public relations, made use of the press. His advisors and cohorts smeared Preus as a Caiphas and "Chairman JAO," while Tietjen marked him as un-Lutheran and un-confessional and "legalistic." In the last stages of the controversy Jack was branded as one who obscured the gospel. I rather doubt that Tietjen himself was responsible for that type of slander, but it was all over the campus and in the papers, religious (*Missouri in Perspective*) and secular.

Only *Time* and *Christianity Today* gave Jack and the old Missourian type of confessional Lutheranism a fair hearing.

Meanwhile Jack resorted to "canon law," the synodical handbook. He quickly studied and learned *Kirchenrecht* and soon after his election was deftly and masterfully deploying the *Kirchenregiment*. Ralph Bohlmann was his "court theologian." Bohlmann was the executive secretary of the CTCR and on leave much of the time from the seminary. He wrote many things for Jack, including the *Statement on Scriptural and Confessional Principles* which was used to "evaluate" the faculty theologically (p. 105). Previously Bohlmann and I had met a few times with Dr. Paul Zimmermann, chairman of the investigating committee, at the Mark Twain Hotel in St. Louis to help him ask the right questions of faculty members who were reluctant to answer questions forthrightly during the investigation. We felt justified in such action, for certain faculty members had made it clear that they were not going to answer unequivocally the questions asked by the investigating committee. It was only toward the end when it was too late that Tietjen and his supporters used theology as their weapon and accused Jack and his supporters of aberrations in respect to law and gospel, legalism, and so on, a belated and futile attempt to justify their position on doctrinal grounds. They protested their own "confessional position" and stance, without ever explaining what it meant (pp. 227, 260, *passim*). Theirs was not a *quia* subscription to the confessions—how often did Tietjen proclaim that they were not bound by the exegesis of the confessions?—and imputed to Jack and the synodical leaders a bogus theological position supposedly based upon synodical tradition rather than Scripture and the confessions. But the counter-attack was incredible. In the end few really believed such an argument.

However, Jack was vulnerable on another front. Again and again, using the synodical handbook, he harkened back to the position of the synod, rather than to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and his only act of discipline was to put out of office four district presidents for violating the synodical handbook (because they had ordained Seminex graduates in LCMS congregations) rather than the Scriptures or the confessions. Thus, Jack for good and necessary reasons set in motion a bad precedent which has been followed to this day, to the detriment of the LCMS.

Tietjen saw this, but again too late. To a group of sympathetic district presidents, on May 17 after the initiation of Seminex, he asserted:

Look what is happening to this church of ours that bears Luther's name. . . . We have reinvented canon law and call it the synodi-

cal handbook. We carry it around in our briefcases and rarely make a move without consulting its bylaws. The Commission on Constitutional Matters, which in times past met rarely, now meets almost every month to hand down rulings about how the bylaws have to be understood, adding bylaw on top of bylaw. . . . Maybe it's time for another bonfire.

3. There was a marked difference between Tietjen and Jack as they played their roles in the controversy. Tietjen was an intensely loyal man, loyal to the students who supported him and to his friends and colleagues on the faculty and in the church at large. He was, indeed, loyal to a fault, for he trusted not only the integrity but also the judgment of his advisors. Throughout his *Memoirs* Tietjen tells us who it was to whom he listened—namely, many of the group mentioned above, but mostly colleagues at the seminary, especially his close friend, Prof. John Damm, and his brother-in-law, Prof. Andrew Weyermann. This course of action was sometimes a big mistake, for their counsel, often colored by their close involvement in the many battles, was bad and counter-productive. And it seems from his *Memoirs* that Tietjen rarely disdained the counsel given. Always loyal, he kept the loyalty of his allies; and he kept his many friends. But he made serious mistakes.

