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## ***Textual Criticism of the Gospel of Mark: Trying to Make Progress***

**James W. Voelz**

### ***I. Introduction***

Every serious student of the New Testament realizes that there is a problem with the text of Mark. Where the book ends is one of the salient problems of textual criticism, and even English translations of the New Testament indicate that all manuscripts (= mss.) do not end the text of the Second Gospel in the same place.<sup>1</sup> Most are also aware of the conundrum at the beginning of the book, specifically, whether or not chapter 1, verse 1 includes the words υἱοῦ [τοῦ] θεοῦ after Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. In this essay I do not intend to replow these well-worked fields. Rather, I wish to discuss much more fundamental problems—problems which concern the Gospel of Mark most directly, but which are applicable to all other New Testament books, as well.

### ***II. What Readings Actually Exist?***

The first and in many ways most basic problem for the textual critic is the simplest: What readings do we actually have for a Gospel like Mark? The answer is not obvious at all.

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<sup>1</sup>Some contain a simple comment, such as the side margin note *in loc.* of the NASB (*New American Standard Bible*, Side Margin Reference Edition, with Concordance, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1977): "Some of the oldest manuscripts do not contain vv. 9-20." Others engage in extensive discussion. The recently published ESV (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, Classic Reference Bible, Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2001) is the most complete. After verse 8, it includes the following note in brackets in the text: "[Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20.]" The following footnote is then referenced immediately after this comment:

Some manuscripts end the book with 16:8; others include verses 9-20 immediately after verse 8. A few manuscripts insert additional material after verse 14; one Latin manuscript adds after verse 8 the following: ***But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.*** Other manuscripts include this same wording after verse 8, then continue with verses 9-20.

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***Dr. James W. Voelz is Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO.***

## A. The Problem of the Content of the Resources

### 1. *Novum Testamentum Graece*<sup>27</sup>

It is disconcerting to learn that the hand edition of the Nestle/Aland text, *Novum Testamentum Graece*,<sup>2</sup> which is the standard tool for almost all New Testament interpreters,<sup>3</sup> simply does not record hundreds, if not thousands, of Greek variants, very many of which are quite significant, indeed. Consider the following: According to Nestle/Aland (=N/A<sup>27</sup>), there is no variant to the καθὼς at the beginning of Mark 1:2. This has occasioned discussion about whether the “just as” here is *retrospective*, linking with the words in verse 1 (= “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God], just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet...), or *prospective* linking with verse 4 following (= “Just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet... John came on the scene...).<sup>4</sup> καθὼς normally is retrospective, and it certainly is elsewhere in Mark<sup>5</sup> (though not always in Luke<sup>6</sup>), but the first verse does seem like an overall title (especially with no verbs), and the sense seems to flow better prospectively (especially since a retrospective reading would cause 1:4 to begin with asyndeton<sup>7</sup>).<sup>8</sup> But, in fact, there is a variant reading here, attested by a number of mss., several of them quite significant. The variant is ὡς, rather than καθὼς, and it is read by 579 (a late minuscule which frequently agrees with B in Mark), by D and W (witnesses to important early traditions), by A and f<sup>13</sup>, and by the mss. which comprise ℄ (the κοινή tradition, and others allied with it).

The number of N/A<sup>27</sup> omissions is surprisingly large. Several examples of no little interest from the early portion of Mark are:

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<sup>2</sup>27th revised edition, edited by Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

<sup>3</sup>Less complete still is the other hand version of the Greek NT text, *viz.*, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th revised edition, ed. by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1998). The text of this work is identical to the text of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, but the apparatus is quite different. Enormously fewer variants are recorded, though the attestation for the ones which are recorded is more complete, especially as it concerns minuscules, versions, and church fathers.

<sup>4</sup>See, e.g., the note of H. B. Swete in his classic commentary, *The Gospel According to St Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices*, 3rd edition (London: Macmillan, 1927), 2.

<sup>5</sup>See 4:33; 9:13; 11:6; 14:16, 21; 15:8; 16:7.

<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., 6:31; 11:30; 17:26; 17:28 (also Acts 7:17; 11:29).

<sup>7</sup>One can note, however, that 1:9 has a similar asyndeton in ms. B, also with an initial ἐγένετο.

<sup>8</sup>For an opposing viewpoint with a review of the data (including the use of Scriptural quotations in καθὼς clauses), see J. K. Elliott, “ΚΑΘΩΣ and ΩΣΠΕΡ in the New Testament,” *Filologia Testamentaria* 4 (1991): 55-58, esp. 56, as well as his “Mark 1:1-3—A Later Addition to the Gospel?” *New Testament Studies* 46 (2000), 584-588, which argues partly on this basis for the non-originality of the first three verses (585-586).

Text	Location	Reading	Unrecorded	Major Attestation
1:4	before	ἐγένετο	καὶ	ℵ* W
1:34		λαλεῖν τὰ δαμόνια	τὰ δαμόνια λαλεῖν	B (D) (Θ)
6:31		ἀναπαύσαθε	ἀναπαύεσθε	℣ <sup>84</sup> ℵ D L W Θ Π ℹ f <sup>1</sup> f <sup>13</sup> 28 33 565
6:40		πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ	πρασιαὶ	ℵL Δ

## 2. *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* 2001

One can do much better with the *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, edited by Kurt Aland, especially in its most recent edition.<sup>9</sup> This work is much more complete than N/A<sup>27</sup> in its critical apparatus. It does, e.g., indicate the existence of the reading ὡς in Mark 1:1 (also adding the attestation of Origen and Epiphanius to that of the Greek mss.), as well as the variants for the examples from chapters 1 and 6 in the paragraph immediately above. It is, however, nowhere near adequate in terms of completeness, leaving the interpreter of a book such as Mark essentially unaware of hundreds of significant options. Consider the parable of the Mustard Seed, Mark (4:30-32) as given in the *Synopsis*:

4:30 Καὶ ἔλεγεν, Πῶς ὁμοιωσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολῇ θῶμεν; 4:31 ὡς κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃς ὅταν σπαρῆ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, μικρότερον ὄν πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, 4:32 καὶ ὅταν σπαρῆ, ἀναβαίνει καὶ γίνεται μείζον πάντων τῶν λαχάνων καὶ ποιεῖ κλάδους μεγάλους, ὥστε δύνασθαι ὑπὸ τὴν σκιὰν αὐτοῦ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνοῦν.

What does one do with the tenth and eleventh words of verse 31, μικρότερον ὄν? They are difficult to fit into the verse syntactically. But there are a number of variant readings at this point, *none* of which is recorded, not only by N/A<sup>27</sup>, but also by the *Synopsis*. The following are the most significant:<sup>10</sup>

μικρότερον πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων	ἐστὶν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς	f <sup>13</sup> 28 33 579 700
μικρότερος πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων	ἐστὶν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς	Ū K U P f <sup>1</sup> 565
μικρότερος πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων	τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐστὶν	A
μικρότερος πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων	ἐστὶν	C
μικρότερός ἐστὶν πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων	ἃ εἶσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς	D

In addition, a number of notable mss. do not spell the key word in question in the standard way. Mss. A, B, and D spell the stem of the comparative

<sup>9</sup>*Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum, Locis parallelis evangeliorum apocryphorum et patrum adhibitis*, Kurt Aland, ed., 15th edition, 3rd revision expanded with papyri 101-111 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001).

<sup>10</sup>None of the options here given parallels Matthew exactly.

degree adjective μικρ-.<sup>11</sup>

As noted above, the number of omissions in the *Synopsis* is not as serious as in N/A<sup>27</sup>, but it is large. Among the most striking may be listed:

Text	Location	Reading(s) Unrecorded	Major Attestation	
5:11 <sup>12</sup>	ἀγέλη χοίρων	μεγάλη βοσκομένη ἀγέλη χοίρων ἀγέλη χοίρων ἀγέλη χοίρων	μεγάλη βοσκομένη βοσκομένη βοσκομένων βοσκομένων	Ν <sup>c</sup> (A) Δ D 579 L
5:43	γνοῖ	γνώ	Ν C Θ Δ Π Ϟ f <sup>1</sup> f <sup>13</sup> 28 33 565	
13:15	εἰσελθάτω	εἰσελθέτω	B Θ Ψ Π Ϟ f <sup>1</sup> 2 579	
16:8	εἶπαν	εἶποι	all except D (!)	

### 3. *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines Against Codex Vaticanus: Mark*

Fortunately, one has access to the unrecorded readings in the passages cited above in the highly useful work edited by Reuben Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines Against Codex Vaticanus: Mark*.<sup>13</sup> In this work, which is part of a series intended to cover the entire New Testament,<sup>14</sup> readings of all major Greek mss. are arranged (as the title suggests) on a line by line basis vis-à-vis ms. Vaticanus / B (which provides the baseline for analysis), to highlight both similarities and differences. This scope and layout give one both access to many more readings and the ability to read the text of a given ms. *seriatim*.

But as valuable as Swanson's work is, it does have its shortcomings.<sup>15</sup> It is not immune from the under-reporting error. Consider Mark 6:39, specifically, what Jesus instructed ἀποτοῖς (the disciples) in the feeding of the five thousand. Swanson gives the following for the original hand of B: ἀνακλειθῆναι πάντας συμπόσια συμπόσια.... For the reading of the corrector of B (= B<sup>c</sup>), the same words are given. In fact, several things happened to the infinitive ἀνακλειθῆναι after it was originally written down. The more im-

<sup>11</sup>It should also be noted that a number of mss., especially D L W 28, read ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν rather than ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς immediately before the words considered above, a fact which is recorded by the *Synopsis*.

<sup>12</sup>It should be observed that in 5:11, there are a number of further unrecorded variants involving the prepositional phrase πρὸς τῷ ὄρει, which occurs immediately before ἀγέλη, some of which place these three words after (A K M U Π) or even within (W f<sup>13</sup> 28) the phrase examined.

<sup>13</sup>Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, England, 1995.

<sup>14</sup>At the time of the writing of this essay, similar volumes have been produced for all four Gospels, Acts, Romans, and Galatians, with 1 Corinthians about to see the light of day.

<sup>15</sup>In addition to what is said in this and the following paragraphs, it must also be remembered that Swanson's work is specifically limited to Greek mss. For the testimony of the versions, the vast majority of the fathers, and the lectionaries, other sources must be used.

portant concerns the omission of the letters  $\theta$  and  $\eta$ , indicated by a dot above each, to give the reading ἀνακλείναι. Swanson does not recognize this (neither does the Aland *Synopsis*). It does recognize (as does the *Synopsis*) the presence of the reading ἀνακλίναι in other mss., but it fails to record that the “corrected” reading of B supports it.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, there is the lack of precision in what Swanson reports, specifically in two areas:

That several different hands have worked on various mss. is not recognized, especially in the case of B / Vaticanus and  $\aleph$  / Sinaiticus. Several correctors are clearly in evidence for each—a fact which is recognized by N/A<sup>27</sup> (though not enough is done with this fact in this hand edition). To this interpreter, at least three hands have worked upon the text of Mark in Vaticanus after its initial production. A close analysis of the 1999 full-color facsimile produced by the Vatican<sup>17</sup> shows one corrector (possibly the original scribe himself) cancelling previously written letters with a stroke through them from upper right to lower left, and, perhaps, a second hand indicating omission with a dot above the letters to be removed. Associated with these non-alphabetic indicators are letters written above the line in a large script, either identical to, or very similar to, the letters as originally written. Next, there is correction made in a much smaller hand, whose script is rather distinctly not identical to the letters as originally written. Finally, someone traced over the letters of the text of Vaticanus much later—but only those letters with which he was in agreement! Thus, some letters are quite faint, because they were not “approved” by the tracer. Unfortunately, Swanson does not distinguish among these editorial workings on the text of Vaticanus.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, there is no distinction between the work of the early, large-hand corrector(s) and the later, smaller hand corrector. To take examples from only the first five chapters of Mark, the addition of TA after ME (to produce META) in 1:14, e.g., is clearly the work of the former,<sup>19</sup> while the second beta of κρᾶββατον in 2:11 and 2:12 is clearly the work of the latter, yet both are marked as B<sup>c</sup>.<sup>20</sup> On the other

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<sup>16</sup>It should be noted that N/A<sup>27</sup> does recognize that a corrected text of B does support ἀνακλίναι, though it does not indicate a difference in orthography.

<sup>17</sup>*Bibliorum Sacrorum Graecorum Codex Vaticanus B* (Roma: Istituto Poligraphico E Zecca Dello Stato, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>N/A<sup>27</sup> (48) detects two correctors of B, the first contemporaneous with the manuscript's production, and the second in the six or seventh century. It may be noted that much less attention has been paid to the correctors of ms. B than to the correctors of ms.  $\aleph$  (cf. footnote 23, below). Indeed, Paul Canart, in his introduction to the text of the new Vaticanus facsimile (“Notice Paléographique et Codicologique,” in *Prolegomena: Bibliorum Sacrorum Graecorum Codex Vaticanus B* [Roma: Istituto Poligraphico E Zecca Dello Stato, 1999], 1-6) says (5): “Un certain nombre de corrections, sous forme de grattages et d'additions, remontent certainement au moment de la copie. Mais toutes les interventions des correcteurs devraient faire l'objet d'un nouvel examen approfondi.”

<sup>19</sup>Virtually all of the corrections given in the large, early editorial hand(s) seem to be very reasonable and are, generally, to be preferred.

<sup>20</sup>See also especially the addition of a final sigma in αὐτοῖς in 1:38, the change of final αἱ to final εἰ in διαλογίζεσθε in 2:8, and the addition of a final sigma in ἄρας in 2:12.

hand, all too often the lack of letters being traced, the work of the final editorial hand, is accorded the status of an earlier “corrector,” and the untraced readings are also marked as B<sup>c</sup> (see, e.g. the spelling ΓΑΛΙΛΑΙΑΣ, omitting an E after the first Λ in the original in 1:16).<sup>21</sup>

In like manner, all “corrections” to the text of Sinaiticus are given by Swanson simply as N<sup>c</sup>. It is obvious from the Kirsopp Lake facsimile,<sup>22</sup> however, that a number of correctors<sup>23</sup> have worked upon the text of N in Mark, one or more quite similar to the original scribe and several with quite a different hand.<sup>24</sup>

The actual readings of various mss. in a number of places is incorrect. Especially problematical here are the readings of ms. D / Bezae. Several important examples may be adduced:

Text	Reading Given in Swanson	Reading in Manuscript Facsimile <sup>25</sup>
6:16D	ὄν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφαλίσαι Ἰωάνην ἐκ νεκρῶν ἠγέρθη	...ἀπεκεφάλισα οὗτος ἐκ νεκρῶν... <sup>26</sup>
6:18D*	οὐκ ἔξεστίν σε ἔχειν αὐτὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ	...σε ἔχειν τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀδελ... <sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup>See also the loss of a second tau in the spelling κράββατον in 2:11 and 2:12. It is not impossible that the later tracer made additional corrections, however. See, e.g., the addition of κἄν after ἄψωμαι in 5:28. Another interesting example is the form in 5:26 recorded as ΕΑΥΘΗΣ and labelled B<sup>c</sup>. The actual reading is ΑΥΘΗΣ, with the tracer’s rough breathing mark over the alpha.

<sup>22</sup>*Codex Sinaiticus Petropolitanus: The New Testament, The Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas*, reproduced in facsimile from photographs by Helen and Kirsopp Lake, with a description and introduction to the history of the codex by Kirsopp Lake (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911).

<sup>23</sup>H. J. M. Milne and T. C. Skeat, in *The Codex Sinaiticus and The Codex Alexandrinus* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1955), detect two correctors contemporaneous with the production of the ms. (one being the copyist himself), and several in the seventh century AD (16-18). These correspond to Kirsopp Lake’s (*Codex Sinaiticus*, xvii-xxiv) correctors A<sup>1</sup> and A<sup>2</sup>, active in the fourth-fifth century AD at the original scriptorium, and the C correctors, active in the fifth-seventh century (Lake sees more, including several much later). N/A<sup>27</sup>, by contrast (48), detects three correctors in N, the first in the fourth-sixth century, the second in the seventh, and the third in the twelfth.

Skeat understands both ms. B and ms. N to have been produced in a scriptorium in Caesarea, while Lake holds the provenance of both to be Egypt. See the extensive discussion in T. C. Skeat, “The Codex Sinaiticus, The Codex Vaticanus and Constantine,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 00 (1999), 583-622, esp. 583-598, 603-604, 617.

<sup>24</sup>As an example of A<sup>1</sup>, see the addition of ΕΥΘΥΣ in 9:24, as well as (probably) the addition of ΥΥ ΘΥ in 1:1. An example of A<sup>2</sup> is the addition of ΤΟΙΣ ΣΥΝΓΕΝΕΣΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΝ at 6:4. C<sup>a</sup>’s sharper-edged hand can be seen in the addition of ΕΙΤΑ ΣΤΑΧΥΝ after ΧΟΠΤΟΝ in 4:28, while C<sup>b</sup>, with his “feathered” letters, has added the words ΕΞΟΥΣΙΑΝ ΤΩΝ ΠΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΑΚΑΘΑΡΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΗΓΓΕΙΛΑΕΝ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ in 6:7-8.

<sup>25</sup>*Codex Bezae cantabrigiensis quattuor Evangelia et Actus apostolorum complectens graece et latine sumptibus Academiae phototypice repraesentatus*, phototype reproduction by Paul Dujardin, copy 149 (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1899).

<sup>26</sup>Given correctly by N/A<sup>27</sup> and the *Synopsis*.

<sup>27</sup>N/A<sup>27</sup> and the *Synopsis* do not recognize the reading σε before ἔχειν.

8:35D*	ὃς γὰρ ἂν θέλη τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι	ὃς γὰρ ἂν θέλη τὴν αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν...
8:35D <sup>c</sup>	ὃς γὰρ ἂν θέλη τὴν αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν σῶσαι	ὃς γὰρ ἂν θέλη τὴν ψυχὴν ἑαυτοῦ...
10:2D*	καὶ πάλιν ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν	καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν <sup>28</sup>

As may properly be inferred from these examples, most errors occur when an attempt is made to delineate original readings and corrections in a ms.

## B. The Problem of Understanding the Content of the Resources: Pronunciation

Another factor relevant to determining the readings which actually exist is pronunciation. The pronunciation of Greek changed over the centuries, a factor which is often ignored in text-critical studies. Recent work by Chrys Caragounis of Lund, Sweden, demonstrates that current Greek pronunciation patterns were already present in New Testament times.<sup>29</sup> One feature of this pattern was the occurrence of much itacism, with, among others, the following important letters/letter combinations being pronounced in identical fashion: αι = ε; ει = οι = υι = η = υ = ι (long); ο = ω. From N/A<sup>27</sup> and the *Synopsis* text one can never gain an idea of how frequently mss. display variant readings of a purely orthographical nature due to the confusion of the sounds here indicated; for Mark such variants number in the tens of thousands! (Indeed, the much vaunted ms. B evidences idiosyncratic spelling involving especially vowels incredibly frequently, in twelve of the twenty-eight verses of chapter 2, for example.) Especially the αι = ε interchange is of importance, because in a number of cases different spellings could actually produce different words, or, more frequently, different forms of words (i.e., not simply different spellings of the same word or form). Two interesting examples are the following:

Text	Reading in Most Mss.	Variant Reading	Major Attestation
3:13	προσκαλείται	προσκαλείτε	A B*
14:47	ἔπαισειν	ἔπεσειν	ⲛ C D L W Δ Θ f <sup>13</sup> 579

In each of these instances, the contextual syntax suggests that the variant reading is a variant spelling, so the possibilities must not be overplayed. But that is not true in the following passages:

<sup>28</sup>Given correctly by N/A<sup>27</sup> and the *Synopsis*.

<sup>29</sup>See his latest work: *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology and Textual Transmission* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

Text	Reading in Most Mss.	Variant Reading	Major Attestation
7:11	λέγετε	λέγεται	ⲛ B* D W Δ Θ 33 579
9:50	ἀρτύσετε	ἀρτύσεται	A C K L Θ 579
13:28	γινώσκετε	γινώσκειται	B <sup>c</sup> K L W Δ Θ f <sup>13</sup> 579

The first and third examples are especially attractive as options, understanding λέγεται and γινώσκειται as 3rd singular indicative passives. In the case of the former, an anacolouthon is avoided (though that construction is not uncommon in Mark) and the initial ὑμεῖς is taken emphatically with οὐκέτι ἀφίετε in the following verse; in the case of the latter, a third singular verb form would fit the context well, allowing the entire sentence (beginning with ὅταν...ὁ κλάδος...γένηται) to remain an abstract principle, in contrast to the personalized second plurals of verse 29 (οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ἴδῃτε...). A slightly more complex example occurs in 6:9. Most mss. read μὴ ἐνδύσῃσθε, keeping the verb form in the subjunctive dependent upon παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα...in verse 8. Several mss. (B\* 33 788), however, attest to the ungrammatical imperative form μὴ ἐνδύσασθε, which would give a possible mixed construction after ἵνα.<sup>30</sup> But there is also attestation (B<sup>c</sup> S Π\* Ω) for the itacistic infinitive form μὴ ἐνδύσασθαι, which is supported indirectly by the perfect infinitive reading ἐνδέδυσθαι of L N 1424. Such an infinitive would also give a mixed (but now grammatical) construction and might be suggested by the preceding ὑποδεδεμένους σιανδάλια.

### ***III. Knowledge of Readings: The Benefits***

That it is vitally important for interpreters of a Gospel to know which readings actually exist can and should go without saying. It may be noted, however, that there are several seldom-recognized benefits to having more rather than less complete knowledge of ms. readings.