Jack, on the other hand, while seeking advice from friend and foe, competent and incompetent, and almost anyone who happened along, rarely trusted the judgment of others. Dr. Herbert Mueller, the secretary of the Commission on Constitutional Matters, was perhaps Jack's most trusted and important consultant as Jack strove to abide always by the synodical handbook. Those who tried to impose their counsel on Jack, often by virtue of their "support" in his election, were quickly, but amiably, "tuned out" by Jack. That was not always easy for Jack, as some of his would-be counselors were very aggressive. Less than a month after the Denver Convention Dr. Waldo Werning invited himself to Jack's lake cabin in Ontario to advise him and see if Jack might appoint him to Wolbrecht's position as chief executive officer of the synodical Board of Directors. Shortly thereafter Mr. Glen Peglau, another Preus supporter, invited himself up to the lake cabin to advise him and see if he could secure Jack's appointment to the Commission on Constitutional Matters. Werning and Peglau knew where the power was. But neither ever received anything from Jack (cf. *Memoirs*, pp. 223, 251), nor did he did take their advice. Thus, Jack made enemies and lost friends. But nobody ever controlled him.

Tietjen, however, was a captive of his friends and cohorts and sycophants, like an ungifted field marshal directed and led by headstrong and inept lieutenants. His intense loyalty became his undoing. He was, at bottom, a follower, impressed by well-meaning, impractical mentors, not a leader. But leadership had been thrust upon him. Unlike Jack, he was always reactive in ecclesiastical warfare, off balance, on the defensive. And without the word and the confessions he had no defense, no strategy, no direction. His supreme mistake was to follow someone's hare-brained idea to start a "Seminary in Exile," one of his few proactive decisions. Thus, he and the faculty not only violated the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions by abandoning their calls (AC XIV), but also broke the synodical handbook, and so were left defenseless.

4. There are a couple of lessons to be learned from the Tietjen-Preus conflict. First, in any war a general must never underestimate his adversary. Tietjen did this; Jack did not. Jack was not only a good theologian, a good scholar, a sincere confessional Lutheran, and good church politician; he was a superb tactician in the art of ecclesiastical warfare. Tietjen, leaning on the counsel of friends and advisors who were for the most part contemptuous of Jack and his supporters, never knew what he was up against. Moreover, he did not realize or even consider that Jack was utterly sincere as he sought to supervise the doctrine taught at the seminary and in the synod. Finally, Tietjen and his colleagues did not ever sufficiently understand the thinking of ordinary Missouri Synod pastors and people. Jack did. They were God-fearing, pious people who wanted to remain Lutheran and who believed the Bible. They were not interested in ecumenical relations with other church bodies, and they were frightened by the so-called historical-critical method whose apologists could never explain it and rarely knew what it was. They were parochial in the good Lutheran sense of the word. And they should never have been taken for granted.

The second lesson to be learned from Tietjen's *Memoirs* is that a president of a church body can with resolve and pertinacity remove an able president of a respected seminary, if he wants to. As much as any Christian group of people in America the constituency of the Missouri Synod loved and respected its seminaries and professors. Tietjen was surrounded and supported by an army of celebrated scholars and competent church leaders in every sphere of the synod's activities. The faculty was loyal to him. The students revered him. How could Jack ever bring him down, even armed with the pure doctrine of the gospel and all its articles? Here is how Jack did it, step by step:

(a.) Realizing that he had been elected to address himself to the doctrinal situation at the Seminary, Jack researched all the many complaints which had been made against professors by pastors, districts, and all groups throughout the synod. And Jack frankly and honestly told the church what he was doing and that the situation was worrisome, if not alarming. Something would have to be done.

(b.) As stated above, Jack studied and mastered the synodical handbook, and he took charge of the governance of the affairs of the synod, gradually gaining influence or even control over the various boards and commissions of the synod, especially those connected with the activities of the seminary. This was accomplished by appointments to commissions and boards; appointment of special committees; feeding suggestions, in the case of elected offices, to those distributing lists of preferred candidates to delegates before conventions; and similar legal devices. Overt politicking was left in the hands of the "troops."

(c.) A *causa belli* was established. In this case it was the preservation of synodical identity, the historic doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod.

(d.) An investigation or some kind of visitation of the seminary had to take place, if its leadership was to be replaced. The investigation could center in the doctrine taught at the seminary, the spiritual life on campus, interpersonal relations on campus, or anything else. In this instance the *causa belli* in the synod became the reason for the investigation, namely, the doctrine taught at the seminary. And so the investigation, made to appear as benign as possible, was suggested, discussed with Tietjen and members of the faculty, debated, revised, and publicized in a most dignified fashion. The faculty had no choice but to oppose it, and they did so vociferously, to their own detriment. The investigation progressed to its inexorable conclusion, duly reported to the New Orleans Convention.

(e.) Another stratagem in Jack's arsenal was the attempt in a variety of ways to reconcile the irreconcilable theological differences at the seminary and in the synod, while at the same time investigating the seminary. Thus, we find Tietjen commenting in frustration, "In the hands of the Preus administration, mediation efforts meant quieting the opposition in order to confirm the actions that had prompted the need for mediation."

(f.) In the meantime Jack was blunting the effectiveness of Tietjen's role as president by keeping him from obtaining new men who shared the doctrinal position of the seminary leadership on the faculty. Jack had

brought under his hegemony the Board for Higher Education, which, according to the synodical handbook, was required to give prior approval for all new faculty members. As far as I can recall, Tietjen was able to bring in only one new professor during his five-year administration, Dr. Edward Schroeder.

(g.) To accomplish his goal Jack had to take charge of the Board of Control, which at the Milwaukee Convention and through the following biennium had successfully defended Tietjen and the faculty against the many charges leveled against them. At New Orleans new faces appeared on the board, giving Jack a six-to-five majority. A majority of one is enough. Tietjen's downfall was sealed. The seminary's future was in the hands of the board.

(h.) Another step in Jack's agenda was to ask Tietjen in a quiet and considerate manner to step down from his presidency for the good of the school and the synod. The request to resign came, not from Jack directly, but from Dr. Lewis Niemoeller, chairman of the Board for Higher Education (pp. 154-156). The request was made without any forewarning at the most hectic time of the New Orleans Convention, after the faculty majority had been thoroughly discredited by the public and extensive "Blue Book" report of the committee investigating the doctrinal conditions at the seminary. Tietjen saved Jack the trouble of leaking or announcing his request to the convention by immediately rejecting it from the convention floor.

(i.) The next step, essential to Jack's strategy, was to find reputable men in the synod to charge Tietjen with false doctrine and with tolerating the doctrinal aberrations taught by various members of the faculty and to persuade the Board of Control to suspend Tietjen on this basis. This action, along with that of the New Orleans Convention which judged the faculty majority guilty of false doctrine, was the proximate occasion of the departure of faculty and students from the seminary and the forming of Seminex.

(j.) The final step, seemingly anticlimactic but totally consistent with Jack's plan, was his *coup de grace*. Since the New Orleans Convention, on the basis of the "Blue Book," had adjudged the faculty guilty of false doctrine which could not be tolerated in the church, Tietjen had to be dealt with as the leader and defender of those who taught such doctrinal aberrations. For, although he had helped to found an opposition seminary, he still remained a member of the Missouri Synod. The Board of Control asked Dr. Herman Scherer, a board member and president of the Missouri

District to deal with the matter and determine whether Tietjen should be suspended from the synod. Scherer turned the matter over to a highly-respected pastor in the English District, since Tietjen belonged to a congregation of that district. Surprisingly he exonerated Tietjen. His decision was appealed by the two pastors who had accused Tietjen of false doctrine, and the matter was turned over by Jack to Dr. Theodore Nickel, third vice-president of the synod. A couple of years after the walkout Nickel wrote to Tietjen, asking him to abjure "certain positions" (p. 286) which he had held and fostered. When, after a meeting with Nickel, Tietjen declined to do so, Nickel published an official notice in the *Lutheran Witness* (October 16, 1977) which stated, "Dr. John Tietjen is, therefore, no longer a clergy member of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is not eligible for a call."

The aforementioned steps indicate how the president of a church body can turn the direction of a renowned seminary by ousting the leader of the seminary. Jack's strategy and execution, played out with a lone hand, was brilliant. As far as I know, nothing like it had ever been accomplished before in the history of Lutheranism. Jack completely shattered the faculty of the Concordia Seminary; indeed, neither of the two seminaries of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has ever regained its previous stature and influence in the synod—and probably never will. After twelve stormy years of leadership Jack handed over to his successor a synod considerably purged of false doctrine, committed to the traditional Missourian understanding of *sola scriptura* and confessional subscription, committed to missions and honest administration—and possessing the machinery for again ridding a seminary of its president, if he became unruly theologically or administratively—truly a remarkable accomplishment. And in doing all these things, Jack never overtly violated the Scriptures or the Lutheran Confessions, or even the synodical handbook. Tietjen, as his *Memoirs* show, saw vaguely every step of the way what was happening, but his commitment to his friends and his cause prevented him from changing the course of events.