Ignorance of readings can lead to an oversimplified understanding of κοινή Greek in general and of the Greek of a given author such as Mark, in particular. To illustrate the first of these points, the presence of support by important mss. of the so-called Alexandrian, Caesarean, and Byzantine traditions for the reading εἰσελθέτω instead of εἰσελθάτω at 13:15 (see II A 2, above), as well as for εἶπον rather than εἶπαν at 16:8 by even more of the same (see also II A 2, above), raises important questions about the prevalence of weak aorist terminations on strong aorist stems in Hellenistic Greek. The actual ms. evidence supports the notion that a change of terminations was an option, even as were the more “normal” strong terminations. The evidence does not support a notion that the more “normal”

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<sup>30</sup> μὴ + the aorist imperative does appear three times in 13:15-16, providing a “precedent,” as it were, for the use of an ungrammatical command form for emphasis.

terminations were only characteristic of the Atticistic reaction. To illustrate the second point (concerning the Greek of a given author), the presence of the present imperative ἀναπαύεσθε (instead of the aorist ἀναπαύσασθε) at 6:31 (see II A 1, above) in key mss. of all important traditions raises questions about the nature of Mark's Greek, specifically, whether it is as ordinary and common as many suppose. If J. Humbert is correct, that by the first century AD there was a move to what he calls the "objective aorist" in verb forms outside the indicative mood in non-literary writings<sup>31</sup> — he speaks of the aorist as being "overwhelmingly prominent" in the papyri of the first century AD<sup>32</sup> — Mark may have more high literary characteristics than is normally assumed. Indeed, depending upon which infinitive form one reads in 6:39 before πάντας, aorist active or passive, Mark's Greek will be seen to be more or less simple in its syntax.<sup>33</sup>

Ignorance of readings also fails to take advantage of the interpretive value of variants. The reading ὡς as an alternative to καθὼς in 1:2 (see II. A. 1, above) is a good example. While καθὼς is very likely to be preferred, the presence of ὡς indicates that, at the very least, some copyists understood the conjunction at this point to convey a prospective rather than a retrospective meaning, and they felt that for this meaning ὡς was a more natural selection. One can observe that semantic development in this direction for καθὼς (cf. Modern Greek, which uses it also in a prospective sense<sup>34</sup>) had already begun in the early centuries AD, as witnessed to by the usage of Luke's Gospel (see 6, above). Notice also how the numerous variants at μικρότερον ὄν in 4:31 (see II A 2, above) help one to understand the probable meaning of this difficult verse.

#### IV. Further Directions: Evaluation

Beyond the readings which actually exist, there are other factors which must be considered when engaging in textual criticism. Principally, these concern evaluation, *viz.*, evaluating the readings known to exist. Evaluation of readings is an issue separate from what is discussed above and the subject of an independent study. Here we may simply indicate two factors which are, in the process of evaluation, either underappreciated or virtually ignored.

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<sup>31</sup>J. Humbert, "Verbal Aspect: Has It Evolved from Ancient to Modern Greek?," *The Link I* (1938): 25.

<sup>32</sup>Humbert, "Verbal Aspect," 25. According to Humbert (24), in ancient authors, the usage of the aorist required justification, not as later, the usage of present tense forms. Relatedly, he observes: "The rare subjunctives and imperatives formed on the present stem are...used, with a certain aptness, in letters which are otherwise marked by a comparatively high culture..." (25).

<sup>33</sup>It is not accidental that Θ and 565, reading ἀνακλιθῆναι, place the πάντας before the infinitive.

<sup>34</sup>See, e.g., Ann Arpaoulou, *Modern Spoken Greek for English-Speaking Students* (New York: Hadrian, 1964), 208.

### A. Manuscript Tendencies

The first underappreciated evaluation factor is ms. tendencies. Each ms. is a unique, individual production—handcopied!—a factor which is hard to remember in a print, if not digital, medium culture. As such, each ms. has its own, individual characteristics. These are the result of the collocation of two factors: the characteristics of the source(s) from which it was copied (or upon which it was based), and the preferences/predilections of the scribe(s) who copied it. These characteristics may be lexical, orthographical, morphological, syntactical, and more.<sup>35</sup> To use ms. B as an illustration: it noticeably employs reflexive pronouns instead of personal pronouns to express basic features of the genitive case (e.g., 2:21: ἑαυτοῦ rather than αὐτοῦ); it prefers to spell “John” with only one ν (Ἰωάννης) not two (Ἰωάννης) (e.g., 1:4); it often prefers first principal part verb forms (present/imperfect) to those of the third principal part (aorist) (e.g., 13:7: ἀκούετε rather than ἀκούσητε); and it prefers standard Greek, rather than Semitic, word order with nouns and adjectives (e.g., 10:8: μία σάρξ rather than σὰρξ μία).

### B. Author’s Style

The second under-appreciated evaluation factor is author’s style. Readings congruent with a given author’s style would seem to be the ones to be preferred. This is a difficult matter, of course, because an author’s style is determined on the basis of the readings of given mss., yet the selection of those mss. is (supposed to be) determined to some extent on the basis of an author’s perceived style. Despite this difficulty, it is possible to achieve a *general* understanding of an author’s style, especially if one notes characteristics present in readings supported by virtually all mss. and text types. Such a general understanding helps one not only to evaluate individual readings, but also, and perhaps especially, to understand more fully individual ms. tendencies, which, in turn, helps one to evaluate individual readings. In Mark, e.g., it can be noted that καί rather than δέ is often used to introduce units or pericopes (e.g., 8:1-21), that present tense indicative mood forms are often employed to convey past events (e.g., 4:35-38), that asyndeton (lack of conjunctions) is frequent (e.g., 2:8b-9), and, in the latter half of the book especially, that nouns are rather distinctively split from adjectives which modify them (e.g., 12:43: ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἡ πτωχὴ πλείον πάντων ἔβαλεν / βέβληκεν τῶν βαλλόντων). It may be observed that these features are also characteristic of ms. B, moreso than they are of, e.g., ms. W.

As noted above, these two factors, *viz.*, ms. tendencies and author’s style, are interrelated and cannot be considered in isolation from one another.

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<sup>35</sup>Theological tendencies may also be noted in mss., but this category will not be discussed here.

# ***Pastors Who Play God***

***Timothy E. Saleska***

***Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not “So there’s no God after all,” but “So this is what God’s really like. Deceive yourself no longer.”***

(C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*)

## ***Introduction***

One Sunday morning in my former congregation, I was sitting in my office scribbling down a few notes when I heard a shuffle at my door. I looked up and there stood Scotty, his fingers were in his mouth, his red hair rebelling against his mother’s shellacking. He did not move, and he did not seem inclined to speak. He just stood there—eyeing me suspiciously.

I invited him to come in and look over some of the toys he knew I kept on a shelf for just such occasions. He marched over and started playing, while I bantered on and on about baseball and pre-school...the weather...and anything else I thought might interest him. But Scott completely ignored me. He preferred the sound of a toy car to my babbling. I smiled because the scene was identical to my previous encounters with this boy. I figured that eventually he would warm up to me. I just hoped it would be before he graduated from college.

Well, in the middle of my futile game of “Twenty Questions” Scotty’s mother breezed into the office, having finally caught up with her fugitive son who could move pretty fast when he was on the lam. She laughed as she watched my one-sided conversation. “I do not think Scott likes me too much,” I finally admitted it. “He barely acknowledges my existence.”

“I would not worry about it,” she chuckled as she picked him up and in the same motion wiped his nose. “Actually he thinks quite highly of you. Last Sunday during the service he pointed at you and said, ‘dat’s God,’ and he keeps asking when he can come to church to see God again.”

“He thinks I am God!” Ridiculously, but predictably, I was slightly flattered by the idea (Smart kid, that Scotty!). “Yes, but do not worry,” Scott’s mother continued with a wry smile on her face, “we keep telling him that you are definitely not God, and I am sure he will catch on soon enough! Have a nice day, pastor!”

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***Dr. Timothy E. Saleska is Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO. The author would like to thank Dr. Robert Kolb for his helpful reading and critique of this paper.***

Now that hurt. Scott's mother had dealt me some killing words. The fondest desire that Scott's fantasy raised in me, his mother quickly crushed with a healthy dose of reality. And "well she should have," we would all say, for almost everyone would agree that pastors should not think and act as if they are God. And most people would say that it is a dangerous sentiment for pastors to entertain.

Nathan Pope observes that he has never heard anyone use the expression "playing God" except with a negative connotation. Ministers, he says, are often *accused* of "playing God." He writes that the *criticism* is often leveled against a parish pastor: "Who does he think he is, God?" People usually say this when they feel that the pastor has overstepped his bounds and has no business saying or doing what only God should say or do.<sup>1</sup>

However, this paper challenges the notion that it is always dangerous for pastors to "play God." Quite the contrary, this paper asserts that pastors *must* play God. This, in fact, is what God would have them do. By thinking of themselves and their calling in an appropriate way as playing God, pastors gain an important perspective on their ministry in the church and in the world. Pastors who understand how they are to "play God" speak and act in certain ways that pastors without this understanding will not. They will make certain moves in preaching, teaching, worship, and counseling that those without this understanding will not. Their attitude towards their ministry and their role in the communities in which they serve will be directly affected as well.

Now, by "playing God," I do not mean that the pastor ought to act in such a way as to attempt to be a rival to God or to supplant God. Wayne Oates warns pastors about the ever-present temptation to *supplant* rather than to represent God. He says that a common daydream of pastors is that of seeing their people do just what they want them to do, seeing their own will incarnated in the lives of their people. Deluded by this desire, it is easy for pastors to begin to assume that their authority is not derived from God, but that it originates within the self. Oates reminds us that this is simply one form of idolatry.<sup>2</sup> This, of course, is the desire of all humans since the fall. The human soul is actually "captivated" by this desire.<sup>3</sup> The serpent promised, "You will be like God," i.e., "You will rival God," and Adam and Eve believed that lie. They wanted to be gods over and against the one, true God.

Pastors must keep in mind that their calling does not exempt them from the servant role that God gives to all believers. Jesus reminds us that we are called to a way of life that is counter to the prevailing culture.

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<sup>1</sup>Nathan R. Pope, *Motivation for Ministry: Perspectives for Every Pastor* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1993), 168-170 (italics added).

<sup>2</sup>Wayne E. Oates, *The Christian Pastor* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 72-73.

<sup>3</sup>Gerhard Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 47.

So he says in Matthew:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-28).

By “playing God,” I do not mean to suggest that pastors are to identify with the power of God so that they become tyrants over their people. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Rather, perhaps ironically, pastors exercise a specific *divine duty* in their calling as God’s servants, and this divine work is carried out in the midst of and as a manifestation of their humble service.

However, when I use the phrase “playing God” in reference to what pastors are to do, I *do* want to call to mind some of the other public contexts in which the term occurs as a criticism. Those contexts usually involve matters of human life and death. For example, in hospitals and clinics doctors are often accused of “playing God” when they are involved in decisions that directly result in the life or death of human beings. In many cases, it seems as if they actually decide who lives and who dies. Again, in such contexts the claim that one is “playing God” is a criticism because the giving and taking of life is perceived as the *ultimate* power reserved for God alone. It is one of those powers that defines God as God.<sup>4</sup>

The Bible operates with the assumption that God alone has power over life and death. When the king of Israel read the letter from the Syrian king requesting him to cure Naaman’s leprosy, he said in despair: “Am I God, to kill and make alive...” (2 Kings 5:7). And a number of other Biblical passages explicitly relegate the power of life and death exclusively to God. In Deuteronomy 32:39, in typical fashion, God says to Israel, “See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me. I kill and make alive; I wound and I heal, and no one can deliver from my hand.”<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of the criticism implied when someone is accused of playing God, this paper asserts that it is precisely and specifically in his use of this God-given power to kill and make alive that the pastor does indeed “play God.” But how can this possibly be so, and what does it entail? In order to answer this question, Martin Luther’s understanding of

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<sup>4</sup>This is already implied in Genesis 3:3-4 where the serpent asserts, over and against God’s warning, “You certainly will *not* die!” Here the serpent, implying that he has some say in this life and death matter, appears to “play God” in an inappropriate way.

<sup>5</sup>See also 1 Samuel 2:6: “The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and he raises up,” and Hosea 6:1-2: “Come, let us return to the Lord. For he has torn us, but he will heal us; He has wounded us, but he will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; he will raise us on the third day that we might live before him.”

God's exclusive power to kill and raise will serve as the foundation for the following discussion.<sup>6</sup> Beyond answering this question, Luther's perspective can provide an important hermeneutical key both for understanding the significance of God's actions in the Biblical narrative<sup>7</sup> as well as for perceiving how God deals with people today. It is an important contention of this paper that what God did to and for people in the Bible is not completely different from what He does to and for people today, and an important link in that work is the pastor.

### ***God Kills and Raises***

As stated above, the Bible attributes to God the power over life and death. He is the only one who can "kill and raise." The contexts of the aforementioned passages provide a variety of situations in which God's "killing and raising" work can be interpreted.<sup>8</sup> But Martin Luther's interpretation of these texts is unique because from them he also understands God's power to kill and raise to refer to the works God does *in His chosen people*. In his *Explanation of the Ninety-Five Theses* he writes:

When God begins to justify a man, he first of all condemns him; him whom he wishes to raise up, he destroys; him whom he wishes to heal, he smites; and the one to whom he wishes to give life, he kills, as he says in 1 Sam. 2:6, and Deut. 32 [39]...He does this, however, when he destroys man and when he humbles and terrifies him into the knowledge of himself and of his sins, in order that the wretched sinner may say, "There is no health in my bones because of my sins; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thy indignation" (Ps. 38:3).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>In what follows, I am greatly indebted to Gerhard Forde's exposition of this theme in Luther. See Forde, *Theology*, and *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation*, 1518 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>7</sup>As will be evident, Biblical passages quoted and alluded to throughout the footnotes and body of this paper are read or interpreted from this perspective.

<sup>8</sup>These passages are explained in various ways by commentators. In their commentary on Deuteronomy 32:39 for example, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, vol. 1 *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 488-489, understand these words to refer not to the immortality of the individual soul but to the restoration to life of the people of Israel, which God had delivered up to death (i.e., the return from exile). Duane Christensen interprets the statement in a more general way as an assertion of the idea that Yahweh alone determines the welfare of human beings (Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, vol. 6b, *Word Biblical Commentary* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002], 819). Ralph Klein, in commenting on the similar phrase in 1 Samuel 2:6 suggests that the phrase refers to God's healing of those who are desperately ill. He says explicitly that the thought of resurrection was probably not in the poet's mind (Ralph Klein, *1 Samuel*, vol. 10 *Word Biblical Commentary* [Waco: Word Books, 1983], 17).

<sup>9</sup>*Luther's Works* (American Edition), 55 vols., ed. Helmut T. Lehman and Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986), 31:99 (henceforth

Whether or not Luther is correct in his application of these particular passages can be debated. But even if he is not, his description of the work of God on his people in terms of death and resurrection provides a powerful heuristic argument to guide our understanding of God's relationship to His people both in the Bible and among us today.

In his view, God visits upon some people a death that is of a special kind. "Death before death" one might call it. Yet for him *this* death is the real death.<sup>10</sup> This work of God in which He frightens people so that they see themselves as "nothing, foolish, and wicked" is, for Luther, the real death.<sup>11</sup> It is death in the sense that people who, as described above, want to be God and who think they can make a valid claim for themselves before God, come to the awful realization that they can no longer do so because the true God has manifested Himself to them in a particularly frightening way. They begin to understand that they are not, in fact, God (or anything close to Him), and their own sin and its fruits become glaringly apparent. This is much like what happened to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed. They realized they were not God, and were therefore in big trouble.

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cited as LW 31:99). See also his *Answer to the Hyperchristian Book*:

These then are the two works of God, praised many times in Scripture: he kills and gives life, he wounds and heals, he destroys and helps, he condemns and saves, he humbles and elevates, he disgraces and honors, as it is written in Deut. 32 [:39], 1 Sam. 2:6, Ps. 112 [:7-8] and in many other places. He does these works through these two offices, the first through the letter, the second through the Spirit. The letter does not allow anyone to stand before his wrath. The Spirit does not allow anyone to perish before his grace (LW 39:188).

In the *Heidelberg Disputation* he writes:

...in 1 Sam. 2 [:6], 'The Lord kills and brings to life....' This is understood to mean that the Lord humbles and frightens us by means of the law and the sight of our sins...Insofar as we acknowledge and confess this, there is no form or beauty in us, but our life is hidden in God (i.e., in the bare confidence in his mercy), finding in ourselves nothing but sin, foolishness, death, and hell, according to that verse of the Apostle in 2 Cor. 6 [:9-10], 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as dying, and behold we live'...that is, he humbles us thoroughly, making us despair, so that he may exalt us in his mercy, giving us hope... (LW 31:44).

See also similar comments in *First Lectures on the Psalms* (LW 10:206), and in *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer* (LW 42:79). See also Forde's comments in *Theology*, 105-108 and *On Being*, 33-36.

<sup>10</sup>M. C. Mattes, "The Thomistic Turn in Evangelical Catholic Ethics," *Lutheran Quarterly* 26 (Spring 2002): 76, writes:

Radical Lutheranism's key metaphor for justification by faith is "death and resurrection." By this is meant that God's desire is to create new beings out of the death of sin and evil that humans inflict on themselves. For Luther, the real, actual death that can be experienced is that of baptism as unifying us with Christ's death and resurrection, not the death we suffer at the end of our lives.

<sup>11</sup>LW 31:44; Forde, *On Being*, 33-34. One may also see Wengert's quote from Luther's *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses* (LW 31:129-130), where Luther vividly describes the experience of those who suffer "the punishments of hell" (Timothy Wengert, "Peace, Peace...Cross, Cross: Reflections on How Martin Luther Relates the Theology of the Cross to Suffering," *Theology Today* (July 2002): 195.

It must be emphasized that for Luther, this death is a real experience. In the Heidelberg Disputation he writes: "To die, I want to emphasize, means to feel death at hand." Gerhard Forde comments about this statement:

It must be remembered here...that for Luther as for Paul the real "sting" of death was precisely in the way it "hits" us in soul and spirit. Thus, for Luther the sinner's experience of the terror of death is the real death. Actual physical death, even though sorrowful enough for loved ones, is in and of itself a much less serious matter.<sup>12</sup>

The bigoted, unpleasant grandmother in Flannery O'Connor's story ***A Good Man Is Hard to Find*** illustrates what Luther means. She was "hit" with this kind of death, and through her the reader is "hit" with it as well. In the story, an escaped prisoner known as the Misfit encounters an unfortunate family stranded in the woods because of a car accident. One by one the family is led away and shot. Finally, only the grandmother is left. The reality of her impending death at the hands of the Misfit forces her to desperate pleas for mercy and evokes a gentle, almost loving attitude towards her killer. But her agony is such that when the Misfit does finally shoot her, it comes almost as a relief to the reader that her ordeal is ended. Her actual death seems far less than the "death" that preceded it. What the terror of death did to her, however, is explained by the comment of the Misfit at the end of the story: "She would have been a good woman," the Misfit said, "if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life."<sup>13</sup> In other words, the terror of death killed the "old" arrogance in her and created a spirit of humility so that she became a different person than she was before. And perhaps that was her salvation. The grandmother's experience, I think, illustrates the kind of death Luther was talking about. When God kills in this way, He cuts away every support by which humans might attempt to prop themselves up and make some sort of claim before God.<sup>14</sup>

It is rather shocking to say it, but in Luther's thinking God is like that Misfit. He puts a gun to people's heads so that their predicament vis-à-vis

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<sup>12</sup>Forde, *On Being*, 100. For a revealing analysis of Luther's thinking on faith and experience, see R. Prenter, *Spiritus Creator: Luther's Concept of the Holy Spirit*, trans. J. M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), 55-64.

<sup>13</sup>Flannery O'Connor, *Collected Works* (Library Club of America, 1988), 153. The author would like to thank his colleague, Joel Okamoto, for pointing out this story to him.

<sup>14</sup>For example, by pointing out to God their good works, their faithfulness, their generosity, a well-lived life and the like. Note how pathetic any such claims would have sounded in the mouth of the grandmother, and in her predicament she is not able to make them. When she does say, "Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady. I'll give you all the money I've got!" it sounds particularly hollow. And the Misfit is unmoved: "Lady," the Misfit said, looking beyond her far into the woods, "there never was a body that give the undertaker a tip" (ibid., 153).

God (their sin, His holiness) hits home with terrifying reality, and **God** becomes the real problem in their lives. Like Isaiah said when he stood before Yahweh, “Woe is me, I am a dead man.” According to Luther, this kind of fear and humility before God is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Without the Spirit, no one dies this death.<sup>15</sup> The Spirit invades the conscience of people so that the “word” from God undoes them. He crashes through every device people use to keep God at bay so that God can no longer be ignored as irrelevant—no more than you could overlook the threat of a man pointing a gun at your head. In the midst of this kind of inner conflict, people cannot continue their everyday life as if their sinful hearts and lives don’t matter. The Spirit convinces a person that God is serious. He makes God seem like the remorseless Misfit who holds your life in His hands.

In other words, God appears to do the opposite of what most people might expect Him to do, precisely in order to affect (afflict) people’s theology.<sup>16</sup> “Hell” (which is an appropriate word to describe the grandmother’s experience and the death Luther speaks of), ends detached speculation about God.<sup>17</sup> One’s priorities are undone. Like a man at gunpoint, a person suffering God’s attack sees God and his own sinful life in a whole new light (Job 42:5). He can no longer fool himself or play games with God. As Luther says, “For where there is no fear, there is no humility. Where there is no humility there is pride, and where there is pride, there are the wrath and judgment....”<sup>18</sup>

Another way to describe this “killing” work of God is to describe it as a rooting out, or tearing down of all that is in us. In Luther’s thinking, for example, the story of the Exodus shows not only our escape from vice to

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<sup>15</sup>*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) Formula of Concord, V.11; perceptively, Calvin calls this manifestation of God’s terrifying presence in the life of the individual “the Day of the Lord” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 579-580).