In 1833 the *opus magnum* of the renowned Prussian general, Karl von Clausewitz, was published posthumously. It was entitled *Vom Kriege* and presented an exposition of his philosophy of war. In succeeding generations it became the basis of military studies and action, not only in Prussia, but all over the world. It is doubtful if Tietjen or Jack will ever write such a *Leitfaden* on ecclesiastical warfare in our country where the constraints of the first amendment obtain and such an effort might appear unbecoming. But the outline of the manual has been clearly provided in

Tietjen's *Memoirs*. The *Memoirs* tell us as much of Jack's philosophy of war and his victorious campaigns as of the failures of Tietjen and the debacle of his faculty. And the *Memoirs* offer invaluable advice to future bishops, church presidents, superintendents, and other officials within the Lutheran Church.

Two important questions must be broached in conclusion. First, was the bitter and costly war justified? Was it a "just war"? I am persuaded that in retrospect both parties would now say yes. For the *causa belli* was the preservation of the *sola scriptura* principle and the gospel. It is not an option for any Christian to fight such a war, but his duty and privilege.

Secondly, who won the war? According to Tietjen's honest account, Jack won almost every major battle between the two adversaries. But not only Tietjen and Jack participated in the conflict. Thousands of others—professors, pastors, people throughout Lutheranism—were involved to some degree or another. Who, then, really won and who lost? Perhaps a few observations are in order from one who was close to all the events and the major figures and groups involved.

I think that Jack left the synod in better condition than he found it. In this sense he was victorious. No longer were professors of theology offending students and the church with bizarre and heretical conclusions offered as the "assured results" of modern exegetical scholarship. The principle of *sola scriptura* and its necessary concomitant, biblical inerrancy (according to the confessional Lutheran understanding), was affirmed and practised at the seminaries. "Gospel reductionism," with its accompanying denial of the third use of the law and its ethical relativism, never clearly articulated and never clearly understood, faded away. Incipient universalism, the bane of mission endeavors, which had invaded segments of the faculty and pervaded the mission staff, was suppressed (although it was in strenuously combatting such universalism that Dr. Waldo Werning ran afoul of Jack [p. 251]). Missionary activity began to increase. The synod again came to the support of the beleaguered seminary in St. Louis. A high degree of conscious unity under the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions was restored.

But there were ominous signs of malaise accompanying the uneasy peace, won in part, ironically, by the departure of hundreds of congregations and pastors and almost an entire talented theological faculty. Working under the shadow of former teachers the revived faculty in St. Louis, not fully trusted by many in the synod, was unsure of itself. And neither of the two seminaries was able to exert the theological leadership

necessary to fill the vacuum left by the formation of Seminex. The pastors and lay people grew war-weary and unable to fight old or new enemies at the gates. Today the Missouri Synod is closer to many of the goals which Tietjen and his colleagues set than when he and his colleagues left the synod. Some level of cooperation or "fellowship" with ELCA is close at hand if the associates of the previous administration have their way. A more active role in inter Christian relationships seems already in place. At least part of Tietjen's agenda is now the Missouri Synod's agenda. Adherence to biblical inerrancy still prevails, but it is rarely any longer a factor in synodical discussions with other Lutherans and seems to have little hermeneutical significance as many pastors and teachers in the synod study the Bible and teach in the church. The Missouri Synod still seems not to have learned that there is a Lutheran hermeneutic, based upon Scripture itself and consonant with the Lutheran Confessions—a hermeneutic which must be operative in the lives and activities of the ministers, schools, and parishes of the church. The influence of Tietjen and his colleagues is still alive in the Missouri Synod.

One final observation may be made. Tietjen and his colleagues often warned that the synod, in its fear of liberalism and a low view of Scripture, would be caught up in the opposite extreme, "fundamentalism"—a subjective, triumphalistic evangelicalism. Jack and many of his supporters were acutely aware of this danger, and during his administration various manifestations of this movement were effectively resisted. Today the Missouri Synod stands in grave danger of being affected by this amorphous, emotional, non-credal, undefinable, increasingly neo-Anabaptistic movement which now permeates American culture. It is not that the synod will succumb overnight, but the influence of what can be accurately called the Methodization of American religion is quite apparent in synodical life and programs. The historic liturgy is being abandoned in some congregations. Laymen without calls are carrying out the work of the public ministry of the word. So-called "church growth" principles, more compatible with the Erasmian humanism and blatant synergism of Luther's day if not coarse fanaticism, are preferred in many cases to a Lutheran ministry of word and sacrament. Open communion is becoming common, if not rife. The historic doctrine and practice of church fellowship seem to be giving way in the synod to a more latitudinarian position. The doctrine of the ministry of the word and the divinity of the call to that office is eroding and being challenged in certain quarters. Church officialdom is claiming and gaining more power. The people are listening more and more to television evangelists, and they dislike being

criticized for doing so. Most of these gradual developments would have been opposed by Tietjen, all of them by Jack.

So who won the war? No one and everyone. This answer will be not only the judgment of history, but surely God's verdict as well (Romans 8:28,37).

Robert Preus

INERRANCY AND HERMENEUTICS. Edited by Harvie M. Conn. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989. 276 pages.

The subtitle of this volume is *A Tradition, Challenge and Debate*. This book is a symposium of essays written by fourteen different professors of Westminster Seminary of Philadelphia. This is the third such symposium offered to the public by Westminster professors since its inception in the 1940's, when a number of professors resigned from the faculty of Princeton Seminary because of the latter's departure from sound biblical hermeneutics and Reformed theology. The two previous volumes were *The Infallible Word* (1946) and *Scripture and Confession* (1973), issued at times considered critical by Westminster professors.

The authors of the fourteen chapters wish to show that they still hold to biblical inerrancy as did their predecessors, and at the same time they recognize, so they claim, the need to be aware of "those emerging disciplines of research linked to hermeneutical theology." They frequently quote from the writings of the founding fathers of Westminster Seminary, such as Murray, Machen, Van Til, Woolley, Kuiper, Stonehouse, Allis, and Young, thus endeavoring to give the impression that they are following in the footsteps of these first stalwarts. This reviewer, however, believes that, if the men mentioned were to arise from their graves and read this volume (and other writings of its contributors) and listen to what is currently being taught in the classrooms of Westminster Seminary, they would disagree.

A number of the professors contributing essays to *Inerrancy and Hermeneutics* aver that there now exist tools that are new and were not available to the founding fathers. They claim that current scholars must be aware of the new methods and employ them in their exegetical endeavors and so reach new conclusions on doctrine and ethics. Thus Conn states: "In faculty writings, the school participates in an exploration of the emerging disciplines . . . that are linked to hermeneutical theory.

Its concerns over issues relating to the full trustworthiness of Scripture have not diminished; it has just taken them into new avenues of research. Structuralism and redaction criticism are being used by Westminster exegetes" (p. 223).

Clearly the kind of hermeneutics now being employed at Westminster Seminary is not the same as the hermeneutics used by the framers of the doctrines of the historic Westminster Confession and by the founding fathers of Westminster Seminary. The reader is told, among many other things, that what the text said in biblical times is not necessarily what it means today. One must operate with the concept that texts have two levels of meaning, one for biblical times and one for now. The views of Thistleton and other linguists are adopted in place of the hermeneutical principles that once controlled Protestant biblical interpretation.

In the last chapter (14) of this volume, "Evangelicals and the Bible: A Bibliographic Postscript," John R. Mueller lists many different current approaches to hermeneutics, showing the divergent theories that have characterized recent Roman Catholic and Protestant hermeneutics, many of which the readers are urged to consider seriously. The theological literature shows that many new winds are blowing in Christendom which do not promise reliable insights into God's word. It would seem that Westminster Seminary is heading in the same direction as Southern Baptist Seminary, Fuller Seminary, and other formerly conservative seminaries in the United States.

Raymond F. Surburg

LUKE THE THEOLOGIAN—THIRTY-THREE YEARS OF RESEARCH (1950-1983). By Francois Bovon. Translated by Ken McKinney. Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1987. xvi and 510 pages. Paper, \$35.00.