<sup>16</sup>Stanley Hauerwas, *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000), 33, suggests that for most American Christians, the crucially important things about God are that God exists and that God’s most important attribute is love.

<sup>17</sup>In Jesus’ parable concerning the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16), the rich man’s theology was changed in this way. He had a new grasp on some important theological truths. You might say that he finally understood God and what God can do to you if He wants. And he was anxious to have his new theological insights proclaimed to his brothers. He understood the importance of preaching the warning to them. You could say that through his speech, he wanted to “damn” his brothers before it was too late—give them a taste of hell before hell—so that they could be saved. Abraham, ironically, suggests that such “preaching” already exists in Moses and the Prophets. If his brothers don’t listen to them, nothing else will do the trick, not even a resurrection. That’s because if a person has not “died” that person will hardly see the need for a resurrection. Such was the predicament of the rich man’s brothers. They needed to be killed so that they could live.

<sup>18</sup>LW 31:47. At this point, note that this conception of God is different than that of most American Christians. Stanley Hauerwas suggests that for most people the most important things about God are that He exists and that He is love.

virtue but rather our escape from our own virtue to the grace of Christ. The Christian must always stand before God as the one who has nothing.<sup>19</sup>

But God's purpose in killing is ultimately to "raise the dead." His punishments are "prolegomena to resurrection."<sup>20</sup> **Why such drastic measures?** Why does God "kill" before "raising?" It is because those who feel the weight of sin and the terror of death are forced to turn wholly to their killer—the one who holds their life in his hands—and earnestly seek His mercy.<sup>21</sup> In the presence of God's wrath, other gods and other priorities are exposed as frauds—utterly irrelevant for dealing with God. They are exposed as great lies which ultimately offer no salvation. Through their "death" God creates a place for His mercy in people's sinful hearts where there was no place before. And this is what He wants, hearts directed only towards Him. And so this is what He sets out to create. He raises His people from the grave into which their self-pretence and sinful self-sufficiency had put them.

To the one in the grip of real death, however, it looks and feels to all the world that there is no mercy at the hand of this remorseless God (that He truly is the Misfit)! And so, in doing resurrection the Holy Spirit must also convince the dead person to believe in God's promised mercy to him contrary to what he sees. The Spirit must convince him that there is redemption from sin, and death, and hell, and that hope resurrects him. In this way faith itself is a resurrection.<sup>22</sup> R. Prenter writes: "It may also be expressed in this manner: only the Holy Spirit can make the message about Christ into the Gospel. Without the experience which the Spirit alone can give, the message about Christ remains law; without the experience given by the Spirit our relation to the Word is simply imitation."<sup>23</sup>

Commenting on Psalm 2:4, Luther says "that one must **rise (aufsteigen)** from visible things to invisible, and the eyes and heart must be turned from things present to heavenly things...."<sup>24</sup> Resurrection happens when the Holy Spirit teaches his children to believe contrary to what they see. In his **Commentary on Psalm 117** Luther writes:

God's faithfulness and truth always must first become a great lie before it becomes truth. The world calls this truth heresy. And we too are constantly tempted to believe that God would abandon us

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<sup>19</sup>Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 46. Prenter has this to say about Luther's understanding of the Gospel (ibid., 50): "What does it really mean that the Holy Spirit does its mortifying and regenerating work by making us conform to the death and resurrection of Christ.... Faith in Christ is the real presence of Christ in us as a redeeming reality, which as an invisible and incomprehensible but divine reality **tears us away from and places us in contrast to all other reality** (italics mine).

<sup>20</sup>Wengert, "Peace, Peace," 201.<sup>20</sup>Wengert, "Peace, Peace," 201.

<sup>21</sup>Observe the behavior of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18, for example. He had to throw himself on the mercy of the very one who was the biggest threat to him.

<sup>22</sup>Forde, *Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 53.

<sup>23</sup>Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 58.

<sup>24</sup>LW 12:25.

and not keep His Word; and in our hearts He begins to become a liar. In short, God cannot be God unless He first becomes a devil. We cannot go to heaven unless we first go to hell.... ***Therefore it is actually the Spirit who enlightens and teaches us in the Word to believe differently.***<sup>25</sup>

As St. Paul puts it: "...we do not look at the visible things (τὰ βλεπόμενα), but the things which are not seen (τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα). For the visible things are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18). St. Paul is describing the kind of wisdom with which the Holy Spirit enlightens His people. In their fear of the Lord, His people become wise with a wisdom the world does not have.<sup>26</sup>

### ***God Kills and Raises Israel***

But all of this begs the question: Who gets this treatment? Whom does God kill in order to raise? The answer has already been suggested: those whom He chooses. It is easily observed that the Biblical narrative is a story in which God is constantly choosing His people: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). God chooses those whom He will make His own, and as the Bible makes clear, all His choices lead to Israel. God wants Israel, and He gets Israel by "raising" them from the "dead." In Israel, election and death and resurrection come together.

Because of this connection, the significance of God's dealings with Israel throughout the Bible can be more clearly grasped if the Bible is read in the light of Luther's description of God's killing and raising work. It provides a framework within which we can "read" the significance of much that happens in the Bible. The impetus behind the people, events, and institutions that are the stuff of Biblical narrative is the death and resurrection of ***His people*** and God's desire to raise an Israel with a heart faithful to Him.<sup>27</sup> In other words, since His elect is the faithful Israel, in the

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<sup>25</sup>LW 14:31 (italics added); Forde, ***On Being***, 90, #21 discusses this passage. In his ***Lectures on Genesis*** Luther also comments on "contrary faith" when he writes:

For if you listen to the Law, it will tell you: In the midst of life we are in death, according to that ancient and pious hymn in the church. But this has reference to the Law alone. The Gospel, however, and faith invert this hymn and sing thus: "In the midst of death we are in life. Thee we praise as our Redeemer. Thou hast raised us from death and hast saved us." For the Gospel teaches that in death itself there is life, something which is unknown to and impossible for the Law and reason.... This is the power of faith, which mediates in this way between death and life, and changes death into life and immortality, which, as faith knows, has been bestowed through Christ (LW 4:116).

<sup>26</sup>In line with the language of death and resurrection are passages such as Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," i.e., God instills fear in people (He kills) so as to give them true wisdom. See also 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

<sup>27</sup>In Deuteronomy 5:29 (NASB) God makes His wishes known: "O that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever."

Bible God is continually and in many different ways killing in order to raise faithful Israel.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, other people just die. When it is their time to go, when God wants to take them out, He does, in remorseless fashion.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>As a few examples among many, one might consider the appearance of God on Mt. Sinai as a “once and for all” death and resurrection event of Israel (see especially Ex. 19:16-21; 20:18-20; Deut. 5:23-27) which was repeated “daily” to the people in their worship at the sanctuary where God was actually present in their midst. Thus, His presence there is described in terms reminiscent of Sinai (1 Kings 8:10-13), and a text such as the description of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 further illustrates the “killing and raising” nature of worship in the sanctuary in general. (See also 2 Sam. 6 where God struck Uzzah for touching the ark, and David, in fear of Yahweh, refused to take the ark to Jerusalem.) Others of these more obscure actions of God might also gain significance from this perspective. One of the strangest stories in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel 24 where God moves David to take a census and then punishes him for doing it. In the face of such a God, one surely “dies.” But as David Penchansky points out, when given a choice, David chooses the punishment that most directly puts him in the hands of Yahweh. He chooses complete dependence on Him, and this is what God wants—complete humility, and in it there is life. Penchansky, however, after pondering this inscrutable story, ventures to suppose: “So God both wounds and heals. Is the healing so dramatically wonderful that it is worth the initial wounding? I doubt it” (David Penchansky, *What Rough Beast?: Images of God in the Hebrew Bible* [Louisville: Westminster, 1999], 40). The significance of God’s work in these events and institutions in the life of His people is summed up in these words of Moses: “He humbled you, that is, he made you hungry (i.e., attacked you) and he gave you the manna to eat which you did not know and your fathers did not know (i.e., he raised you), so that *he might show you* that man does not live by bread alone but by everything that comes from the mouth of Yahweh will man live” (Deut. 8:3).

But in addition to these events and institutions, God’s word also has the power to kill and raise. It does what God pleases (Is. 54:11). And so Yahweh also says: “Therefore I have hewn you by the prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth...” (Hosea 6:5). And Yahweh says to Jeremiah: “Behold I am making my word in your mouth into a fire, and this people is the wood, and it will consume them” (Jer. 5:14). God, through the proclamation of the prophets, was killing in order to raise His people. In fact, the prophetic writings are structured in these terms. That is to say, oracles of judgment (death-dealing) are juxtaposed with oracles of salvation (life-giving) with little or no transition between the two. This technique can be explained in functional terms. That is, by this arrangement, God alternatively kills and raises His Israel in hopes that the heart will be turned to Him.

One can see this in the lives of individuals as well. See, for example, God’s behavior toward Job. Like the Misfit, God showed no remorse or compassion for Job’s suffering, and He was unmoved by any of Job’s speeches. Job was “dead in the water.” When God finally speaks to Job, he can only respond: “I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). In spite of all his suffering, God’s revelation left him with no other choice. God seems to have “killed” the author of Psalm 88 this way. The psalmist talks as if he were already dead, and he holds God responsible: “You have put me in the lowest pit. In the darkest places, in the depths...I bear your terrors I am helpless; over me your wrath has passed, your terrors have annihilated me” (Ps. 88:4-5, 7, 16-17, Hebrew). Near death, the psalmist was terrified of God, and he appears to describe this as the real death.

<sup>29</sup>So, Luther, in commenting on Romans 2:9, distinguishes between the tribulation of the faithful and that of the ungodly. In summary, he says: “God permits his own from time to time to experience both [i.e., tribulation and anguish] temporarily.... But God lets the ungodly linger in this distress forever...” (LW 25:180). See also his remarks in *Bondage of the Will* (LW 33:62-63).

The author of Psalm 135 makes this distinction very clear. Israel is His choice: "Praise Yahweh for Yahweh is good! Sing to his name for it is delightful. **Jacob he has chosen for himself, Israel as his treasure....** Whatever Yahweh wants he does in heaven and earth" (vv. 3-6). Then, the Psalmist recalls what Yahweh did **to people** on behalf of **his people**: "He struck the firstborn of the Egyptians" (v. 8). Namely, He simply killed people in accord with His purposes for Israel. There was no remorse from God. In fact, they never had a chance. God told Moses that He was going to harden Pharaoh's heart, and when Pharaoh did not listen, He was going to "lay [His] hand upon Egypt" (Ex. 7:3-5). It was not because the Egyptians were the worst of sinners, but again "whatever God wants, He does." And so it goes, according to the Psalmist. Yahweh struck many nations and killed mighty kings: Sihon, Og, and all the kingdoms of Canaan (vv. 8-11). His wrath hit them without distinction.

But again, Israel **suffers** a different fate. By raising up a nation from Abraham, by bringing that nation out of Egypt, the land of death, and by dealing with them as He did in the wilderness, "in, with, and under" the nation God was busy raising up His Israel who would be true to Him. As the story goes, God regularly attacks His children, but He does not abandon them. He terrifies them, and He humbles them, but in the end He raises them from the tomb of the Babylonian exile (cf. Ezek. 37).<sup>30</sup> Throughout her history, God kills and raises Israel like this because "He wants to be their God as they were his people." That is, He is about the business of shaping the hearts of His elect so that they will love and trust in Him alone. This far, it seems the Misfit was right, "She would have been a good woman, if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life." And so, it seems, when it comes to Israel, God was there.

### ***What about Us?***

For us, God's way with Israel is both warning and promise: promise if you are Israel and warning if you are not! The question asked earlier is still as pressing as ever: Who gets to be Israel? Whom does God kill in order to raise? And the answer is still the same: It is God's choice. God raises Israel, and He can do it out of stones if He wishes (Matt. 3:9).

For us who live on the New Testament side of things, the exclusive nature of God's choice of Israel is demonstrated once again and for all in the death and resurrection of God's Son, the faithful Israel and God's elect.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Even though Yahweh's beloved had a weak heart, Yahweh's love is so "furious" that He cannot forsake her: "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel?...I have had a change of heart. My tenderness is all stirred up" (Hosea 11:8). He never talks the language of love to anyone but Israel. In this regard, Yahweh is faithful.

<sup>31</sup>On this teaching that Jesus is Israel "condensed" into one see especially David E. Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 27-83; Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*

Christopher Seitz observes: “The witness of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture is fundamentally a witness to the One who raised Israel from the dead, and who, in turn, raised Jesus from the dead.”<sup>32</sup> He goes on to say that the challenge of our day is how to see in Jesus’ death and raising actions truly in accordance with the Scriptures of Israel.<sup>33</sup> Seitz’s words can be restated to say that the challenge of our day is to see in Jesus’ death and resurrection actions truly in accordance with *the way God always works with Israel*. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God deals with Israel as He always has because this is God’s way with His elect. Not only is Jesus’ death and resurrection in accordance with the Scriptures of Israel, but it is in accordance with God’s way with Israel from the start.

The Father was pleased (the meaning of the Hebrew root  $\text{פָּצַח}$ ) to kill this Son, too (Is. 53:10). And so Christ died. But then, as always with Israel, God raised him up *ahead of time*. He received an end-time resurrection before the end. On this one whom Luther describes as the one “whom God himself *elects*”<sup>34</sup> God carried out death and resurrection.

The death and resurrection of this faithful Israel is important for *us* because the New Testament testifies that Christ is actually God’s Word to *us*. David Jeffrey writes: “God’s Word and the words of men and women are certainly not identical: whereas we speak with words, God speaks with things, persons, and events, preeminently so in the event of the Incarnation.”<sup>35</sup> Christ is the *Word* made flesh (John 1:14). “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days *spoken* to us by his Son” (Heb. 11:1).

What was God’s word to us “in Christ?” Just this: “I *hereby* kill and raise you, my *elect*.” And the Word, Christ, made it so. In “the Word made flesh,” Word and deed come together. God’s Word (Christ) accomplishes the action—the death and resurrection—that God desires.<sup>36</sup> Or, to put it

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*tation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983), 35-59; Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. D. H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

<sup>32</sup>Christopher Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster, 2001), 47.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>See his hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” in *Lutheran Worship*. Prepared by the Commission of Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982), 297-298.

<sup>35</sup>David L. Jeffrey, *The People of the Book: Christian Identity and Literary Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 17. One ought to see here the connection between Jeffrey’s assertion and the “things, persons, and events” through which God spoke in the Old Testament as suggested above, and therefore the relationship between these and Christ. If God kills and raises us in Christ, it suggests that this is what He was doing to His Israel in the Old Testament as well.

<sup>36</sup>From this perspective, it can be said that Christ’s death and resurrection is performative speech. Performative speech acts are speech acts that don’t just describe states of affairs but (when the conditions are right) they accomplish something in the very act of uttering them. A performative speech act changes the world in (sometimes)

another way, Christ is God's Word that kills and raises us.<sup>37</sup> It is through this Word that **we** receive the death and resurrection that marks "Israel." Israel is God's choice, and in Christ He proclaims that He has chosen us.

### *Pastors Play God*

So, what does this mean for pastors and the way that they view themselves and their ministry? Well, if it is God's Word that accomplishes the death and resurrection of the elect, the Word must be proclaimed so that it can do in the **here and now** the killing and the resurrection, the electing, which God has determined.<sup>38</sup> It means that the **biggest challenge** for pastors is to **play God**, to kill and raise people ahead of time, to make them Israel, God's chosen people, in the present time. Through the promise of God's Word, pastors are to resurrect God's chosen ones out of the deadness of their sin. They bring about the death and resurrection of God's children.<sup>39</sup> In this vein, Forde writes:

God does not come hat in hand begging "Won't somebody please believe in me?" God does not come in ways that pander to our so-called freedom of choice. God comes to invade the house of the

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substantial ways. Examples of performative speech acts are when a pastor says "I now pronounce you husband and wife." Or in a worship service when he says, "I forgive you all your sins..." For information on performative speech acts, see Stephen Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 228-237; Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 231-233; Jim Voelz, *What Does This Mean?: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1995), 289-292. Thus, the word made flesh (God's speech to us), in His death and resurrection, actually accomplishes the death and resurrection of the elect. Kevin Vanhoozer, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of Covenant," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller (Scripture and Hermeneutics, Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 32, is on a similar track when he suggests that Jesus is God's "illocutionary act." (For an explanation of illocutionary acts and speech acts in general, see J. R. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World*, [Basic Books: 1998], 135-161.)

<sup>37</sup>So St. Paul can write: "For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and he died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

<sup>38</sup>Forde writes: "Ministry is doing the deed of election here and now, publicizing the mystery in and through the church. It has to do with the concrete, present-tense, public doing of the deed" (*Theology*, 180).

<sup>39</sup>So the New Testament says things like: "Now when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord; And as many **as had been appointed to eternal life believed**" (Acts 13:48, NASB, italics added); and "We give thanks to God always for all of you...knowing, brethren beloved by God, **His choice of you**; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction..." (1 Thess. 1:2-5, NASB, italics added). My colleague, Robert Kolb, likes to use the expressions "hitmen" and "midwives" for the way that believers use the Word, Law and Gospel, to do God's work for Him.

“strong man armed” who aims to keep his goods in peace. God comes to challenge the adversary to battle for the life of the captive.” This is so, he says, because “the bound sinner will never choose the crucified God.... The sinner must die to be raised to newness of life. The proclamation is shaped by that realization. It administers death in order to call to life.<sup>40</sup>

Nowhere is the responsibility of pastors to play God more clearly seen than in the public worship service and their conduct of it. We usually like to remind ourselves of the fact that on Sunday mornings we gather around the Word and Sacraments to celebrate the resurrection. That is true enough. But if what I have been saying is true, on Sunday mornings we do not merely **celebrate** the resurrection, but that is when death and resurrection actually **happen!** On Sunday morning, the dead must actually be raised. And pastors are the ones who have been charged to proclaim the Word in order to do just that. And this recognition should inform the preparation and content of the worship service—the Word that will be proclaimed. In the worship service, pastors aim the Word at the heart to kill and make alive! (Nothing less will really do!)<sup>41</sup>

Pastors carry out that charge, for example when they officiate at a Baptism. Here they play God by administering God’s killing and raising Word (Christ) to the baptized ones. In Baptism, God manifests His election in the present time. Through it, the pastor announces in God’s stead: “I hereby kill and raise you, my elect.” And again, the deed is done. That child has died and risen to new life. He/she has become “israelized” (Col. 2:11-12). The death and resurrection of His elect are accomplished, not apart from the Word incarnate, but precisely because in Baptism God gives us that good Word. So, St. Paul says that we have been buried **with** Him through Baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead...even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6). In Baptism, God kills and raises His children beforehand **with** the Word, and that means that death has no final victory over them. Its power is only apparent and temporary. In a real sense then, our life begins with the death of Christ and ends on the Last Day. In Baptism our life takes on an **eschatological quality**.<sup>42</sup>

But this is not the only time pastors play God. On the contrary, it is the

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<sup>40</sup>Forde, *Theology*, 56.

<sup>41</sup>How much this is needed can be appreciated when one looks at descriptions of contemporary audiences. See, for example, Timothy Wright, *A Community of Joy: How to Create Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 86-95. William Willimon’s comments about some worship music also make a similar point: “People come away from worship on Sunday morning, after being exposed to such drivel, feeling a bit better, having a vague sense of having participated in some sort of spiritual ‘high,’ but not at all sure of any counter cultural claim having been made on their lives” (*Shaped by the Bible*. [Nashville: Abingdon, 1990], 80).

<sup>42</sup>Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 79.

constant perspective from which pastors carry out their ministry. That is because the death and resurrection that Baptism deals to God's people is a once-and-for-all event which continues their entire life. It has to because the "old Adam," who wants to take God's place and be God, always threatens to come to life. Luther explains:

These two parts, being dipped under the water and emerging from it, point to the power and effect of baptism, which in nothing else than the slaying of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new creature, ***both of which must continue in us our whole life long.*** Thus a Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, begun once and continuing ever after. For we must keep at it without ceasing, always purging whatever pertains to the old Adam, so that whatever belongs to the new creature may come forth.<sup>43</sup>

In other words, by daily dying and rising, the eschaton, the end-time resurrection, comes ***beforehand*** to God's people.<sup>44</sup> In dying and rising, God's people experience death and then resurrection as a foretaste and anticipation of what is to come. Through the continual death and resurrection of God's children, the goal of the kingdom of God keeps moving in on them.<sup>45</sup>

But how does that "***daily*** Baptism," that "continuing experience of death and rebirth" happen in the Christian life? Luther says that the old man dies and the new man comes forth through daily "contrition and repentance." For Luther repentance is shorthand for "death and resurrection." Repentance consists of "contrition" or the terrors that strike the conscience when sin is recognized (death as it has been discussed above) and "faith,"

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<sup>43</sup>***The Book of Concord***, Large Catechism, Baptism, 65 (italics added).

<sup>44</sup>William Willimon, "A Liberating Word in Water," ***The Christian Century*** 95 (March 22, 1978), 304.

<sup>45</sup>Thus, Luther writes: "Now, when we enter Christ's kingdom, this corruption must daily decrease so that the longer we live the more gentle, patient, and meek we become, and the more we break away from greed, hatred, envy, and pride" (***The Book of Concord***, Large Catechism, Baptism, 67). In this same vein, Forde writes:

The "progress" of the Christian therefore, is the progress of one who has constantly to get used to the fact that we are justified totally by faith, constantly has somehow to "recover," so to speak, from that death blow to pride and presumption—or better, is constantly being raised from the tomb of all pious ambition to something quite new. The believer has to be renewed daily in that. The Old Being is to be daily drowned in repentance and raised in faith. The progress of the Christian life is not our movement toward the goal; it is the movement of the goal in upon us. The righteousness granted unconditionally is eschatological in character; it is the totality of the "Kingdom of God" moving in upon us (***Justification***, 51).