Francois Bovon has made an enormous contribution to Lucan studies in his summary of Lucan theological research from 1950 to 1983. It is difficult to imagine undertaking such a task, but Bovon does it masterfully, with a clear understanding of the trajectories in Lucan scholarship in this half century. Bovon's approach to the huge amount of literature available is commendable for a number of reasons:

(1.) He organizes Lucan scholarship into topics that allow him to trace the development of arguments and trends among various schools of

thought. His chapters include the following: "1. God's Purpose, Salvation History, and Eschatology"; "2. The Interpretation of the Old Testament"; "3. Christology"; "4. The Holy Spirit"; "5. Salvation"; "6. Reception of Salvation"; and "7. The Church." An appendix is entitled "Chronicles in Lucan Studies." Each chapter is further subdivided to give specific direction to Bovon's summaries. For example, in chapter 2, on the Old Testament, his three subdivisions are "I. Lucan Hermeneutics"; "II. Typology"; and "III. The Text of the Old Testament." This approach allows the reader to focus on one particular aspect of Lucan research and become exposed to the literature on that subject.

(2.) Bovon is exhaustive but representative. It would be unmanageable to summarize everyone who has written on a particular subject, but Bovon chooses those scholars who have either made unique contributions to Lucan interpretation (what he likes to describe as innovative suggestions) or those scholars who have entered the debate to help clarify, expand, or summarize the current discussion. For the English-speaking reader, Bovon tends to highlight the German and French contributions, which is helpful in giving the scholar access to a wide range of foreign language material and in determining whether or not particular articles and books are worthwhile reading. Bovon's summaries of the various authors are always fair and comprehensive, with an unparalleled ability to sense the significant nuances in the argument from one author or school of thought to another. He usually gives his own judgment and critique of the author he is summarizing with a flair for fairness and economy. Even though he cannot summarize everyone, his footnotes are invaluable, offering either a brief synopsis of others who have dealt with a particular subject or a bibliographical reference for the reader to pursue himself.

(3.) At the end of each chapter, Bovon offers his own conclusions about the literature which he just summarized and the issues which they represent. This is the greatest strength of the book. It is refreshing to read a scholar who candidly and forthrightly tells his readers what he thinks about the debate and offers his own analysis of the issues. And Bovon is very clear in his analysis, highlighting for the reader the major issues and their significance. These are not bland summaries, for they engage the reader and force him to make a judgment on Bovon's analysis. If one is at all familiar with the trends in Lucan scholarship, this exercise of debating with Bovon's critique is pure pleasure.

For those interested in Lucan research, Bovon's book is invaluable. He will give them access to all the important works by means of a concise

and accurate summary of the purpose of the author. This book also highlights the value of recognizing the history of various interpretations. A study of the development of the diverse views on eschatology and salvation history allows the student to see how Luke-Acts has influenced New Testament criticism in the twentieth century. Of interest to Lutherans is the greater emphasis on Acts than on the Gospel of Luke in current scholarship, especially as the Paul of Acts relates to the Paul of the epistles. As one follows Bovon's odyssey through these arguments, the traditional interpretation keeps popping up here and there as a unifying thread in the discussion. For the pastor who struggles with higher-critical commentaries, Bovon will show him the source and development of current critical interpretation. For the pastor who is willing to invest the time and the energy, this book is a delight. Every theological library should have at least one copy, and every serious student of Luke should own a copy of this masterpiece.

Arthur A. Just

HARPER'S BIBLE COMMENTARY. Edited by John L. Mays. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988. 1344 pages. Cloth, \$34.95.

Harper and Row organized and published this one-volume commentary in cooperation with the Society of Biblical Literature. The general editor amassed numerous specialists from the large pool of SBL scholars to write introductions and commentary for all the documents associated with the canon in various Christian traditions, including the components of the Apocrypha, 3 and 4 Maccabees, and Psalm 151. Because of the number and nature of the contributors to this volume, it features much diversity in content and is particularly representative of the current state of biblical scholarship—especially in the United States.

The target market for this commentary is the informed layman and Bible student. It is carefully organized and, in spite of having many contributors, each section follows an established format. There are several introductions at the start of the volume that place these documents in their historical and literary milieu. Introductions also preface each of the seven literary groupings. Because the scope of this commentary is so inclusive, comments are made according to each pericope or section and not verse-by-verse. There are no footnotes and few technical terms, yet the content and vocabulary are by no means simplistic.

A volume with this many contributors often contains some disparity in quality, content, and coverage. This one is no exception. For example,

after David Clines comments in an introduction that the Documentary Hypothesis "has been challenged recently at every point" (p. 83), John Kselman goes on to speak of J and P creation accounts in his notes on Genesis 1-2 (p. 87). Other common critical presuppositions will concern the confessional Lutheran: the composition of the "Deuteronomistic History"; the authorship and dating of Isaiah and Daniel; the supposed flexibility of "Jesus tradition"; the prominence of Q in synoptic research; and the supposedly pseudepigraphal nature of several New Testament documents. Especially troubling conclusions in the New Testament section are the late dating of Matthew (A.D. 90) and the redactional understanding of Romans and 1 Corinthians. The material on the use of rhetorical criticism to understand Pauline epistles is helpful, and the inclusion of documents too often ignored by Protestants is a real bonus. There is, however, unevenness in the amount of commentary on some documents (e.g., Romans is covered in 37 pages and Daniel in 11 pages).

A positive aspect of this commentary is that most contributors deal seriously with the text in its so-called "final form." The familiarity of these scholars with their allotted document is visible in perceptive, if terse and debatable, textual notes. These notes tend to summarize and clarify the text; they generally are not of a doctrinal or homiletical nature. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of this volume does not lie specifically in its assistance to our understanding of various texts, but in its aid to our understanding of how texts are currently being interpreted.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan

ACCURACY OF TRANSLATION AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION: THE PRIMARY CRITERION IN EVALUATING BIBLE VERSIONS. By Robert P. Martin. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989. 89 pages.

It has been a long time coming, but finally a major publisher has offered a sensible and substantive evaluation of the NIV. This criticism is all the more timely because Zondervan has been boasting of late that finally the NIV has replaced the Authorized Version as the best selling English Bible in the world. Not much credence, however, should be given to this triumphalism. Thomas Nelson has its own poll which says that not only is the old AV still number one, but also the New King James Version is number two, the NIV not even appearing in the running. So much for the polls released by the public relations offices of large

publishers.

This book is all the more important because of the publisher. The Banner of Truth Trust has consistently produced the very cream of the crop of Calvinistic-Puritan commentaries and theological treatises in the English-speaking world. The publisher took on this subject some years ago in *The Banner* (October, 1976) and presented a commendable, even-handed debate on the merits of the NIV. Nevertheless, the issue was left quite open-ended, suggesting perhaps that nothing of any consequence was at stake. This present publication has endorsed a critique which claims that the NIV undermines the very foundation of historic Protestantism—the verbal view of inspiration. In centering the argument here, Robert Martin has, indeed, cut through all the advertising verbiage and glowing endorsements of the NIV. In eighty-two easy-to-read pages he strives to make really only one decisive point: one cannot claim to hold to a verbal view of inspiration and still use the NIV.

Martin has six chapters, each nicely leading the reader along in his argument. Stating first the philosophy behind the translating technique used in producing the NIV (chapters 2-3), he next documents, with examples, the results of this philosophy and its implications for verbal inspiration (chapters 4-6). In Appendix A he notes the many changes in the revisions of the NIV since it first appeared. In Appendix B he tackles the issue of archaic language and modern translations. Finally, in Appendix C he makes clear that he has no interest in defending the *Textus Receptus* and offers some sound criticism of certain extreme elements, particularly in the United States, who argue for this textual standard more from an emotional than from a rational basis. It would be difficult to fault Martin here. There are indices of both authors and Scripture passages mentioned.

Regarding Martin's Appendix C, treating the issue of text criticism, several observations could be added. Martin earned his doctorate from a Southern Baptist school, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (the largest seminary in America), from which a flood of dissertations on New Testament textual criticism has flowed forth in recent years, Martin's among them. He reflects, in his assessment of the discipline, the typical confidence that conservative theologians in America have carefully projected since the days of B. B. Warfield, the first conservative churchman in America to gain proficiency in the discipline. Prior to the nineteenth century, the discipline of text criticism was seen by confessional Protestants, as well as by Roman Catholics, as the single greatest threat

to *verbal inspiration*. The variety of textual variants seemed to invite an infinite number of possibilities, which did not seem to fit the paradigm of *verbal certainty*.