Likewise, M. Mattes writes: "Radical Lutheranism responds that self-development in either mode is not what the Christian life is about. Instead, it would affirm that the old, self-centered being, whether as pious or 'secularistic,' has died with Christ and likewise daily should be put to death so that a new being can live in and from Christ as a servant" ("The Thomistic Turn," 76).

which is brought to life by the Gospel or absolution (resurrection). Faith liberates the conscience from its terrors.<sup>46</sup> Repentance is the **daily Baptism** (the life and death experience) of the Christian life. Therefore, on our way between Baptism and resurrection, God's people constantly take leave of themselves (death) only to take refuge in Christ (resurrection).<sup>47</sup>

So, pastors who think of their ministry in terms of killing and raising God's people, in terms of "baptizing" them daily, seek to bring repentance to them. And ultimately they are called to play God as absolver. Pastors who play God are not interested simply in stirring up people's emotions or feelings through various (manipulative?) techniques. It is the experience of (Christ's) death and resurrection (i.e., repentance) that they try to effect. In this connection, Luther remarks,

However, I have learned, not only through the Scriptures but also from severe inner struggles and trials, that Christ is God and has put on flesh, and likewise I have learned the doctrine of the Trinity. Today, therefore, I don't so much believe as **I know through experience** that these doctrines are true. In the worst temptations nothing can help us but faith that God's Son has put on flesh, is bone [of our bone], sits at the right hand of the Father, and prays for us.<sup>48</sup>

Pastors, therefore, need to be cognizant of how they are speaking because through their appropriate use of language God's children **experience** His killing and raising work (Christ in them) and thus the coming of His kingdom. And because of this, it is particularly evident that pastors are to play God in the pulpit as well.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, pastors are not simply to engage in long-winded explanations from the pulpit. In general, they will want to aim at doing what God does in Christ—killing and ultimately raising the dead. But how should one begin to conceive of this task? A helpful suggestion comes from Forde who believes that the move must be from what he calls "secondary discourse," words **about** God, to "primary discourse," the "first to second person" word **from** God.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>*The Book of Concord*. The Augsburg Confession, XII. 3-4.

<sup>47</sup>Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 69.

<sup>48</sup>LW 54:371 (italics added). T. Wengert notes that Luther is not just talking about emotion or the fantasy of feelings, but rather the **experience of reality**. "It is not any old experience that makes a theologian, but precisely the experience of having been stretched out on Christ's cross" (Wengert, "Peace, Peace," 196).

<sup>49</sup>See Forde's own description in *Theology*, 155-158.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 3-4. However, it is also to be observed that cases of "indirect speech acts" are possible. Indirect speech acts are "cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another" (Brown and Yule, *Discourse*, 232; Searle, *Mind*, 151). Thus, there is an indirect relationship between structure and function, and different structures can accomplish the same basic function (George Yule, *Pragmatics*, Oxford Introductions to Language Study [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], 55; Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 263-276). This observation suggests that, in the appropriate context, a "third

Imagine yourself desperately in love with someone who does not know you exist. Your attempt to woo your beloved with long biological and psychological explanations about the nature of love in an attempt to gain your beloved's heart has only seemed to make things worse. She/he finds such explanations (and you) boring and irrelevant. Your only hope is to create in that person the heart that he/she does not have—the heart that loves only you. And that determines how you speak. Like a poet, you speak *to* the heart—primary discourse—words straight *from* your heart. You may plead, promise, challenge, debate, shock, praise, in bold attempts to spark your beloved's heart to life. You try to break the hard heart and re-write your name on a heart that you want to beat only for you. In short, you speak like the prophets spoke to Israel—God's Word to His people—to raise dead hearts to life here and now.

If you are playing God from the pulpit, you are seeking to take hold of the hearts of God's people. The heart, finally, is what God wants. You seek to kill the old will which finds God boring and irrelevant and raise the heart that beats madly for him. Your strategy comes from the very Word of God as He speaks in the text. What is God doing in the text? That is what you try to do in the sermon. Your ultimate aim is to make a place in hard hearts for the life-giving Gospel, so that people who thought that they were “goners” experience a resurrection as they listen to your Word for them.<sup>51</sup> The sermon ought to be, quite literally, a life-giving experience for those who have been given ears to hear.<sup>52</sup>

Again, this is not unlike how we operate in daily life to form and strengthen our relationships. For example, when young children disobey their parents and rebel against the notion that they are part of a family, parents, whose love for their children never ceases, still speak to them in anger in order to “kill” the stubborn will that—if left to itself—will eventually destroy the child and the family. And they move to forgiveness and hugs when they see the tears and shock on their child's face. In that move, the child actually experiences something of a new life and rebirth into the family (“Oh, whew! Dad still loves me. Mom still thinks I'm the greatest! What a relief!”). When parents “do forgiveness” to a child who is in doubt and fear, love is actually kindled and nurtured in that move.

It is the move from killing to raising to life, and in the Christian community it is a move that ought to be made often (and too seldom is) in all

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person utterance” can still function as a “direct” accusation or promise. An example of this would be Jesus' parables. In the parable of the tenants (Luke 20:9-19), for example, even though the form is “indirect,” the chief priests and scribes understood it as a direct attack (a killing word) against them, and they reacted accordingly (v. 19).

<sup>51</sup>Jesus, in His earthly ministry, pierces hearts with the word to prepare them for the Word of life. See, for example, the function of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 (a frightening warning), the parable of the wicked vinedressers in Luke 20 (again, a killing indictment against the Pharisees), and also Jesus' “humbling word” to the rich man in Luke 18:22.

<sup>52</sup>See Appendix for two examples of how preaching like this might look.

our relationships. It is the move from killing to raising that forms Christians into a unique community of people (God's Israel) who have been raised and in turn raise others through the Word. It is actually this move that pastors playing God ought to make all the time.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, even beyond the worship service, the recognition that pastors play God ought to enliven and enrich every facet of their ministry. When speaking in the public square, pastors will take care to ensure that they are speaking about God correctly in view of their audience, and they will want to think carefully about what they want to accomplish in the hearts of their hearers when they speak. Such occasions may very well provide the opportunity for pastors to make a place for the Gospel in the heart of people who up till then had little use for God, or find Him irrelevant. Was this not perhaps Paul's strategy when he preached at the Areopagus? After speaking about the unknown God, he concludes with these words:

...God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).<sup>54</sup>

Finally, and ironically, we return to a scene touched on at the beginning of this paper: the life and death decisions that often go on in hospitals and emergency rooms. Sometimes, in the middle of all the technology and immense learning of doctors and other caretakers, pastors can easily feel as if they are nothing but "extras." Everyone may assume that any real healing is done by everyone else and at best pastors only provide human companionship or at worst they just get in the way of the professionals at work.

It is ironic because many of those to whom pastors are called to minister receive devastating, killing news from the doctor. They hear death sentences which no one, not even the best of doctors, can change, and their people carry enormous pain. But here in the midst of death come pastors who know at such times how important it is to play God. And they deliver the only Word that can raise to life, the only Word that offers hope

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<sup>53</sup>This move happens at other points in the public worship service as well. For example, in the Confession and Absolution and in Holy Communion when the pastor announces: "This is my body and blood shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." In all of these, pastors, in their use of God's Word, play the part of "absolver" in God's stead.

<sup>54</sup>On speaking God's word in the public square see also Tim Saleska "The Meaning of Participation: A Case for Speaking in the Public Square," *Concordia Journal* 29 (January 2003), 44-49.

to the hopeless and resurrection in the midst of death. Far from trivial or unimportant, in such cases pastors deliver the only care that matters, and it brings nothing less than life itself.

### *Epilogue*

The terrible thing is that a perfectly good God is in this matter hardly less formidable than a Cosmic Sadist. The more we believe that God hurts only to heal, the less we can believe that there is any use in begging for tenderness. A cruel man might be bribed—might grow tired of his vile sport—might have a temporary fit of mercy, as alcoholics have fits of sobriety. But suppose that what you are up against is a surgeon whose intentions are wholly good. The kinder and more conscientious he is, the more inexorably he will go on cutting. If he yielded to your entreaties, if he stopped before the operation was complete, all the pain up to that point would have been useless. But is it credible that such extremities of torture should be necessary for us? Well, take your choice. The tortures occur. If they are unnecessary, then there is no God or a bad one. If there is a good God, then these tortures are necessary. For no even moderately good Being could possibly inflict or permit them if they weren't (C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*).

### *APPENDIX*

Two sermons follow which illustrate some of the assertions made in the preceding paper (n. 52). The first sermon, based on *Psalm 45*, illustrates the move to *primary discourse* as suggested by Forde. The second sermon, based on *Mark 2:1-12*, Jesus' healing of the paralytic, takes up Forde's challenge in *Theology Is for Proclamation* (155-158) to *apply* the text to the hearer. In reference to this text from Mark, Forde suggests that, "The proclaimer must so announce the forgiveness to those gathered here and now as to amaze them with the audacity of it all." This sermon tries, then, to amaze people with the gift of forgiveness.

### *Psalm 45*

For the past several weeks, the slaves had been pushed to the breaking point. They were hungry and tired, which in itself was not unusual, given that their owner assumed that the slaves did not know any different anyway. He figured that only people needed regular sleep and food. Not slaves. But recently, things had gotten worse. You see, the king was getting married, and preparations for the banquet had to be perfect. The slaves knew that the whip would be the penalty for failure, and maybe—after all was said and done—the reward for success anyway.

As the banquet guests arrive, you are warned to obey every request: “Fetch me a drink.” “Take my coat.” They speak down to you expecting ready obedience. Sometimes they toss you a coin and laugh as you scamper after it.

The guests flout their riches to each other while complaining that they could find nothing to wear. Standing in their shadow, you listen to the speech of power and wealth—the chatter of those who pay others to worry for them. You cast no shadow on them. You are their shadow. They stand in the light, not you. When they move, so do you.

What would it be like to stand by yourself with new clothes rather than these rags? What would it be like to have others wait on you—to live for one minute without this terrible fear—without worrying where you might be tomorrow?

A shadow harbors no hope to have such substance. And so you stand there, unseen and not dreaming. But then the room grows quiet, and all eyes turn to the door. The king is entering, and every one is hushed. He is about to be married. From the back of the room, you can not see much, but his entrance has overshadowed everyone else. The music and singing is like nothing you have ever heard.

To the accompaniment of the music a poet begins to praise the king. But his words are not the usual ritual flattery designed for these official occasions. He sings with a sincerity that stands in sharp contrast to the hollow boasts of the guests. He sings of the king’s grace—of the mercy he shows to his subjects—even slaves.

This king has conquered every enemy, and yet he is humble and just. These are the qualities of which the poet sings. Not his wealth or riches, which he has in abundance, but humility! This king loves righteousness and hates wickedness! How different from other kings who embrace what is wicked if it will further their cause and who have no problem with injustice if it will secure their power. But this king fights for truth. The slave listens intently as the poet boldly proclaims that this king has been blessed by God and anointed by him apart from all other men. The poet, so enamored with this king, goes so far as to call his kingdom an eternal kingdom, and he even addresses him as “God.” The slaves wonder what it would be like to kneel at his throne and hear this king speak to them.

And then the poet begins to address the queen. And it becomes clear that the king has transformed her. The king has given her an entirely new status. He has completely rewritten the story of her life by adding a fairy-tale ending. She is now a member of the royal family—the very bride of the great king. And so the poet invites her to forget her people and her father’s house and let the king long for her beauty. Forget your old way of life and worship the king—he is your lord.

Now you see, this is music to the ears of the slave. To have this one as your Master! To sit at the side of this one with graceful lips who personifies humility and justice! This one who is blessed by God Himself. What

old ties, what old way of life is there to compare? The slave would gladly give it all up to sit by this king.

What would it be like to have him as your master? You strain to see this fortunate bride—the apple of the eye of the king who has been granted entrance into the world of royalty. What must she be feeling? You can not see her from where you stand, but now the people in front are getting restless. Someone is walking through their midst, and all the splendor in the room is letting him pass—not daring even to touch him. You look up and there stands the poet who moments ago was before the king. Through the parting crowd, you can see the king, on his throne, with a gentle smile on his face, and he seems to be looking at you. You stand in his light and—for the moment—you are blinded by it.

But the poet stands very near now, and he speaks: “It is you,” he says gently. “You are the one to whom I have written my song. The king has authorized me to tell you that you are the one he has chosen. You can forget your old way of life and your old ties. The king loves you. He is your lord.”

As the poet escorts you to the king’s throne, all the royalty who thought you nothing shrink into your shadow cast by the light of the king. The riches about which they boasted will be given to you. The joy and pleasure that they took as their right are now yours. You now rule over them. Imagine that.

Now today, you see, I want you to realize, if you will, that I am the poet. And we have come together in anticipation of the marriage of the king whose praises I sing: “You are the king of glory, O Christ! You are the everlasting Son of the Father. Your throne, O God, is eternal. You are the mighty warrior who advances in the cause of truth and justice to deliver your people from their enemies. By your arrows the enemy falls at your feet, O Lord Our Righteousness.” Think of our most powerful hymns in terms of Psalm 45: “Beautiful Savior, King of Creation, Son of God and Son of Man!” “Ride on, ride on in majesty!...O Savior meek, pursue Thy road.... In lowly pomp ride on to die. O Christ, thy triumphs now begin O’er captive death and conquered sin.”

Listen and wonder about this King, and think about the splendor of His victories and the life that He brings with Him. And let me draw closer and make this announcement from the king: “It is you. You are the one that the king has chosen for his bride.” The meeting of the king and queen is happening here. Right now. I bring you word from the king himself. As a called and ordained servant of my Lord, I announce to you the grace of God. In His name and in His stead, I am announcing to you that you are the one He loves with all His life and death, and the one to whom He gives His kingdom. He rode to battle on your behalf and won the victory over every enemy. He died and He rose, and He did it all especially for you. All that the King has He gives to you: His honor, His righteousness, His victories are all yours. Today, as in your Baptism, I am pleased to tell you that

the King has rewritten your life story. He has given it a new ending. Resurrection, life, and an eternal kingdom are yours in Him. That's no exaggeration or hyperbole. The King is God, and it is you that He has saved for Himself. You stand in the light, a person of real substance. Imagine that!

Believe my words and rejoice in your royal status. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new." That is true now and will be manifest at the end of time. Listen and take heed: "Forget your old way of life! Your people and father's house, your old ties. The King is your Lord! Worship Him." What other story or ending to your life compares with this? You are not slaves any longer, and so do not live like slaves. Your Lord is this King of grace. Live in His light—in truth, humility and righteousness.

You know, some scholars call Psalm 45 the most secular psalm in the book. They describe it as a love song at the occasion of the marriage of the Davidic king. And that it might very well be. But to us, this psalm is not the most *secular* but the most *sacred* because in the marriage of the Davidic king to his bride—the king who carried the eternal promise and covenant of God—in that "human event"—Israel could *see* God's love for His people embodied. And in the splendor of that moment, they could see beforehand what God ultimately had in store for them. This was their story, their end.

For us, the marriage of the Davidic King foreshadows and now describes our relationship with Christ, the son of David and King Messiah. The psalm gives us new insight into what our relationship with Christ is and what it means. And because of this, the psalmist-poet speaks to us, the bride of Christ, extolling our relationship and securing our future, and that is what I announce to you today. Amen.

### ***Mark 2:1-12***

I want to talk to you for a few minutes about the people packed into Simon's house that day, and the four men tearing up the roof above Jesus.

In my former parish I went to visit a man who had been told by the doctors that he had—at the outside—six more months to live. This man had retired a month earlier. He had plenty of money, and up to that point, not a care in the world.

But now, he was scared. His eyes betrayed him even though he talked confidently about "beating this thing." One look at him, however, and you knew that he would not. He and his wife were even going to some quack who claimed that his herbal treatments would cure his cancer. I can not blame him for that because that is what desperate people do.

Or, a little closer to home: it will be eleven years this spring since I was diagnosed with diabetes...a disease which I hardly knew existed before that point, but which I now think about everyday, every time I put food in my mouth.

And every time I pick up the newspaper there is another article re-

minding me of the bad news: studies show that one of the leading causes of heart attacks is...diabetes! One of the leading causes of blindness is...diabetes! Stroke? Diabetes! Kidney failure? Diabetes! Neuropathy? Diabetes! Memory loss? I'll think of the answer in a minute. I mean, diabetes is one of the leading causes of everything bad! Why could not diabetes be one of the leading causes of good looks, or great intelligence? But no, the day I got diabetes, that is the day I heard the clock ticking.

Someday, sometime, the doctor is going to find something else seriously wrong. One of the "side effects" of the disease will "pop up" despite my best efforts. And what will that mean? How will my life change then? Quite honestly, that scares me.

And maybe now you know these people in the story a little better. And can appreciate why they were crammed into a small house listening to Jesus. And why four men were doing a major demolition job on someone's roof. They were not so different from you or me. They had their own fears and problems to wade through too.

But when these people heard that Jesus was in town, they dropped everything and came to see Him: desperate, scared, curious, hopeful, they all came. News about Jesus had spread throughout Galilee. Here is a guy who healed the sickest of the sick. A leper, who was told to say nothing, told so many people of his miraculous healing that Jesus could not walk in public anymore. So when the word now came down that He was back home, and people could not stay away. I can not blame them. I would have gone too, just to see; maybe Jesus could do something for me. I might have jumped through that hole right after the paralyzed man.

But at first, Jesus does not do what I would have wanted Him to. He does not seem to give the paralyzed man the "good stuff" at all. Instead, He says to him: "Child, your sins are forgiven." Now, do not get me wrong, I think that's nice and everything, but I am still tempted to say: "Who cares! The guy is paralyzed. Fix that! And then fix me!"

I tend to put Jesus' actions into the same category as that described in the book of James: "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them 'Go in peace, be warmed and fed,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?"

What use *is* that? The guy still cannot walk! Jesus' solution seems not to measure up to the enormity of the problem. Face to face with the paralyzed man, we cannot appreciate what Jesus has just done, nor what it means. Maybe that is why the pews are half empty today, and why so many people can find better things to do on Sunday mornings. Maybe they do not appreciate what Jesus has just done. Maybe you do not, either.

However, the scribes, bless their hard little hearts, give Jesus the occasion to make His point. The scribes questioned Jesus' authority to forgive sins. They knew that when Jesus said, "Child, your sins are forgiven," he ***was not simply stating a fact, but was actually claiming to for-***

**give.** The implications of Jesus' actions rankled the scribes. In their eyes His words were slander against the most high God.

So, Jesus showed them that He could by His own authority actually forgive sins. And He showed it by healing the man. Here is the surprise! Jesus links forgiveness and healing. That is to say, He forgives the man his sins, and then He brings the end-time consequences of His forgiveness ahead of time, into the present life of this man. He made this man's future hope a present reality for everyone to see.

It is as if He said: "You do not think that this guy is actually forgiven? Well, I will show you that he is. Look! He walks! I have erased the source and cause of his misery and all of yours, and here is the result: he is walking!"

You see, Jesus' words "Child, your sins are forgiven," were not empty sentiment. No, this was a specific and powerful word to this man. Jesus' forgiveness actually does something.

Too often, people think that church is nothing more than the place where they go to hear pious, but ultimately irrelevant talk about God. They hear that having God in your life is better than not having Him. They think it is the same stuff you can get by watching a nice family movie. Who really needs it except for the occasional emotional boost you might get from all the nice people around you. The amazing, astonishing "new thing" that Jesus does here is simply overlooked.

Do you not see? Here we do not just talk about forgiveness or prattle on and on about how awesome God is; you know, "Jesus is just alright with me!" But here, Jesus actually does forgiveness to each of you. Not in general, but specifically He speaks that powerful word to you: "Child, your sins are forgiven." He speaks that word in your Baptism, and He speaks it again when you take the Lord's Supper: "This is my body and blood shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." And He speaks it again in the Absolution when the pastor in the stead and by the command of Jesus Christ forgives you all your sins. And I tell you again from this pulpit: "Child, your sins are forgiven!" That word actually removes your sin and ultimately its curse.

The crucified and risen Lord, the conqueror of death, has the authority and has chosen to touch you with this healing and life-giving word. That word is not meant just to lift your spirits or make you feel better. Nor is it just an abstract spiritual salvation that He offers. He actually wipes away the root cause of all your pain and misery.

And that means that you too will one day walk again. And you will see, and you will hear, and you will live—abundantly and gloriously...and I guess I will be able to eat all the Snickers Bars I want without being afraid. The end-time miracle which the paralyzed forgiven man experienced will most certainly be your miracle too. Jesus has the power to raise the dead, and He touches each of you with that power right here and now.

God's forgiveness is astonishing and amazing. It is a miracle that can

be found nowhere else and in no one else except Jesus. And that is what goes on in this place—your forgiveness and all that it entails. You do not look any different or feel any different now. But, “Child, your sins are forgiven.” That is worth raising (or razing) the roof over. Amen.

# *My Pilgrimage to Luther*

*Won Yong JI*

My pilgrimage of life is “Luther-pilgrimage.” My gradual discovery of the true meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lutheran church, Concordia Seminary, and my lifelong task were likewise originated from Martin Luther. I learned a significant portion of his teaching, and admire and appreciate it. I would like to document these personal experiences of my pilgrimage to Dr. Martin Luther with my deep gratitude to God, to the Reformer, and to the Lutheran faith.

## *1. The First Meeting of the Great Man*

One spring afternoon, when I was sixteen years old (1940), I stopped by chance at the “Jesus-Teaching Book Store” in the town of Chaeryung, Hwang-Hae Province, Korea, where my family lived at the time. Looking around the bookshelves and browsing through individual books with no specific thought in mind, I came across a book in Korean entitled “***The Great Works of Luther.***” (Later, I found out that it was a translated copy of John L. Nuelsen, ***Luther: The Leader***, 1906). With much interest I read several pages of the book while standing in the bookstore. I decided to buy it. With unusual fascination I read through the book in a short time, and re-read it later. I also told my parents and friends about what I had read. I felt I had met a superman, an impossible person among ordinary mortals. With singular conviction of faith and pen, he challenged the mighty papacy to whose power none—not even the emperors and kings of the day could stand contrary. Often I contemplated: Korea needs men of courage and convictions. What was the source of Luther’s conviction, I asked myself. At that time I could not grasp the real meaning of his message and why he was so angry. What fascinated me most was his courage and persistence for his cause. I wished I could be even one-hundredth of what he had been. This was my first meeting with Luther, even though I had previously run across his name briefly in a book, ***History of the West.***

After that striking incident, I did not give any more thought to Luther. Eight years passed. And then I found myself “meeting Luther” again as I stood in front of the signboard of Trinity Lutheran Church in Olympia, Washington, on April 10, 1948, 8:00 p.m.

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***Dr. Won Yong JI is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO.***

## **2. Reminiscing**

Indeed, the most memorable occasion was standing before the impressive statue of Martin Luther, on an early day in September 1950, on the beautiful campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, USA!

There was the man whose life impressed me so profoundly, exactly ten years earlier at Chaeryung, North Korea, which experience affected my decision to come to the Lutheran church and to Concordia Seminary. I stood silently before his statue for quite a while, reminiscing on the years behind, and once again admiring the hero of my teens. I thanked God for the chance of coming to this place and beholding his statue. I thought of the words of Thomas Carlyle which I had read, characterizing Luther as

great, not as a hewn obelisk, but as an Alpine mountain, so simple, honest, spontaneous, not setting up to be great at all; there for another purpose than being great at all! A right spiritual hero...for those these centuries and many more to come yet, will be thankful to Heaven (*On Heroes, Hero-Worship...*, 1929, p. 127).

Concordia Seminary was my home base for the next eight years while I was in the Midwest and elsewhere, and from where I received whatever I needed, including references and legal guarantees. Furthermore, later I taught at the Seminary, my alma mater, starting in 1978. It is from this "home" base that I am writing these reminiscences.

## **3. Initial Impressions from Luther**

From the beginning year at Concordia Seminary, I had a deep interest about the thoughts of Martin Luther, who was so profoundly admired, so much hated, so deeply controverted and provocative, and so likewise appreciated and misunderstood.

My first curiosity was about his "95 Theses." I translated it into Korean in my early student days at Concordia Seminary, starting from the impressive Thesis One: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying: 'Repent ye,' etc., intended that the whole life of believers should be penitence." This was then followed by my translation of his "Disputation against the Scholastic Theology," 1517, and "Heidelberg Disputation," 1518, Luther's Small Catechism, and "Freedom of a Christian," in the subsequent years. I still vividly remember Luther's classic statement on a Christian: "Ein Christenmensch ist einfreier Herr über alle Dinge, und niemand unterthan. Ein Christenmensch ist ein dienstbarer Knecht aller Dinge, and jedermann unterthan" (These and other items were translated and published in the early years of the 1960s in Korea).

With the full task of a student at Concordia and elsewhere, time was not so easily available. At any rate, whatever I did was done out of my

personal interest motivated purely by my own initiative and theological reasons.

#### **4. Luther and Calvin**

Ever since 1950 I became a student majoring in Luther. In 1954, I wrote a thesis for my S.T.M. degree at Concordia Seminary on the understanding of predestination by Luther and John Calvin. It was both theologically and practically intended at that time. Christianity at the time in Korea, my homeland, was predominantly of the Calvinistic Reformed tradition with already millions of believers and thousands of churches, whereas Lutheranism and the Lutheran church were unknown. With my intended return to Korea, it was a serious issue of knowing what John Calvin taught, viewed from a Lutheran perspective.

The thesis was a modest piece of work; nevertheless, it was truly an enlightening, educative experience for me to view both reformers from their own writings, commentaries and theological treatises. Later, after my return to Korea a series of lectures on the same topic were given by request in 1960 at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (*Tong-hap* side) in Seoul, and published in the seminary's publication LOGOS. Responses and reactions from the Presbyterians were of no small interest to me.

#### **5. Luther, My Life-long Mentor!**

In 1957 I prepared my doctoral dissertation (Th.D.), at Concordia Seminary, written on "The Concept of Education in the Light of the Theology of Martin Luther." I am grateful for the advice and counsel of Dr. Lewis Spitz, Sr. and Dr. Paul Bretscher, Sr., at Concordia and Profs. Heinrich Bornkamm and Edmund Schlink at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. This work was later somewhat reshaped and partly reworked for publishing as a book in Korean, under the title: "***Luther's Thought—Theology and Education.***" The book received the "Outstanding Author Award" given by the Christian Literature Society of Korea in 1964. In the subsequent years the book was reprinted several times and widely circulated among academic communities in Korea (In college, my major was education; minor in psychology).

My involvement and activities related to Luther and his Reformation are dealt with in detail with the mention of various publications, by Prof. Dr. Jin Seop Eom, the director of Luther Study Institute in Korea, in his commendable article, "Luther Reception in Korea," published in *Lutherjahrbuch 2003*, Leipzig, Germany, (149-174).

#### **6. An Idea of a "Luther Study Group"**

As early as 1965, a thought came to mind to plan a Luther Study Group in Korea beginning with publishing a small "Luther Studies" in Korean on

a quarterly basis edited by myself, dealing with the translation of Luther's works, e.g., parts of his Large Catechism, "Sermon on Good Works," "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," and also dealing with articles on some pertinent subjects.

It was a humble undertaking with a high aspiration. Even some Presbyterian scholars like Dr. Kyung-Yun Chun, already a well-known New Testament professor, contributed on "The Hermeneutics of Luther" (LS 10<sup>th</sup> special issue, 5-37).

The publication continued until 1968 with eleven issues (average size: about thirty-five pages) and had to be discontinued due to my departure for Europe in 1968 to be the Asia Secretary of Lutheran World Federation. The plan of a Luther Study group met the same consequence.

Such a venture of Luther study in Korea in the 1960s was too much for the newly arrived "Korea Lutheran Mission" started by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1958. No person inside or outside the small Lutheran circle did come forward to continue the program. In a way it was not a happy ending, even from my point of view. A tentative plan of producing a Korean Edition of Luther's Works had to be postponed indefinitely.

### **7. The Production of the Korean Edition of Luther's Works (LW-KE)**

My involvement in 1975-1978 with the *Missionswerk* in Neuendettelsau, Germany had brought a revival of the old dream of producing a Korean Edition of Luther's Works (LW-KE). In 1977, the *Missionswerk* had decided to support and assist me however it could for my hope of materializing the old dream of LW-KE. In short, with the generous support of *Missionswerk* (about \$120,000), the assistance of The Lutheran Church in Korea, and the cooperation of Concordia Seminary, the plan of producing a twelve-volume set of LW-KE was realized in twelve years. I acted as the general editor and the chief translator. It was a joint program of the above three parties.

The Korean Edition of Luther's Works consists of twelve volumes in 6,496 pages with seventy-eight items of entry from Luther's writings with brief explanations and comments by me for each entry, eight appendices, and Biblical and other indices. The materials are divided into three sections, namely: *Luther and the Bible* (two volumes each for the Old Testament and New Testament); *Luther and Theology* including three volumes; and *Luther and Ministry* in five volumes, treating Luther as minister for the church, as minister for the world, Luther as preacher, as counselor, and as communicator. I received some good collaboration with our Lutheran colleagues Hyun-Sup Um and Il-Young Park, and other scholars in Korea. They are acknowledged in the text.

In 2003, Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* was also translated in two volumes which could not be included in the LW-KE, worked by Prof. Sun-

Hoi Kim of Luther University/ Seminary under the sponsorship of Lutheran Heritage Foundation in Michigan. My limited involvement was the writing of an introduction to the commentary and reading parts of the translated manuscript.

### **8. Experiences in Luther Land, Germany**

In addition to reading about Luther and his writings, my personal experiences in Germany have enriched immensely my understanding and appreciation of Luther as well as providing me many practical insights for pursuing Luther's thought. Furthermore, the contact with people in Germany, students and professors, gave me additional impetus and encouragement.

During my student days at the University of Heidelberg, I had the opportunity of sitting in classes and seminars of great scholars like, Heinrich Bornkamm, Edmund Schlink, Peter Brunner, Gerhard von Rad, and Karl Löwith, receiving their insights on various subjects. Later on, 1975-1978, my work with the *Missionswerk* in Neuendettelsau of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria offered me an invaluable blessing, for me personally and for its relationships with the Lutheran Church in Korea and other churches in East Asia. With a fond memory, I recall the good experiences of work and personal contact with the people in Germany.

### **9. Luther Study Institute in Korea**

The old plan of having a Luther Study Group was resurrected in 1997 under the new title "Luther Study Institute" in Luther University/Seminary in Korea. It publishes annually the "Luther Study." I have been involved in this program by providing written materials. It also receives the cooperation of *Concordia Journal* of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and *Luther Digest* in Michigan. The Luther Study Institute is permitted to use their materials whenever needed. The numbering of the publication continues from the old "Luther Studies" (i.e., eleven issues). Including them, the most current number of *Luther Study* is "the 17<sup>th</sup> issue." Average size is about 160 pages. Since the beginning of 2003, Prof. Dr. Jin-Seop Eom is the director and I the honorary director of Luther Study Institute. At any rate, its activity continues.

I also had the privilege of attending for five times (once every five years) the International Congress for Luther Research, namely, in St. Louis, Erfurt, Oslo, Minneapolis, and Heidelberg. The experiences in those Congresses were indeed stimulating, thought-provoking, educative, and interesting.

## 10. What Luther Is to Me!

As we know, there are literally countless impressions of Luther, both positive and negative, by many knowledgeable historians, theologians, and others. How they understand the Reformer is shaped by their respective viewpoints. Some comments about Luther are: A “pious monk” to begin with, courageous reformer, “a whistle blower,” brilliant teacher, eloquent preacher, prolific writer, a loving family man, innovative theologian, a guide and norm for social change, cultural father of Germany, etc. Realizing this I merely add my own personal impressions about him. What I try to express as my personal views are obviously limited; nevertheless, they have special meaning for me.

Martin Luther as a **Hero**: “Hero” is usually defined as anyone who has first of all unusual strength and courage, intellectual acumen with extraordinary achievements for himself and for others in whatever areas he is able to contribute for human culture and civilization. Luther was a widely controverted person in history with many admirers, followers, and serious students. He also had many opponents. At any rate, Luther was a “hero” in the fullest sense, a great person in the sense that no ordinary human being could imitate him in thinking, acting, daring, and pursuing the cause. Many words of admiration are expressed about Luther. Surveyors found that Luther was counted as one of the few who are considered outstanding in the past millennium in human history.

Luther was a **profound thinker** in analyzing the status quo and initiating new paradigms as he interpreted the prevailing situation, and in suggesting a new direction.

Martin was an **insightful interpreter of the Gospel** of Jesus Christ in new categories, e.g., his teachings on the “**solus**,” the distinction between Law and Gospel, the “two kinds of righteousness,” etc., as he was expositing the Biblical teachings. His translation of the Bible into German can also be mentioned under this category of what he truly was.

As the Reformer he was a **prophet** who could see the issues which could be so relevant in the subsequent centuries.

The Reformer was an **outstanding teacher** at the grass root level and a distinct reformer of popular education. His Catechisms, a number of educational writings, theological treatises, commentaries, and sermons bear witness to that. His contribution as an outstanding educator has been widely recognized, acclaimed and appreciated by many educators in subsequent generations. A long time ago the educator E. H. Wilds observed that Luther was the first modern education-reformer for the public school system and compulsory education. Truly, Luther was an educator as well as a great theologian.

Luther, furthermore, was a **missionary**, not in a traditional romantic mold, but in a unique manner and in a genuine sense of the term “mission.” He was a great missionary, ranking next to the first cross-cultural

missionary, the apostle Paul.

Luther was an enlightened missionary for his time—the tail end of the Middle Ages, an era of much self-indulgence and apathy. The church thought for people and answered for them. But Luther stimulated his generation to think for themselves, to be puzzled and perplexed, and to ask profound questions (cf. his own spiritual struggles and “Anfechtungen”). And, Luther was a fearless missionary to the church, the medieval Roman Church which he loved and respected (cf. his treatise, *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*). Further, Luther was a thoughtful missionary to his own people (cf. his translation of the Bible, hymns, and many writings of practical nature). He was also a courageous missionary to the world (cf. his exposition, for example, on Col. 1:23 and Mark 16:15). Luther, finally, was an insightful missionary to the self-centered “Renaissance-man,” the rational man, the *homo sapiens*, the human wisdom-inspired man of the Graeco-Roman world (cf. “*De servo arbitrio*”). (*A History of Lutheranism in Korea*, 152; and I also quoted the above, which is my own thought, elsewhere in my writings.)

### 11. “Luther Renaissance” in East Asia

In the past decades, I have been promoting “Luther Study” among the churches and my friends and colleagues in East Asia, naturally including my homeland, Korea. I am convinced that the Reformer Martin Luther and his thoughts say something important for us and continually teach some new insights in life, theologically and practically.

With this intention and conviction in mind, I have been participating in the study of Luther throughout my life by giving lectures, writing essays, articles, and a limited number of books on Luther and his theology. I also had the privilege and honor of editing and translating the works of Luther for the LW-KE, vols. I-XII. Furthermore, I had the pleasure of giving some counsel for the Chinese Edition of Luther’s Works (LW-CE) which is in the process of being published in Hong Kong and mainland China (cf. LW-CE, vol. I, x-xi). The work on the Korean Edition of the *Book of Concord* is another special joy for me in translating this important Lutheran publication.

The following article may give a current picture of this Luther study: “Luther Studies in the Sino-Cultural Region in Asia” (by Won Yong JI, *Concordia Journal*, October 2001, 330-348, a slightly modified form in German is in *Lutherische Beiträge*, Nr. 3/2003, S. 173-191; also published in *Luther Study* in Korea, XV: 7-28).

As an important record, I would also like to mention that the *Concordia Journal* of my alma mater offered me the forum for expressing some of my

understandings on Luther and his Reformation thought in articles and theological observers. For this opportunity, I am grateful.

## ***12. Luther from an Eastern Perspective***

For sure, Martin Luther is not merely the guru of the “Lutherans” nor another great figure in the history of the West. His thought has global significance. The great discovery by Luther is what we need today. As an appreciative inquirer, I ponder: Aren’t there yet undiscovered insights in Luther’s thought which may give us some clues to untie the complex predicament for our generation, in society, culture, and religion—tension, strife, and disharmony—especially in the light of the Eastern thought-frame?

The distinctly paradoxical way of thinking under the umbrella of ***theologia crucis***, Luther’s insight on ***iustus/peccator***, free-person/complete-servant, the ***absconditus***/the ***revelatus***, ***Gesezt/Evangelium***, the “right hand”/the “left hand,” human bondage/divine grace, etc., appears to have some attractive aspects for the Eastern traditions. Are they not, in fact, speaking about the same reality of paradox from two contrasting perspectives? The both/and paradigm of the East, the ***Li/Ch’i*** contrast (***logos/neshama***), the classical ***Tai-Chi*** principle, and the idea of harmony without deviating from “the Center,” may say something complementarily to Luther’s ***simul...cum*** polarity. If Luther’s thought is closer to the Hebraic holistic mode of thinking than the dichotomic Hellenistic thought-pattern, the Eastern way of asserting reality (***Tien***, Tao) looks like it has considerable affinity with Luther.

Thus, serious consideration of a positive encounter between Luther’s and the Eastern ways of reasoning may shed some realistic light on many unresolved problems and say something meaningful about the complicated and sensitive subjects today, like, the “theology of religions,” the issues related to the Christian faith and indigenous beliefs (e.g., Shamanism, spiritism), and Christian mission and modern culture. While we proclaim the divine message of the unique way of salvation in Jesus Christ, can we be mutually respecting of competitors?

Having heard these, one may wonder: where to begin, how to proceed, and to what end. There is no simple answer nor an easy way. Like in the history of the church, we inevitably face modern “gnosticism,” pluralistic syncretism, religious tolerationism, and secularistic relativism. Often it is like walking on thin ice. We have little choice, however, except to proceed as long as we hope the twain, East and West, would meet each other for mutual survival, benefit, and contribution. I urge my fellow Lutherans in the West to encourage and promote the fledgling efforts of studying and theologizing Luther in the two-thirds world (Quoted from ***LWF Information***, a special issue of Remembering Luther in 1996, February 8, 1996, NO. 3, 10f.).

### ***13. The Lutheran Church (LCMS) and I***

After a long Pacific voyage for sixteen days, in 1948 from Inchun (Korea) to Seattle, Washington (USA), with terrible seasickness and all sorts of anxiety and worries about the unknown land and people with a totally different language, I was extremely tired. At such a time, it was unbelievably good news for me to hear the words of the chaplain of the ship "General Haan" that some folks were waiting for me at the Seattle harbor where we were to disembark. Lo and behold, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Cain, the parents of Wilbur Cain, who was stationed at that time at Kimpo Air Base, Korea, as an U.S. serviceman, who so thoughtfully sent a telegram to his parents asking them to meet me upon arrival on April 10, 1948.

On that same evening of April 10, about 8 o'clock, Mrs. Doris Cain took me to her church and introduced me to the pastor and his wife, Rev. and Mrs. Ernest R. Drews. For the first time I saw the signboard of a **Lutheran** church, Trinity Lutheran Church in Olympia, Washington, exactly eight years since my earlier encounter with Luther, the hero of my youth. That past memory returned to mind. I had a feeling of meeting an old friend, even though the Lutheran church was somewhat strange to me. The short period of a few days of orientation on America with the Cain family, the Drews, and Trinity Lutheran congregation in Olympia gave me many positive impressions and valuable encouragement. Furthermore, Mrs. Cain, who was an unusually fast talker, gave me a tough but valuable drill on the American language. From there I went to my final destination, San Jose, California.

Making a long story short, two years and five months later, after having many good experiences of kindness and thoughtfulness of the Lutherans in Olympia, I came to Concordia Seminary as a regular student in 1950, and a short time later I became a Lutheran and joined Concordia Lutheran Church in Maplewood, near the seminary. In 1957, I was ordained as a pastor of the LCMS, and was sent to Korea in the following year (September 1958) as a Korean national missionary of the LCMS.

### ***14. Lutherism and Lutheranism***

Are Luther's thought (Lutherism) and Lutheran thoughts (Lutheranism) the same? Can they be the same? Do they complement each other? Are they different? It may sound somewhat strange; nevertheless, these questions should be handled both theologically and practically. This reminds us of the dictum: The Truth (Tao, Tien) is One; Interpretations (understandings) are many. The truth never changes; interpretation does. Luther is one, but the views on Luther and about him are many.

There are many groups (denominations) bearing the name Luther. This is true in other traditions also. Calvin (or John Knox) is one, but

there are many Presbyterian bodies. Among religions in general, such phenomena prevail everywhere, in the west and in the east. There are not only many different groups and denominations, but also they are not infrequently fighting against each other. This is a puzzling subject!

How should we assess this situation? Can we ever clear up these complex realities: historically, theologically, and ecclesiastically? A very difficult and complicated subject. This is a special task or assignment given to this century, if the Lutherans and Luther-interested groups would ever want to make a new contribution in the world. The diversity can never be eradicated, but it should be handled in a more mutually edifying and amicable manner.

The following statement of the LCMS synodical convention resolution (Cf. *Lutheran Witness*, October 1994) seems to offer a clue to think about: “We reaffirm that the bases of our Lutheran doctrine are the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confession and not Luther, as such.”

Clearing this up, if it can ever be done, may mean a revitalization of the “Christian heathens” in Christianity, and a transformation as a truly meaningful new community of the heirs of Luther. Can the proliferated and divided Lutherans handle it? Is this realistic?

At any rate, a new Luther renaissance is needed in this century possibly starting from the time around the occasion of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, and when the organization like Lutheran World Federation will note the seventieth anniversary of its formation in 1947, thinking back to the meaningful, historic years like 1883 and 1917 which made the first “Luther Renaissance” possible. What would be the new shape of the Christian faith and understanding thereof and what would reformation Christianity look like in the twenty-first century, observing especially the rapid development in the Two-Thirds World? What is the *raison d’être* of the Lutherans and the LCMS?

### *Afterword*

As I gradually wind up the work in life, I would like to close this brief excursion by mentioning a regret. During my twenty years of active teaching at my alma mater, Concordia Seminary (not to mention for years as emeritus), I have not had even a single occasion of teaching or lecturing on Luther and his Reformation. Some reasons may be conceivable, namely: there are many competent Luther scholars at Concordia campus and the LCMS, and possibly due to my not expressing a wish to conduct a course on Martin Luther. At any rate, it is now history.

In the midst of this unfortunate experience, the gracious Lord granted me other good opportunities. I have taught and lectured on Dr. Luther, his theology and many of his contributions, in my original homeland Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and elsewhere in the world—even to non-Lutherans and non-Christians. Furthermore, I con-

tributed articles on request for Christian and secular publications. Much interest has been prevailing then on Luther and his Reformation movement. Meeting Luther, next to the meeting of my personal Savior Jesus Christ, is truly the great and very significant event in my entire life.

May we learn from history and the great Reformer Luther with new paradigms, now and in the times to come!

The following books, authored by this writer, may be helpful to the readers of this article. They are available at the seminary bookstore.

***A History of Lutheranism in Korea: A Personal Account.*** Concordia Seminary Monograph Series Number One, 1988. Also available in a Korean version of this publication.

***By the Grace of God I Am What I Am*** (autobiography). Lutheran Heritage Foundation, Macomb, MI, 2004. Also available in a Korean version.

# ***Identifying Authorities and Pastoral Practice in the Early Church. Two Case Studies: Basil of Caesarea and Ephrem of Syria***

***James Alan Waddell***

## ***I. Introduction***

In the last several years, Concordia Seminary has done an excellent job of providing theological symposia that make sense. They meet the needs of the parish pastor by addressing the kinds of theological questions we struggle with in our service to God's people. The theme of the 2003 symposium, "Identifying Authorities: The Limits of Theological Diversity and Confessional Unity," was one of those themes that makes sense.