Furthermore, Martin neglects to note that christological battles were fought, from Servetus onward, with Socinians, Arians, and Deists, over certain key textual variants. This fact explains the quotations which Martin extracts from Bengel, Kenyon, and others (p. 76, n. 1). These authors stressed the innocuous nature of textual criticism just because it was in this field that the antitrinitarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offered the biggest challenge to traditional orthodoxy, including the editions of the texts of the original language used in the Reformation.

Furthermore, textual criticism still provides plenty of theological controversy. Martin lulls us all to sleep when he gives us this assurance (p. 76):

Far from being an enemy of truth, where its task is pursued using sound principles, textual criticism is the friend of truth and a valuable aid to the church in drawing the precise boundaries of "biblical" faith and practice.

Nowhere, however, does he mention what these "sound principles" are. For the last thirty years, there have been at least three major schools of textual criticism, each of which, like the three popes of the Western Schism, have anathematized the others: (1.) the rational eclectic; (2.) the rigorous eclectic; and (3.) the majority-text school. Each group has, in turn, its own sub-groups. Each school has produced its own edition of the "original" Greek New Testament; each differs from the others, sometimes on important points, because each is operating from a different set of "sound principles." Perhaps an indication of the school to which Martin belongs is the open copy of the third edition of the Greek New Testament of the United Bible Societies which appears on the cover of Martin's book, but perhaps, again, it is merely the preferred edition of the publishers. Whatever the case, Appendix C is the weakest link in Martin's otherwise excellent essay.

This treatise is an easy-to-read, brief, and important analysis of the NIV, but it is not the best work on the subject. Jakob van Bruggen's *The Future of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978) still holds that position. Martin's book is, however, the best in print at the moment.

Theodore P. Letis
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THE LIVING PSALMS. By Claus Westermann. Translated by J. R. Porter. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989. 306 pages.

Claus Westermann is an emeritus professor of the University of Heidelberg. He has had an ongoing interest in the form of the Psalms. He grew up with missionary parents in Africa and later was in a prison camp during World War II. He considers the Psalms tools which can convey the reconciling power of God and can aid those who seek to realize their identity as humans in the image and likeness of God.

He begins with an introduction to the psalm genre, including discussions of how they came to be collected and used. He then treats some psalms in detail, under headings which include communal psalms of lament and trust; royal psalms; individual psalms of lament, trust, and praise; descriptive psalms of praise; liturgical psalms; and songs of Zion, blessing, and wisdom. He concludes with a suggestion about the relationship of the Psalms to Christ.

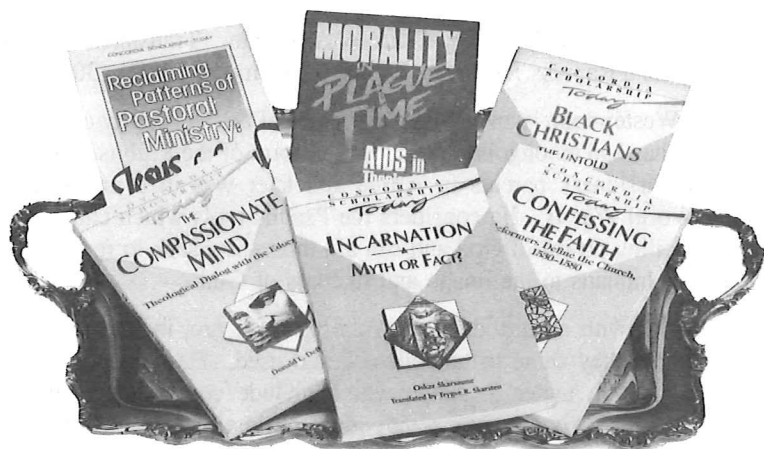
This book is not for someone who is looking for a devotional book. It can be helpful to someone who would like to understand current explanations of the background and inner workings of the Psalms. Westermann explores the issue of communication with God and studies the structure of the way in which the psalmists viewed themselves and those around them. He makes the observation that the lament has all but disappeared in the church. He recognizes that all the psalmists see God as deeply involved in daily life. He calls for reflection about the way in which we speak about and to God.

Some will find that the technical discussions are too much through which to wade. One wishes that some adequate explanation could have been offered for the disjunctions in the Psalms, which interrupt what our Western minds would consider to be a smooth-flowing text. No alternative to rearranging the texts is considered.

Thomas Trapp
St. Paul, Minnesota

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