As a parish pastor, I have to admit that I struggle with the theological diversity I see among my colleagues in the ministry. We live and minister at a time when the limits of our theological diversity and confessional unity are being tested. As our culture transforms itself before our eyes in ways that were unimaginable when I entered the ministry only twelve years ago, we see within the church extreme reactions to that transformation on both ends of the ideological spectrum. How do we norm our responses?

This symposium's theme identifies the church's primary norming authority as Scripture, our secondary authority as the Lutheran Confessions, and tertiary authorities as all the other things we draw upon to justify our theology and practice (e.g., history, traditions, liturgies, etc.). Outlining the church's authorities on primary, secondary, and tertiary levels helps us to clarify what we are to draw upon to norm the church's faith and practice in a time of rapid and relentless cultural change. When identifying these authorities that shape our theology and practice, Lutherans have historically appreciated the witness of the church fathers. The Lutheran Confessions and the writings of such Reformation figures as Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and Martin Chemnitz relied extensively on the church fathers to construct their theological positions. In this study I will make reference to two tertiary authorities of the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea and Ephrem of Syria, not to norm, but to inform issues which have relevance to divergent liturgical practices in the church today.

Basil employed both Scripture and unwritten traditions in his theological defense of this trinitarian doxology, and he was accused of liturgical

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***James A. Waddell is Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Albion, MI. This article was originally delivered at the Fifteenth Annual Theological Symposium at Concordia Seminary, September 23, 2003.***

innovation for using a form of music that previously was unheard of in the catholic church. Ephrem, in response to a Gnosticism that was flourishing in Syria in the fourth century, adopted a Gnostic form of hymn composition while giving it orthodox catholic content.

## II. *Basil of Caesarea*

In his *De spiritu sancto* in the year 374, Basil wrote:

In these days there is no lack of superficial listeners and questioners; but to find one of such a character that he desires knowledge and seeks the truth as a remedy for ignorance is very difficult. Just as in the hunter's snare, or in the soldier's ambush, the surprise is ingeniously concealed, so it is with the inquiries of most questioners who advance arguments, not so much to get some good out of them, but so that they may seem to have fair ground for controversy, when their investigation fails to elicit answers which agree with their own desires.<sup>1</sup>

Liturgical Theology now exists as a movement around which no insignificant amount of disagreement is growing in the church. With a new generation of Liturgical Theology in full stride,<sup>2</sup> Prosper of Aquitaine's adage *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* has become nothing less than a new dogma for the church, ingeniously imbedded in the processes of liturgical investigation by its simplification into the aphorism, *lex orandi lex credendi*, "how the church prays determines what the church believes." This continues to be so in spite of the careful work of Paul De Clerck and Paul V. Marshall. De Clerck deconstructed the aphorism which, as it turns out, amounts to a late-modern misuse of Prosper's adage.<sup>3</sup> Marshall has held up the many assumptions of Liturgical Theology to the close scrutiny of historical and theological examination.<sup>4</sup> Working ourselves out from

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<sup>1</sup>Basil of Caesarea, *De spiritu sancto* I.1; hereafter cited as *DSS*. The translations of Basil throughout this study are a slightly modified version based on the translation by Blomfield Jackson in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. VIII (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., David W. Fagerberg, *What Is Liturgical Theology?: A Study in Theological Method* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992); Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993); Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999); and Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997).

<sup>3</sup>See Paul De Clerck's "'Lex orandi, lex credendi.' Sens originel et avatars historiques d'un adage équivoque," *Questions Liturgiques* 59 (1978): 193-212. In English: "'Lex orandi lex credendi': The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage," trans. Thomas M. Winger, *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994): 178-200.

<sup>4</sup>Paul V. Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is There a *Lex Orandi* for All Christians?" *Studia Liturgica* 25 (1995): 129-151.

under the weight of so much historical and theological baggage is not unlike Sisyphus laboring beneath the great stone. Yet, the dogma *is* losing its luster.<sup>5</sup>

An example of how the ambiguous aphorism, *lex orandi lex credendi*, may be reversed and applied to our understanding of the development of liturgy in the early church is the theological defense of the doxology to the Holy Spirit in the anaphora of St. Basil's liturgy. Basil stated the occasion of the controversy in the following terms:

Lately when praying with the people, and using the full doxology to God the Father in both forms, at one time "*with* the Son *together with* the Holy Spirit," and at another time "*through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit," I was attacked by some of those present on the grounds that I was introducing novel and at the same time mutually contradictory terms.<sup>6</sup>

The Egyptian Anaphora of St. Basil is considered the oldest of Basil's liturgies. It is recognized "as one of the earliest surviving eucharistic prayers."<sup>7</sup> In the doxology at the end of the anaphora, Basil prayed: "The Father in the Son, the Son in the Father with the Holy Spirit, in your holy, one, catholic, and apostolic church."<sup>8</sup> The doxology of the anaphora from the Byzantine Liturgy of St. Basil reads: "...and grant us with one mouth and one heart to glorify and hymn your all-honorable and magnificent name, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup>

Neither of these extant prayers corresponds to Basil's doxology as he described it at *De spiritu sancto* I.3. This should not deter us, however, from examining the doxology in *De spiritu sancto* on Basil's own terms. What tradition has passed on to us in Basil's Egyptian and Byzantine liturgies are forms of prayers fixed in historic liturgical texts. What Basil has given us in *De spiritu sancto*, on the other hand, is an example of a bishop at prayer with his people. In other words, here we may identify an authority of pastoral practice in a specific church father. This is also a prayer with a theological and historical *sitz im leben*, which Basil unfolds for us in the argument of *De spiritu sancto*. The question is: Did the form of Basil's prayer occasion the theological controversy, *lex orandi lex credendi*, as those who attacked the bishop claimed? Or did the theological controversy occasion the form of Basil's prayer, *lex credendi lex orandi*?

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<sup>5</sup>For an example of a recent study in the LCMS which treats *lex orandi lex credendi* from a critical perspective, see Kurt E. Marquart's "Liturgy and Dogmatics," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67.2 (April 2003): 175-190.

<sup>6</sup>*DSS* I.3. See Basil's discussion of "in" (ἐν) and "with" (σύν) at *DSS* XXV.

<sup>7</sup>R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, (Texts translated and edited with commentary) 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (rev. and enlarged) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 67.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

### **III. Basil's Use of *lex credendi lex orandi***

Basil was undoubtedly conscious of those attending the Eucharist in the church of Caesarea.<sup>10</sup> The controversy over the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the church was escalating. In 373, Basil published a letter in which he argued against those who held false beliefs regarding the Holy Spirit.

They must anathematize all who call the Holy Spirit a creature, and all who think that way; that is, all who do not confess that He is holy by nature, as the Father is holy by nature, and the Son is holy by nature, and refuse Him His place in the blessed divine nature. By not separating Him from Father and Son this is proof of our right mind, for we are bound to be baptized in the terms we have received and to profess belief in the terms in which we are baptized, and as we have professed belief in, so to give glory to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and to hold ourselves apart from the communion of all who call Him creature, as from open blasphemers.<sup>11</sup>

In this letter, Basil has expressed his reliance on ***lex credendi lex orandi***, “for we are bound to be baptized in the terms we have received and to profess belief in the terms in which we are baptized, and as we have professed belief in, so to give glory to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Here the progression is catechesis to Baptism, Baptism to public profession of belief, public profession of belief to praise. The process begins with catechesis for Baptism which is predicated on “the terms we have received,” Basil’s ***lex credendi***.

In another letter written that same year, to Eupaterius and his daughter, Basil wrote:

As we were baptized, so we profess our belief. As we profess our belief, so also we offer praise. As then baptism has been given us by the Saviour, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, so, in accordance with our baptism, we make the confession of the creed, and our doxology in accordance with our creed. We glorify the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son, from the conviction that He is not separated from the Divine Nature; for that which is foreign by nature does not share in the same honors.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Basil was elected and consecrated Bishop of Caesarea in 370.

<sup>11</sup>***Ep.*** CXXV.3.

<sup>12</sup>***Ep.*** CLIX.2. At ***DSS*** XII Basil wrote: “For as we believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so are we also baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: first comes the confession, introducing us to salvation, and baptism follows, setting the seal upon our assent.”

The phrase “As we were baptized” does not refer to the liturgical rite per se, but, as Basil himself repeatedly maintains, the rite is derived from the Trinitarian formula which was given by the mouth of the Lord (Matt. 28:20) and is of the essence of Baptism: “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Here Basil has made his understanding plain that the Trinitarian doxology is derived “from the conviction that He [the Holy Spirit] is not separated from the Divine Nature.” The form of Basil’s inclusion of the Holy Spirit in the Trinitarian doxology, his *lex orandi*, is predicated on the *lex credendi* of the church’s creed and the creed is confessed in accordance with the Trinitarian baptismal formula which has been given by the Savior.<sup>13</sup>

Basil’s detractors had accused him of liturgical innovation; in their way of thinking this rendered his theology suspect.<sup>14</sup> Typical Trinitarian doxologies before and up to the fourth century are given in the formula: “...to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.” This formula occurs repeatedly throughout Books VII & VIII of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, for example.

Basil appealed to Nicea; he wrote: “I honor the faith of the Fathers assembled at Nicea above all later inventions.”<sup>15</sup> Basil used as his defense the creed of the Nicene fathers. He wrote in *De spiritu sancto*:

Thus we ascribe glory to God both “in” the Spirit, and “with” the Spirit; and herein it is not our word that we use, but we follow the teaching of the Lord as we might a fixed rule, and transfer His word to things connected and closely related, the conjunction of which in the mysteries is necessary. We have deemed ourselves under a necessary obligation to combine in our confession of the faith Him who is numbered with Them at Baptism, and we have treated the confession of the faith as the origin and parent of the doxology.<sup>16</sup>

“...we have treated the confession of the faith as the origin and parent of the doxology.” Again, this explicitly expresses Basil’s reliance on *lex credendi lex orandi*. Basil’s primary source of his Trinitarian doxology is the creed. The creed took its form from what is given in Baptism. And

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<sup>13</sup>Cf. *Ep.* CCX.4 where Basil wrote: “For unless the meaning of the distinctive qualities of each be unfounded, it is impossible for the doxology to be adequately offered to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Here, in a letter to “the notables of Neocaesarea,” Basil plainly asserts the normative priority of correct Trinitarian theology over doxology, yet he does this without separating the two.

<sup>14</sup>At *DSS* VI.13 Basil wrote: “It is obvious that they are annoyed with us for completing the doxology to the Only Begotten together with the Father, and for not separating the Holy Spirit from the Son. On this account they style us innovators, revolutionizers, phrase-coiners, and every other possible name of insult.”

<sup>15</sup>*Ep.* CLIX.1. Cf. also *Ep.* CXXV.2, CXL.2, and CCIV.6.

<sup>16</sup>*DSS* XXVII.68.

what is given in Baptism is received from the mouth of the Lord.<sup>17</sup> This is Basil's primary argument.

This passage is also key for understanding Basil's thought on the relationship between written and unwritten tradition, what is given in Scripture and what is passed on in the church through oral apostolic tradition in liturgical mystery. Basil makes a fundamental hermeneutical assertion when he writes: "...we follow the teaching of the Lord as we might a fixed rule, and transfer His word to things connected and closely related, the conjunction of which in the mysteries is necessary." The key word here is "transfer." This demonstrates how Basil takes authority from what is given in Scripture directly from the mouth of the Lord and transfers this authority to unwritten apostolic tradition. It demonstrates the intimate link between Scripture and tradition, *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*, in Basil's thought.

#### *IV. Basil's Use of lex orandi lex credendi*

While Basil clearly identified the words of the Lord in Matthew 28 and the creed of Nicaea as the theological source of his Trinitarian doxology, Basil also argued *lex orandi lex credendi* on the basis of "the unwritten mysteries of the Church."<sup>18</sup> He wrote in *De spiritu sancto*:

Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us "in a mystery" by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Basil wrote at *DSS* X.25-26: "...they clamour for written proof, and reject as worthless the unwritten tradition of the Fathers. But we will not slacken in our defence of the truth. We will not cowardly abandon the cause. The Lord has delivered to us as a necessary and saving doctrine that the Holy Spirit is to be ranked with the Father.... Is it not then indisputable that they make their own blasphemy more authoritative than the law prescribed by the Lord? Come, then, set aside mere contention."

<sup>18</sup>*DSS* XXVII.66-67. See also *DSS* IX.22 and X.25; at *DSS* X.26 Basil wrote: "Let us consider the points before us, as follows: Whence is it that we are Christians? Through our faith, would be the universal answer. And in what way are we saved? Plainly because we were regenerate through the grace given in our baptism. How else could we be? And after recognising that this salvation is established through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, shall we fling away 'that form of doctrine' which we received? Would it not rather be ground for great groaning if we are found now further off from our salvation 'than when we first believed,' and deny now what we then received? Whether a man have departed this life without baptism, or have received a baptism lacking in some of the requirements of the tradition, his loss is equal.... But, for myself, I pray that with this confession I may depart hence to the Lord, and then I charge to preserve the faith secure until the day of Christ, and to keep the Spirit undivided from the Father and the Son, preserving, both in the confession of faith and in the doxology, the doctrine taught them at their baptism."

<sup>19</sup>*DSS* XXVII.66.

For Basil the beliefs and practices of the church have two sources of authority. They are derived from the written teaching given in Scripture, and they are delivered “in a mystery” by the tradition of the apostles. Both have the same force of authority. To reject the unwritten tradition of the apostles is to injure the Gospel.<sup>20</sup> For Basil there are four liturgical elements that derive from unwritten apostolic tradition: making the sign of the cross, facing east at prayer, the epiclesis, and eucharistic prayer.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of Basil’s application of *lex orandi lex credendi* through the “unwritten mysteries of the church,” liturgical innovation was not beneath him. In his personal correspondence, Basil described how his monastic community made use of the Biblical psalms in their liturgical prayers. The clergy of Neocaesarea accused Basil of innovating liturgically, because Basil and his monastic community used in the singing of the psalms a style of music that was previously unknown in customary catholic usages. In response to the charge of liturgical innovation, Basil insisted that he and his community did nothing that could or should be construed as contrary to the church catholic. In 375 Basil wrote the following in a letter to the Neocaesareans:

When they are asked the reason for this furious and truceless war, they allege psalms and a kind of music varying from the custom which has obtained among you, and similar pretexts of which they ought to be ashamed...beware lest, in your disputes about the mode of singing psalms, you are straining at the gnat and setting at naught the greatest of the commandments.<sup>22</sup>

Basil also wrote: “You all concur in hating me.”<sup>23</sup> He argued that under spurious pretenses the Neocaesareans had charged him with false doctrine. Here Basil accused the Neocaesarean clergy of setting themselves up as the standard of liturgical practice among catholic communities.

According to this letter, Basil was attacked for two reasons. He was criticized for the style of music in the singing of psalms in his community, and he was criticized for the ascetic life of his monastic order. What is most interesting is that in a broader context of defending unwritten apostolic liturgical traditions, Basil defended the freedom of the local community to innovate, particularly in relation to the kind of music that was used

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<sup>20</sup>*DSS* XXVII.66. Martin Chemnitz’s criticisms of Basil on the authority of unwritten apostolic tradition are crucial, because they make the necessary distinction between what Basil accepted as a norming authority for the church’s liturgical practice and what we as Lutherans have historically rejected as a norming authority for our practice. Cf. *Examination of the Council of Trent*, vol. I, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), Second Topic: Concerning Traditions VII.1, p. 267. Also cf. *Examination of the Council of Trent* Vol. I, Second Topic: Concerning Traditions VIII.8, pp. 292-293.

<sup>21</sup>*DSS* XXVII.66.

<sup>22</sup>*Ep.* CCVII.2, 4.

<sup>23</sup>*Ep.* CCVII.1.

and the order of the community's life of prayer.

### ***V. Ephrem of Syria***

In his *Ecclesiastical History* from the fifth century, Salaminius Hermias Sozomen described Ephrem of Syria with the following words: "Ephraim the Syrian was entitled to the highest honors, and was the greatest ornament of the Catholic Church."<sup>24</sup> Ephrem was noted for his philosophical mind and for writing ecclesiastical history for the Syriac church. But he was also known for his shrewd defense of the catholic faith through his liturgical sensibilities.

Sozomen describes how, near the end of the second century, the Gnostic Bardasanes had made a name for himself in the region of Syria. In the third century Harmonius, the son of Bardasanes, followed in his Gnostic father's footsteps. But Harmonius, as his name suggests, took his Gnosticism a step further. Harmonius combined poetry and popular forms of music to draw faithful church-goers away from catholic orthodoxy and into the Gnostic fold. Sozomen wrote:

I am not ignorant that there were some very learned men who formerly flourished in Osroëne, as, for instance, Bardasanes, who devised a heresy designated by his name, and Harmonius, his son. It is related that the latter was deeply versed in Greek erudition, and was the first to subdue his native language to meters and musical laws; these verses he delivered to the choirs, and even now the Syrians frequently sing, not the precise copies by Harmonius, but the same melodies.<sup>25</sup>

Sozomen then goes on to relate how Harmonius was himself not free of the errors of his Gnostic father, and how he introduced these errors "into the lyrical songs which he composed." Sozomen then describes how Ephrem adopted the form of Harmonius' hymns, but gave them orthodox, catholic content.

When Ephraim perceived that the Syrians were charmed with the elegance of the diction and the rhythm of the melody, he became apprehensive, lest they should accept the same opinions; and therefore, though ignorant of Greek learning, he applied himself to the understanding of the metres of Harmonius, and composed similar poems in accordance with the doctrines of the Church, and wrought also in sacred hymns and in the praises of passionless men. From

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<sup>24</sup>Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, second series, vol. 2 *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 3.16.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 3.16.

that period the Syrians sang the odes of Ephraim according to the law of the ode established by Harmonius.<sup>26</sup>

Sozomen's last comment here suggests that the practice persisted among Syrian catholic Christians. In the sixth century, Theodoret in his *Ecclesiastical History* reiterates this point in his description of Ephrem.

Ephraim, employing the Syrian language, shed beams of spiritual grace. Totally untainted as he was by heathen education he was able to expose the niceties of heathen error, and lay bare the weakness of all heretical artifices. Harmonius the son of Bardesanes had once composed certain songs and by mixing sweetness of melody with his impiety beguiled the hearers, and led them to their destruction. Ephraim adopted the music of the songs, but set them to piety, and so gave the hearers at once great delight and a healing medicine. These songs are still used to enliven the festivals of our victorious martyrs.<sup>27</sup>

No doubt Theodoret used Sozomen as a source for his information on Ephrem. The point, however, is that both Sozomen and Theodoret claim that the form of hymnody, or the style of music, adopted by Ephrem persisted into their own times. Averil Cameron, in her book, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*,<sup>28</sup> suggests that the form of Ephrem's theological discourse in his Syriac hymns continued to influence the liturgy of Eastern Christianity into the sixth century, and she presents as evidence the Greek hymns of Romanus, the deacon of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.<sup>29</sup>

Many of Ephrem's Syriac hymns contain orthodox Christology, asserting orthodox doctrines of the nature and incarnation of Christ, His passion and soteriology, and orthodox catholic teachings of the virgin Mary against the Gnostic doctrines that prevailed through the hymns of Harmonius. One of the Gnostic teachings described by Theodoret<sup>30</sup> was that Christ received no part of his humanity from Mary, and that He passed through her as through a conduit having only the appearance of being a man,<sup>31</sup> a docetic Christology that certainly militated against the Biblical account of Christ's incarnation in human flesh. Ephrem adopted the form of the Syriac hymns which conveyed this heretical doctrine. By coopting the form and

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 3.16.

<sup>27</sup>Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 4.26.

<sup>28</sup>*Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: U. of California, 1991) 161.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica Genuina*, ed. P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis (New York: Oxford, 1963).

<sup>30</sup>A description supported by evidence in Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi.

<sup>31</sup>*Ep.* CXLV. In this letter to the monks of Constantinople, Theodoret refers to Ephrem as "the harp of the Spirit."

giving it catholic content, Ephrem nullified the error, thereby preserving orthodoxy in the church of Syria.

## VI. Concluding Remarks

To reject the normative priority of *lex orandi* as a dogmatic presupposition of all liturgical investigation is not to reject the historic liturgical traditions of the church. It is certainly not that the traditions of the church are to be abandoned. Rather, they should be upheld and appreciated. They should be used in the liturgical service of the Gospel to the greater glory of God. In theological defense of his liturgical practices, Basil espoused the principle *lex credendi lex orandi*, and, in taking a high view of the church's unwritten apostolic liturgical tradition, Basil also employed the principle *lex orandi lex credendi*, although he took this well beyond the limits that were later to be defined according to the evangelical catholic *ethos*.<sup>32</sup>

The pressing question has come to regard the normativity of the church's history and tradition for the church's liturgical practice, particularly as this has bearing on local congregational variation in the context of efforts aimed at inculturation and renewal, and the extent to which uniformity of liturgical practice has anything to do with the catholicity and orthodoxy of the church.<sup>33</sup>

While it is impossible to separate *lex credendi* from *lex orandi*, in Basil's view they may be distinguished as each had its place in his defense of his liturgical practices in different contexts. In this connection it is helpful both historically and theologically to make a theoretical distinction between what is sacramental and what is humanly instituted liturgical rite.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Cf. Chemnitz's critique of Basil.

<sup>33</sup>In "Worship, Culture and Catholicity: What Next?" *Studia Liturgica* 29 (1999): 100-115, Eugene Brand argues that we have reached the limit of the theological effort toward unity in ecumenical discourse. What is now needed is an understanding of liturgy as universal *ordo* which unites differing faith traditions in a form that essentially corresponds to the Roman Rite. This may be accomplished, according to Brand, by aiming at "the authentic core of Christian worship," a common possession which would no longer necessitate "our separation at the altar." Ecumenical unity based on the Roman Rite is also argued by Patrick Lyons in his essay, "Liturgy and Ecumenism," *Handbook for Liturgical Studies, Vol. 1, Introduction to the Liturgy*, ed. Anscar J. Chupungco (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1997), 81-92; Lyons includes a selective but helpful bibliography in his essay.

<sup>34</sup>In her study, "Can Liturgy Ever Again Become a Source for Theology?" *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989): 1-13, Catherine Mowry LaCugna does not make this distinction. Mowry's study actually begs the question by referring to a number of Trinitarian texts in the New Testament as having their origin in Christian liturgy. But this can be only conjectural at best. See for example Kurt Niederwimmer's *The Didache: A Commentary*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, trans. Linda M. Maloney, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 125-130. Niederwimmer begins by assuming that both Didache VII and Matthew 28:19 are liturgical in origin. W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, on the other hand, reject the notion that what is given at Matthew 28:19 is liturgical. See *Matthew: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible Commentary Series 26 (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 361-363.

The evidence for the use of the Trinitarian formula in Baptism is very early in the church and would lead us to conclude that what is given in the New Testament in the way of explicit Trinitarian texts are not necessarily later accretions. What is given at Matthew 28:19 and *Didache* VII, while they have a clear affinity in the Trinitarian formulation, have distinguishable historical and theological contexts. *Didache* VII was written for the explicit purpose of giving detailed liturgical instruction to a local Christian community. Matthew 28 was written as the conclusion of Matthew's Gospel with Jesus delivering to His disciples the *kerygma* that would effect the growth and ensure the continued success of the church. Reading post-Nicene Trinitarian theology back into New Testament and early liturgical texts, and thereby passing judgments on the validity of their origins, is methodologically suspect. To make such a distinction is to raise fundamental hermeneutical questions regarding our assumptions and methodology for historic liturgical investigation as this relates to liturgical renewal and inculturating popular forms in the church today.

For the sake of clarifying our hermeneutic for liturgical investigation, reading Basil is most illuminating. For Basil, what is given by the Lord in the baptismal formula of Matthew 28 and as this later came to be expressed in the confession of the church's creed is the formal ground on which the church creates its praise to God. What is further the case for Basil is that the material essence of the church's doxology is the doctrine of the Trinity—the equal glorification of the three hypostases in the one divine essence of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

While it is necessary theoretically to make a distinction between *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*, the effort to keep the two together is commendable, as Basil himself understood his doxology to be the logical consequent of his Trinitarian theology. Yet, to make doxology the center of theology, as is so often the case with Liturgical Theology,<sup>35</sup> is to make liturgy the formal and material ground of liturgy. Liturgy cannot be the formal or material principle of liturgy, for that would be a tautology. The fundamental assumption of Liturgical Theology is tautological, that liturgy is primary theology and theological reflection is secondary theology. This assumption is not supported by the evidence in Basil's *De spiritu sancto* or in Basil's letters. These two hermeneutical approaches, Basil on the one hand and Liturgical Theology on the other, represent two incompatible systems of liturgical discourse.

Ephrem of Syria has provided us with an example of a methodology whereby he coopted the form and gave it orthodox catholic content in order to nullify the heretical content. The application to the "form-substance debate" in today's context is painfully obvious. When historical evidence is suppressed in the church's discourse on liturgy, and only evidence that fits our prior assumptions is privileged, then it is not the hard data that shape

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<sup>35</sup>C. LaCugna does this in "Can Liturgy Ever Again Become a Source for Theology?"

our assumptions, but our assumptions which drive our reading and presentation of the hard data. Again this raises fundamental questions about the ways in which our underlying assumptions shape our methodology and drive our discourse on liturgy. If orthodox, catholic historical evidence contradicts our prior assumptions, then we must have the integrity to say as much and the courage to face today's rapidly transforming culture with wisdom, grace, and love, as we attempt to bring the saving message of the Gospel of forgiveness of sins in our crucified and risen Savior to a lost and dying world.

# ***Homiletical Helps on LW Series A***

## ***—Gospels***

### ***The Transfiguration of Our Lord*** ***Matthew 17:1-9*** ***February 6, 2005***

The Transfiguration of Our Lord is a lesson that offers an almost unfathomable richness of imagery, theology, and valid interpretation and application. The collect in ***Lutheran Worship*** (p. 31) takes the theology of the text in a valid direction, namely, our identity and glory as adopted sons who are brought into the family of God through the glorious true Son of God: “O God, in the glorious transfiguration of your only-begotten Son...you wondrously foreshowed our adoption by grace.” This is a valid extension of the text’s meaning. But it is an extension.

I would suggest taking the text in a different direction. The glory and identity of Jesus of Nazareth in His transfiguration are like a brilliant diamond that is set off all the more dramatically by the “setting” in which this gem is placed. That is to say, immediately before the text stands Jesus’ first Passion prediction and the promise of a cross not only for the Master, but also for all who follow Him (16:21-28). Immediately following the Transfiguration, on the way down the mountain, Jesus silences the disciples about this glorious event, and grimly instructs them that the eschatological Elijah/John and the glorious Son whose identity they have just witnessed are both to receive rejection and death at the hands of evil men. This strange ***contextual*** juxtaposition of divine glory and splendor (17:1-8) and lowest humility and suffering (16:21-28 and 17:9-13) is matched by three features of the reading itself. Those elements of the text include Jesus’ identity, Peter’s inadequate response, and the Father’s urgent command to ***hear*** the words of the Son of God. We may take each one in turn.

First, Jesus’ identity: who is He, there on the mountain? If Moses and Elijah symbolize the Old Testament revelation, then Jesus’ standing with them and then afterwards remaining alone probably symbolizes His identity as the one who fulfills the Law and the Prophets (5:17). This part of the text, then, shows Jesus’ greatness as the one who fulfills and brings to completion the revelation of God.

When we try to focus more precisely, however, it would probably be a mistake to see in Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as too much of a “one greater than Moses” typology. The textual key that takes us in a different direction consists in Matthew’s statement, after describing Jesus’ glorious appearance: “Look, Moses and Elijah appeared ***speaking with him***” (συλλαλῶντες μετ’ αὐτοῦ). The fact that glory is present, that the experience takes place on a mountain, and that Moses (along with Elijah) are standing there evokes the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34. But the fact that Moses (and Elijah) are “speaking with Jesus” places Jesus in parallel position with God Himself, for Exodus 34:35 states that Moses would veil his face until he went in “to speak with Him [God]” (συλλαλεῖν αὐτῷ). Thus, Jesus is, as the Father’s voice from heaven declares, the glorious Son who stands in the place of God Himself; He is the ***divine*** Son of God. When Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus on the mountain, they are speaking with God.

Peter then speaks, and his words add further opportunity to emphasize who Jesus is. Whatever else Peter may mean to say, by offering three booths for Moses,

Elijah, and Jesus, Peter seems to be placing Jesus on the same level or in the same category as Moses and Elijah. Under any reading, Peter's words display ignorance and an unworthy assessment of Jesus.

The evangelist makes this abundantly and immediately clear in verse 5 by introducing not one, but **two** clauses in a row using his characteristic marker, "Look!" (ἰδοὺ). The presence of the Father overshadows the mountaintop, and the divinity of the Son is distinguished from the divinity of the Father as the latter speaks His approval of Jesus' identity...and then adds the command to the disciples, "Listen to Him!"

The disciples respond with terror, falling face down on the ground. But the divine Son comes to them, touches them, and invites them to leave their fear behind. Lifting up their eyes, they realize that Moses and Elijah are gone...**and that the manifestation of Jesus' divine glory is gone as well.** Emphatically the evangelist writes, "They saw no one except Jesus himself, alone." The final verse of the text (v. 9) then reveals that the glory is not yet, and so it may not be spoken of until the cross and resurrection are accomplished. And **this is precisely what the disciples are to hear from Jesus—His words about the cross that precedes the glory, both for Himself and for them!** The command "Listen to him" is not a general exhortation to hear the teaching or words of Jesus. It is a context-specific exhortation to take to heart the divinely ordained order of events. First comes humble service and cross. Only afterwards will the glory emerge. To reverse the order is to follow another Master and to leave God's plan for salvation.

Thus, the text itself is internally framed just as it is contextually framed. Humility all around, with glory in the center. But the glory cannot be known or received until after the lowliness and suffering: "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man rises **from the dead**" (v. 9). And this is a textual theology that can be preached and applied, both concerning Jesus and concerning His disciples, then and now. The glory is certain, for it comes from Jesus' identity as true Son of God. But God's timing is sovereign, and He will not allow humans to change it.

### ***The Path to Glory (Matt. 17:1-9)***

- I. The path that Jesus incredibly chooses.
  - A. The disciples had seen some amazing things already during Jesus' ministry.
  - B. But now, they gain a glimpse into His divine nature.
  - C. But that nature and that glory will remain hidden.
  - D. In order to save us, Jesus will choose the path to glory that leads through the cross.
  - E. Then He rises in glory! And He will come again one day in all His glory!
- II. The path that we must learn.
  - A. Listen to Him!
  - B. This is the only true understanding of Jesus Himself!
  - C. This is the only true understanding of what it means to be His disciples!
  - D. Our present life is a hidden one, and there are crosses waiting for us.
  - E. But the promise of glory is certain. Listen to Jesus!

Jeff Gibbs

**First Sunday in Lent**  
**Matthew 4:1-11**  
**February 13, 2005**

**This reading is about Jesus.** That may seem an obvious thing to say, something that no one could ever miss. Yet the temptation is present to read Matthew 4:1-11 as if it were really about us, as if here Jesus is really serving as an **example** for us in our fight against Satan's temptation. Now, there is a secondary sense in which this account of Jesus' temptation in the desert by Satan does teach us something about our own battle with Satan, for no servant is above his master (Matt. 10:24).

But the primary message of Matthew 4:1-11 is a Christological and soteriological one, and that is what should be preached most vigorously. The richness of the reading's meaning cannot be exhausted in one short study, or in a score of them. In this study we will gain insight into that Christ-centered message of the reading by highlighting both the typological connections with the history of Israel's Exodus and wilderness wanderings, on the one hand, and the connections with the immediately preceding account of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan on the other hand. We'll consider the latter set of connections first.

Three truths tightly connect the account of Jesus' temptation by Satan with the early narrative of His baptism by John. First, in both situations, the Holy Spirit is active in the ministry of the Lord, coming down upon Jesus (3:16) and also leading Him into the desert for the purpose of being tempted by Satan (4:1). Second, the question of His identity as the Son of God receives a primary focus in both texts, through both the Father's voice from heaven and the first two temptations that Satan hurls at Jesus. Third, in neither lesson is Jesus a figure of power and initiative. Rather, He surprisingly submits to John's baptism even though John has just identified Him as the mighty eschatological Judge of all, and He willingly undergoes the divinely appointed ("led by the Spirit") attacks of Satan himself ("in order to be **tempted** by the devil"). Together, these three linking themes between 3:13-17 and 4:1-11 emphasize that the true and only Son of God is carrying out the divine plan not by means of power and glory, but by means of humble service. Satan's final temptation especially brings this to the fore. The assumption is that Jesus will worship and serve **someone**. But as the perfect Son, He will be completely determined to worship and serve His Father, the Lord God and Him alone.

In addition to contextual connections, there are also typological connections that show Jesus as the one who stands in battle with Satan **in the place of** God's people Israel. Recall that in the Exodus accounts, God names Israel as His first-born son, and that the command to Pharaoh is to let the people go (Ex. 4:22). Against Pharaoh's will, God ultimately brings His "son" out to freedom and into the wilderness. But in the wilderness the "son," the people, betray their God and fail the testings that He sent their way.

But now another, perfect, true Son has come out into the wilderness. Satan tempts Jesus to use His own power to satisfy His own needs. In reply, He cites Deuteronomy 8:3, words of Moses that describe the **failure** of Israel in the wilderness. But Jesus does not fail, and He is not the "kind of Son" who will use His own power to provide for Himself. Rather, He will depend on everything that comes from the mouth of His Father. Where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds—and that in the same place where they failed, indeed, **in their place, in their stead**. Jesus is the champion of Israel, the warrior on behalf of Israel in the battle with Satan.

In a second attack, Satan tries to draw Jesus into demanding that His Father-

God deal with Him in a certain way, protecting Jesus when Jesus puts Himself unnecessarily into danger. Israel failed a similar test in the wilderness, demanding a certain kind of provision from God (Deut. 6:16). But Jesus passes the test, citing the very words of Moses in reply to Satan's attack. Israel did not know what it meant to be God's son. ***But Jesus does not swerve from His identity or calling as the true and perfect Son of God.***

Last comes the question asked of everyone who is a "son." By definition, a "son" serves a "father" and does his bidding. Who will Jesus serve? Israel faltered in the desert and later in the promised land as well, running after other gods, willing to worship and serve them. But Jesus will have none of it. He once again appropriates the words of Moses (Deut. 6:13), showing the contrast between the sinful people of Israel and His own perfect obedience to the Father. In the battle with Satan, Jesus will not waver—He will carry out perfectly His identity and role as God's Son. He will be perfectly obedient to the Father's will.

The Gospel of Matthew is, of course, intensely interested in the work of Jesus on behalf of Israel; the first-century origin and context explains why. We may validly extrapolate its message on behalf of all, since this is the Gospel that ends with the Great Commission to all the nations (28:18-20). So the portrait of Jesus in the desert is of Him who is champion in the battle against Satan on behalf of, in the place of, as the representative of all people. His perfect worship and service of the Father issues forth finally in the garden, the trial, the cross, and the empty tomb. That perfect obedience is foreshadowed here by the narrative of Jesus' conflict with Satan in the wilderness. It is a text that proclaims very, very good news!

***Suggested outline:***

***Why Is He Out There in the Wilderness?***

***Introduction:*** Try to catch the strangeness *of this text*. This is ***Jesus***, God's ***Son***, who has just been declared such by the Father's voice ***directly*** from heaven. And there He is—not in glory, or power, but in the desert. And not alone, either; ***tempted directly by the Devil himself!!***

- I. Because it is God's plan for Him to be there.
  - A. He is led out ***by the Spirit***.
  - B. He is led out ***in order to be tempted by Satan***.
- II. Because we all have failed.
  - A. It is precisely the setting in which Israel failed to be what God called them to be.
  - B. Like Israel, so often we turn away from our identity as Christians, as God's people, as God's sons and daughters. We forget who we are, and we live in that forgetfulness.
  - C. If God left us out there in conflict with Satan, we would perish!
- III. Because He is a very different "Son of God."
  - A. He comes in the place of others, and for their sake.
  - B. Filled with power by right and by the Spirit—He refuses to use the power for His own sake. He knows who He is. And He knows why He has come.
  - C. His victory in our place in the desert, and on the cross, can ***silence*** the devil's accusation that we do not deserve to be God's children, or that we cannot expect God to receive us as His own. Jesus is the victor for us!
  - D. When the battle with temptation rages, remember Christ's victory for

you—and look forward in *hope* to His final victory over the Evil Foe when He comes in glory!

**Conclusion:** Do not let the old story become “old hat.” Ponder, and marvel that Jesus, God’s Son, would be *this* kind of a son for you. See Him out there in the conflict with Satan for you—and give thanks!

Jeff Gibbs

## ***Second Sunday in Lent***

***John 4: 5-30, 39-42***

***February 20, 2005***

### ***Surprising Words<sup>1</sup>***

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me.” Remember that little ditty? We used it on the playground when someone made fun of us. It was a way of saying the cut downs did not mean a thing. “You can not hurt me!” But the words did hurt. They cut deep into our soul, and left us feeling bad about ourselves. That is one little ditty that was terribly wrong. Words can hurt.

My sister once told me how hurt she was because of something our mother said.<sup>2</sup> She was in high school and in a forensics competition, along with our older brother. She did well. First place in her division. She could not wait to tell mom. And she did. But you know what our mom’s first words were after my sister told her she had won? “How did your brother do?” The words hurt because there was no recognition of her victory, only an interest for an older son. My sister told me this story some twenty years after it happened. She remembered the hurt for a long time.

This incident of the Samaritan woman and Jesus at the well is a story of words. Words that hurt have been spoken to this woman in the past. But surprise! On this day, Jesus will speak words that satisfy her hurting soul.

Of course, Jesus and this woman should not have spoken any words at all. Jesus was Jewish; the woman a Samaritan. These two groups of people just did not get along. Jews would travel way out of the way to avoid going through Samaria. Years of ugly, hateful words had built up the prejudice to vicious levels. There were gender boundaries. Women were seen by many as inferior, even pitied because they had the misfortune to be born a female. A Jewish male just did not lower himself to speak to a Samaritan woman.

But surprise! On this day, Jesus speaks to the woman. Even more, He treats her with respect and dignity few have ever given her. And He offers her the most precious gift of all—the living waters of eternal life.

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<sup>1</sup>The approach taken in this sermon borrows from a sermon by Thomas Long, “Words, Words, Words,” in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 12:3 (1991), 313-319.

<sup>2</sup>I use personal stories in my sermons. I have not altered them for general use, but have placed them into this sermon as I would preach them to show how I use such stories. You will need to either find similar stories from your life or generalize the story (as I did with the story about the young girl and her report card later in the sermon or simply give appropriate credit that the story comes from another person’s sermon/life.)

However, the woman is suspicious. She has to be wondering, "Why is he talking to me? What is going on here?" You can not blame her. Here is a woman who has heard so many hurtful words in her life, particularly from men. Now I know the usual interpretation is that this woman is some shameless hussy, going through men like a Biblical times Liz Taylor or Britney Spears. Five husbands, and now she is with a man who is not her husband. Our first thought is that this lady is the epitome of immorality and unfaithfulness.

But women back then typically did not have that kind of marital freedom. Men could divorce a wife with little trouble, but it was not so easy the other way around. No, the culture was not one where a woman could do this kind of husband swapping. If anything, she was the one who heard words of rejection. I wonder, did one husband complain that she did not bear him any sons? Maybe another one found someone more attractive. Perhaps one of the men in her life thought she was too old. Whatever the reason, she had been rejected by one man after another until she did not even have the dignity of marriage anymore. The man she was living with was not even her husband. Can you blame her for being suspicious when Jesus starts talking to her if she had been treated so shamelessly in her life before this?

No, because we have the same suspicions about words. We too have been hurt by someone else's words of rejection. I heard about a young girl in school who tried so hard to get good grades. She wanted to please her father. It was report card time. All A's except for one A-. She showed the report card with pride to her dad. His comment, "Why is there an A- in this subject?" Words hurt.

At the seminary I get to meet the pastors who teach our students how to be pastors during that year of internship called vicarage. One of those pastors was notorious for not giving compliments. If a student did something wrong, he was quick to criticize. But do something well, and nothing, just silence. It was a year of criticism and no encouragement. It was a long year. Words hurt. They can wear you down and damage you.

In a magazine called *Marriage Partnership*, a Christian journal to help couples have better marriages, I remember reading a story of a husband who was addicted to pornography. When his wife found out, they went to a counselor. But his words were not helpful. He asked the wife if she gave her husband what he needed at home. ***The wife was made to feel guilty for her husband's sin!*** Words hurt. They can leave your soul parched, thirsting for a good, healing word, a word that accepts and satisfies.

We can not blame the Samaritan woman for being suspicious. But surprise! Jesus does not stop talking with her. He does something incredible. He speaks to her wound. "Go bring your husband." With that sentence Jesus lets her know that he knows what has happened to her. He tells her everything that has happened in her life. She is amazed. Here is someone who understands what she has gone through. Here is someone who offers her something that she has heard so seldom—words of love, acceptance, and life.

Jesus could do the same thing to us—speak one sentence that names our deepest wound. Perhaps it is, "Go bring your spouse." But the relationship between the two of you is damaged, dying, barely on speaking terms. Maybe it is, "Go bring your child." But the alienation between you and that daughter or son is so bad that few words are ever said. It could be, "Go bring your friend." But the loneliness you feel inside tells you there is no friend to bring. It could be, "Go bring your brother, your sister." But the words of rejection and neglect over the years have made even a phone call difficult. We all have that inner wound that Jesus can name, that

needs His understanding, His words of love, acceptance, and life.

And surprise! Jesus speaks openly to the woman. Seldom do we hear Jesus say He is the Messiah this openly and plainly before He goes to the cross. There is a certain secretiveness about His claim to be the Christ, except with the disciples. But here He simply says He is the Messiah, the Christ, who gives living water of eternal life. He is the One her soul desires. He is just what parched souls need to hear.

His words are words of acceptance. From the cross we hear, "Father forgive them." And in that forgiveness, God welcomes us as His own people forever. They are words of love. On the cross He says, "I thirst." It is love that keeps Him there, hanging in agony. Love for us. In the glory of His resurrection, Jesus speaks words of life, "Everyone who believes in Me, streams of living water will flow within. I will give to those who are thirsty, without cost, the water of life to drink." Words of love and acceptance from a cross. Words of life from an empty tomb.

And words of love, acceptance and life are powerful words, even when hurtful words of rejection have been spoken. That is the other surprise in this story of the Samaritan woman. She listens. After all that has happened in her life, she listens to Jesus. She is so excited about what she has heard that she runs to her village. That is not so surprising. That is what you do when you have great, wonderful news. No, what is surprising is that she listened in the first place. But she did, and, wow! Her soul was healed. Parched and thirsting for love and acceptance, she heard it in Jesus's declaration He is the Messiah. He satisfied her deepest needs in the saving words of forgiveness and life. Words can heal.

A few years ago, my wife and I had a fight. Now Sue and I seldom have major arguments, but this was one of them. Strange, though, I can not remember what it was about. I know it lasted for a couple of days. I recall that we did not say much to each other and the tension was high in the house. We felt coldness and distance in our relationship. But then came the time to end the hurt and silence. Words, powerful words were spoken to each other. We started with, "I'm sorry." Then came even more powerful words, "I forgive you," followed quickly by "I love you." What a change in our relationship. Warmth returned. We seemed closer than ever before. The tension was replaced with a peacefulness that the kids really enjoyed. Conversation was heard again. These words were healing words. They were words that satisfied thirsting souls as Sue and I heard words of love, acceptance, and life from each other.

But what happened between Sue and me pales in comparison to what Jesus offers us in His words. His words are eternal. His words bring forgiveness from God. His words are the powerful words of divine love. And our souls need to hear them again and again. So as the woman at the well in Samaria listened to Jesus speak words that satisfied her thirsting soul, you too, listen as Jesus says to you words of acceptance, love, and life. "As the Father has loved Me, so also I love you." "Everyone who believes in Me will have, without cost, the waters of eternal life welling up within you." "Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven." "For I, Jesus, the One who is speaking to you, am the Messiah, the Savior of the world." Amen.

Glenn A. Nielsen

**Third Sunday in Lent**  
**John 9: 1-12, [13-17], 18-33, [34-39], 40-41**  
**February 27, 2005**

This is a favorite chapter of the Bible for many people because it shows the work of Christ who creates simple faith, not simplistic faith, in the life of the uneducated poor man born blind. This work of YHWH's Servant changed the man's life temporally as well as eternally, and his confession of faith has been echoed ever since: "I was blind but now I see."

The pastor has the option to read either the whole chapter for the day, which is preferred, or to read the selected verses that are bracketed above. My suggestion is to take the time in worship to read the entire chapter since this fleshes out the miracle event for the hearer. The point of the sermon should direct the listener to Christ as YHWH's Servant who was sent by the Father to carry out His work. This miracle identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah 42:14-21—the Old Testament reading for the day. The details of the reading, such as Christ making mud out of spittle and packing the blind man's eyes and what that all means, or Jesus sending him to the Pool of Siloam (cf. Is. 8:6, Siloam in the LXX, where the people refused these waters and here they refuse Christ) or how Christ's deeds were perceived as breaking the Law by doing work on the Sabbath would best be left for Bible study. Since this is a lengthy reading, the preacher would probably best serve the hearer by interpreting the deeds, actions, and reactions of the people involved in the reading and then applying this to the lives of the hearers.

**The disciples** asked Jesus about the blind man: did he sin or did his parents sin since he was born blind? And what was Jesus' response? No one sinned to cause this man's blindness. This man will be used so that the works of God can be displayed. I am the fulfillment of Isaiah 42. Watch and see!

**The neighbors and acquaintances of the blind man** could hardly believe what they have just witnessed. Did this really happen or was this man simply someone who resembled the blind man whom they knew? It certainly seemed like the right man, but his life had changed dramatically. Not only could he physically see, but his whole outlook on life changed and he now gave worship to Jesus. What is the witness of the Christian's life to those around him or her, especially those Christians who may have come to believe in Jesus later in life?

**The parents** certainly saw a change in their son's life, and they believed. However, they were afraid of the consequences of confessing their faith in the presence of Pharisees. They would have been kicked out of the synagogue. The parents did not have a courageous faith, but they had faith nonetheless. This still happens with Christians today, and we need to be careful not to label them as "non-Christians" simply because they may not be as strong or courageous as others.

**The Pharisees** (St. John also uses "Jews" interchangeably in this reading) refused to believe the testimony of this man who claimed that Jesus had healed him. How could this audacious man possibly know anything? After all, he was a sinner steeped in sin. He was born blind, and he was uneducated. How in the world could he teach them anything? They were the leaders and they prided themselves on knowing God's Law, keeping it, and leading the people in their understanding of God's Law as well. But this man Jesus was horning in on their territory. He was "sheep stealing" (cf. *Homiletical Help* for April 17), and they were losing their control over the spiritual lives of the people. Their societal status and "job security" were at stake. These were more important to the Pharisees than acknowl-

ing and believing what they learned in their “catechism classes,” *viz.* that YHWH would send His Servant to open the eyes of the blind physically as well as spiritually, and that Jesus was this One sent from God.

***The man born blind:*** We are not given his name. We only know that he was blind and uneducated. His day began like any other day; probably out begging for alms. There was no way that he could ever anticipate what would happen to him that day. His life was changed temporally as well as eternally. The Light of the World came to him and changed his life forever! The Servant of YHWH opened up his eyes just like he had heard would happen in the Bible. However, he did not know that this would happen to him. We can only imagine how his life changed that day. He literally saw God’s creation for the first time in all its splendor. He could now see the people he loved. He no longer had to beg for a living. But more importantly what happened to him that day was that he placed his faith in Jesus Christ. Though others refused to receive Jesus, this man received Him with joy and gladness (John 1:12-13).

One important item that the pastor needs to take into consideration while reading this Scripture in worship and preaching on this text is that there will most likely be people in the pew who are either blind or who know some relative or friend who is blind. They may wonder to themselves why God will not open their eyes since He opened the blind man’s eyes. The preacher should pastorally assure them that Christ has taken care of their spiritual blindness and that on the Last Day they will behold Christ in all His glory with their very own eyes along with everyone else at the resurrection. And, how extra special it will be for them when the first thing they see, or see again, will be Jesus in all His splendor!

***Suggested outline:***

- I. Flesh out the characters of this miracle event; their actions and reactions. This is a built-in illustration and will probably be appreciated by the hearers in the pew.
- II. Jesus is the Servant of God who was sent into the world to open the eyes of the blind.
  - A. He was nailed to the cross for all the world to see. We see the magnitude of our sin, but we also see the love and mercy God has for us in Christ Jesus.
  - B. Jesus opened our spiritually blind eyes in Baptism. We now fix our eyes on Jesus. As the blind man’s life was changed eternally and temporally, so also are our lives changed as well. Because of Jesus, we now live lives of hope and assurance.
- III. Encourage and equip the hearer to reach out to those they know within their own circles who are still spiritually blind. Have them invite their friends and family not only to Easter morning service, but to your Lenten and Holy Week services as well.

Michael J. Redeker

***Fourth Sunday in Lent***  
***Matthew 20:17-28***  
***March 6, 2005***

***The Greatest Glory***

You have to smile and nod your head at the mother of James and John. Most any parent knows what she's doing. What dad does not want his daughter to be the center of attention? What mom does not want to be proud of her son? Parents want their kids to do well, to get some glory and honor.

My youngest daughter plays softball. I want her to get the big hit, to have all the other parents cheering for her. My older son plays the trombone. I am pleased when he gets to stand and play the solo in the piece, when his name is marked in the program for some special recognition.<sup>1</sup>

I am sure I could visit most of your homes and go to the one place where you are feeling just like this mom coming up to ask Jesus for places of honor for her sons. I would go straight to the kitchen and look on the refrigerator door. A report card with the A's circled. A picture colored. A letter from the Dean posted about some award. Some special photos are front and center.

But it is also not hard to see where this mom got it wrong. And not just the mother, also the sons and the disciples. They all were much too concerned about honor and glory for themselves. They wanted to be the center of attention. They wanted those positions of prestige and privilege. To sit on the right and left were the two top spots. They would have been Jesus' favorites. Everyone else would have been looking up to them. It would be like standing on the gold medal stand in the Olympics forever. Who would not want that! The mother did. The two sons thought they should have those seats. And the rest of the disciples were angry and upset that James and John asked for places they thought they should have.

It is a pretty nasty scene of jealousy, pride, selfish ambition, and anger. But, again, we can nod our heads—this time in personal understanding and shame.

A few years back a church was doing an analysis of the giving at the congregation. A chart was divided into two columns: amount of money given on one side and number of people giving that amount on the other. The purpose was to see how many were giving little if anything. But I wonder how many of the top givers were tempted to say, "I am doing pretty good. I wonder if any one knows I am one of best givers. I wish people could see the names in each category."

Have you ever had the chance to compare yourself with someone else and see how much better you are? Pride sneaks in. You like that recognition, that honor. The desire for glory grabs hold. Usually it just turns out to be selfish ambition. Nasty business.

At one church they have a wonderful recognition program. Someone who has given much time and effort to the church is chosen each year and has his or her name placed on a plaque. It is a time to give thanks for someone's service to the church. But I can imagine someone saying, "My name should be on that plaque. I have done so much for this church. Why is that woman recognized before me? I have done more than she has."

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<sup>1</sup>Please see my note in the sermon for Lent 2 on John 4 for use of my personal stories.

Have you ever had someone else receive some recognition you thought you should have received? The envy eats at you. It gets in and spreads like a virus. The bitterness can last for years. Jealousy rears its ugly head. Nasty scene.

So it is not too hard to see what the mother of James and John, the disciples, and James and John did wrong. We know what pride, ambition, jealousy, anger, and indignation all can do when the desire for recognition, glory, and honor wells up inside of us.

But it is also not too hard to see what the mother of James and John, the disciples, and James and John did right. One thing stands out as wise and good in this nasty scene. They went to Jesus. They at least knew to go to Jesus.

The mother kneeled before Jesus. She came into His presence with humility and respect. Her request was off base, but she believed that Jesus was the One to ask. She was looking to her Lord. Now, I am not going to make what she asked for seem okay, but that she came to Jesus was good. And she was asking that her sons be close to Jesus.

James and John were clearly wrong for wanting to be above the other disciples. But when Jesus asked them if they would suffer with Him, they said, "Yes." They wanted to be with Jesus. They wanted to follow Him even if that meant rejection, persecution, and death. James was martyred; his head cut off. John was exiled to the Island of Patmos for the last years of his life. They wanted to follow Jesus.

The other disciples—their anger and indignation were wrong. They were jealous and wanted the places of honor for themselves. But they were following Jesus. They wanted to be the ones closest to Him. They knew He was special, and being next to Him was the best place to be.

They were right. Jesus was the One to ask. Being close to Him is the best place in the world. Following Him is a good desire to have. But not for glory and honor. Not for recognition and special awards. But for service. For greatness that comes from serving.

Remember what Jesus said? "I have come not to be served, but to serve." Now that is greatness. It is great for us.

Watch how He does just what He says. Jesus gives up the fullness of His greatness to come to this earth. He gives up His heavenly honor and glory to serve us in suffering and death. He does not choose some powerful country with a mighty army and overwhelming weapons. He comes to a tiny country called Israel. Look at a map of the world. (Here you could use a visual aid. Bring a sizable wall map of the world and point out how small Israel is.) You can see huge countries. Then there is Israel. You can barely see it. Yet when Jesus walks this earth, it is the center of the universe. All of creation is looking at Him for the greatest service to be done.

Again, the place seems so ironic for such greatness. We call it Mt. Calvary, but it was probably no more than a small mound, a little knoll where criminals were crucified. Yet on that tiny spot of land, Jesus did what we could never do. He took all our pride and jealousy, every nasty scene, and buried it from God's sight once and for all. In its place He gives us all His love and forgiveness, a wonderful scene of eternal life. God Himself glorified and honored His Son. He brought Jesus out of the grave in joyful recognition that Jesus' service to us is true greatness.

Just like the mother and the disciples, just like James and John, we want to be close to Jesus. He is the One to kneel before. He is the One to trust. He grants our requests. Yes, He is the One to follow—in service not selfish ambition, in humility not pride, in love not jealousy.

Have you wondered who will sit on Jesus' right and left sides? Who will receive

that honor? Will it be James and John? The case could be made for Moses or King David. Peter was the lead disciple. But Mary Magdalene was the first to see Him risen from the dead. Could it be Jesus' mother? The apostle Paul? John the Baptist?

We do not know yet. But we do know what the people who will sit in those places will look like.

A child holding tight all the pennies from a piggy bank, but then dropping them in the collection plate with a smile, not caring if anyone has noticed. Just giving freely.

A woman setting up donated glassware for the church rummage sale. No one else is around, but that is okay as she's singing a hymn of praise for Jesus.

A man sees a plaque in the church hallway is falling down. He brings in his tools, and no one even knows it has been fixed. He is serving Jesus and church.

A mom brings her children to church so they will be closer to Jesus. And many years later, the children lovingly bring her to church when she can not drive anymore, keeping her close to Jesus.

A dad prays with the kids, reading them Jesus stories so they know whom to ask for their deepest needs. Then he keeps praying for them as they leave home to live their own lives.

A husband cares for his wife as her health fails. A wife does not give up encouraging her husband in his faith.

Who will sit on Jesus' right and left sides? I do not know, but that honor will go to those who have served in love because they wanted to be close to Jesus, they wanted others to be close to Jesus.

Who will receive that greatest honor? I do not know, but when we find out on that last day, we will not be jealous. We will simply be rejoicing that we too are close to Jesus—all because He chose to serve us instead of choosing to be served on that little hill called Mt. Calvary. Amen.

Glenn A. Nielsen

***Fifth Sunday in Lent***  
***John 11:47-53***  
***March 13, 2005***

***Introduction:*** The death of Jesus Christ is the theme of this text and is emphasized in the whole Lenten season and in the church's use of the cross at all times. The question is bound to be asked: Why *did* Jesus die? It is an important question, to which everyone needs to know the answer. It was asked by the little boy in a story from Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian. He and his father were looking at pictures in a book. When they came to one of the crucifixion, he said, "Papa, that man is bleeding! What is he doing there on that piece of wood?" We will look in the sermon text for the answer.

***Why Did Jesus Die?***

I. He died because men plotted to kill Him.

This is the explanation on the surface. Jesus was seen as a danger to the well-being of the nation, and the leaders of Israel plotted to bring about His death (vv. 47-48, 53). It was the greatest tragedy in history, arising from unbelief and

misunderstanding. “Men of Israel...you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross” (Acts 2:22-23). “None of the rulers of this age understood it (the message of wisdom); for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory” (1 Cor. 6:8).

II. He died for the benefit of the people.

The high priest Caiaphas stated the strategy of the political intrigue in his counsel: “It is better for you that one man die than that the whole nation perish,” (v. 48). Jesus was to die instead of the people having to die. As the apostle points out (vv. 51-52), Caiaphas did not realize how well this expressed the deeper truth of the matter: the Man was to give His life for this nation and for all nations, in a gracious vicarious satisfaction for their sins, that they might have a sure basis of avoiding the eternal damnation they deserved. “Our sins must be either upon our own necks or upon Christ. If they remain upon us, we are lost forever, but if they be upon Christ, we are saved” (Martin Luther). Peter knew the truth about this: “Christ died for your sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). Paul also knew it (1 Cor. 5:15, 19, 21). In the marvelous wisdom of God’s mercy, the death of the innocent Jesus, railroaded to His death, would be the occasion for the substitutionary atonement of the Righteous One for the unrighteous, by laying our sins upon Him (Is. 53:6). Here is the unfailing source of pardon and salvation for all who are guilty before God, from the malicious plotters to the little boy and his father looking at pictures.

III. He died to bring together the children of God and make them one (v. 52).

The benefit of His work is not only for His own people (Matt. 1:21) but for all the nations of the earth (Gen. 22:18). All who come to trust in Him as their Savior and Benefactor and are baptized into Him are one in Him (Gal. 3:26-28). They all alike have reason to exclaim, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1), and to love and encourage one another in the one great family of God, instructed to love as they have been loved (1 John 3:11, 23; John 15:17). From this love arises a missionary longing to gather the children of God together by spreading the Word of Reconciliation for Christ’s sake ( 2 Cor. 2:19-20).

**Conclusion:** In Kierkegaard’s story the father had the answer for the little boy’s question. Do you?

Thomas Manteufel

***Palm Sunday  
Sunday of the Passion  
Matthew 26:1-27:66  
March 20, 2005***

Individually and in various combinations, the verses of this text have provided texts for many sermons delivered during the Lenten season. Treating the verses as a unit poses a homiletical challenge. One theme that suggests itself is:

***The Predictions of Jesus***

Jesus anticipated His betrayal: “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me” (26:21); “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me” (26:23).

(English quotations are from the ESV.)

Matthew indicates that Judas betrayed Jesus (26:47-56) and reports that Jesus saw this as a fulfillment of the Scriptures.

Jesus predicted that the disciples would fall away from Him in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (26:31).

The last part of Matthew 26:56 states, "Then all the disciples left him and fled."

Jesus predicted Peter's denial. "Truly, I tell you this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."

Matthew 26:69-75 records the account of Peter's denial of Jesus.

According to Matthew 26:2 Jesus reminded His disciples that they had been previously informed that the Son of Man would be handed over (παράδοται) to be crucified. Jesus' repetition of this teaching reaffirmed the prediction and indicated the fulfillment would take place during the last part of Passion Week.

Matthew refers to the partial fulfillment of this prediction in Matthew 27:1-2 when the chief priests and the elders of the people handed (παρέδωκαν) Jesus over to Pontius Pilate.

Matthew 27:32-50 is Matthew's account of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus pointed forward to His burial (26:12) when He chided His disciples for complaining about the woman who poured ointment on His body.

As Matthew indicates (27:57-60), Joseph of Arimathea claimed the body of Jesus and placed it in his own tomb.

Jesus anticipated His resurrection. "But after I am raised, I will go before you to Galilee" (26:31).

The message of the fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in Matthew's post-resurrection account.

During the last hours before His crucifixion, death, and burial for the sins of all people Jesus pointed forward even beyond His resurrection. Two predictions in our text that Jesus made remain to be fulfilled:

- I. In concluding the institution of His Holy Supper Jesus predicted, "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (26:29).
- II. In response to the questioning of Caiaphas the high priest (26:64) Jesus responded, "But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The fulfillment of Jesus' predictions in reference to events in Passion Week serve to strengthen our confidence that Jesus will fulfill His prophecies of events yet to come.

Arthur F. Graudin

***The Resurrection of Our Lord***  
***John 20:1-9***  
***March 27, 2005***

***Notes on the text:*** 1. Each Gospel speaks differently of the Lord's followers finding the empty tomb. John's account of the discovery of the empty tomb is unique in some significant ways. First, the Synoptic Gospels speak of more than

one woman going to the tomb (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; and Luke 23:55-24:1). John, however, speaks only of Mary Magdalene going to the tomb and reporting its emptiness to Peter and John (v. 1). To be sure, this does not exclude others being present with Mary, and in her report (v. 2) she speaks in the first person *plural* (*oidamer*: we know). We cannot ascertain, however, a conclusive explanation for John speaking of Mary alone. But at least we can notice that focus on her in the discovery of the empty tomb goes along with the story of Christ's appearance specifically to her (20:10-18). Second, the synoptics tell us not only that they found Jesus gone from the tomb but also that they were met by an angel or angels, who announce His resurrection (Matt: 28:2-7; Mark 16:5-7; and Luke 24:4-7). John, however, tells us only about Mary finding angels in the tomb, and this happens after Peter and John have inspected the scene and left. Mary, however, is portrayed as thinking that Jesus' body has been taken (v. 2; see also v. 13). Accordingly, the disciples are also portrayed as investigating a report of a missing body rather than a report of a resurrection.

2. John does not explain why Mary went to the tomb. But once there it is clear that her original intentions, whatever they may have been, were upset by finding the tomb empty. Mary concludes that someone has taken the body, although it is not clear whether she had in mind anyone in particular (e.g., grave robbers or Jesus' enemies). But when Peter and John (identified here as elsewhere in the Gospel as the disciple whom Jesus loved) go to the tomb, they not only find Jesus missing, they also find the cloths in which He had been wrapped and the cloth (*soudarion*) that had been over His head not among the cloths but in a place of its own (vv. 5-7; see also 19:38-42, in which John explains in some detail who buried Jesus and how they did this, and 11:44, for details about how Lazarus had been buried). These indicate that Jesus' body had not simply been taken. Upon seeing this, John makes the right connections: He saw and believed (v. 8). Although these verbs lack explicit objects, they are obvious: he saw the cloths lying in the tomb, and thus he believed that Jesus' body had not been taken but that He had risen from the dead.

But the evangelist also makes it clear that Christ's resurrection was unexpected and as yet inexplicable. He adds that still they did not understand the Scripture that He had to rise from the dead (v. 9). When Jesus cleansed the temple, the Jews demanded a sign of His authority. Jesus answered them: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). He was speaking of His own body, and, as John explains, "When he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word Jesus spoke" (2:22). But in neither place does John identify this Scripture, and it is impossible to infer which passage he had in mind (if, in fact, it was a single reference).

**Notes for preaching:** 1. The characteristically Lutheran account of salvation may be summed up in three words: death and resurrection. Of course, this bare statement amounts to nothing more than a slogan. To put it more fully, we can do no better than the Apology's explanation of God's alien and proper works: The two chief works of God in human creatures is to terrify and to justify the terrified, or make them alive (Ap XII.53 [Kolb and Wengert, eds.]).

Like all faithful theological reflection and confession, this theology finds its ultimate justification in Jesus Christ. Of course, all so-called Christian claims would *say* that they are grounded in Christ, and so such a justification always needs elaboration and argument. Lutherans, however, are able to justify their death and resurrection soteriology, first of all, by the story of Christ's death and resurrection, and then substantiate it further by showing that the apostles them-

selves followed it in their preaching of Christ as recorded in Acts (especially Peter's sermon on Pentecost), by showing how the death and resurrection pattern is in Christ's ministry, in the ministry of the apostles, and in the Old Testament, and by showing that the death and resurrection pattern is a central and pervasive motif in the way the Old and New Testaments speak about God's saving work.

2. John 20 shows that Christ's death and resurrection make up the occasion for the death and resurrection of Mary (see also vv. 11-18), Peter, John, and other disciples on the first day of the week (see also vv. 19-23), and Thomas (vv. 24-29). They did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead. Mary went to the tomb, expecting to find His body, and the disciples were in hiding, because they were afraid that they would suffer just as their teacher had. John's account, moreover, reinforces the utter surprise of Jesus' resurrection by pointing out that Mary thought Jesus had been taken, and also that, even when John believed that Jesus had been raised, he did not yet know that He had risen according to the testimony of Scripture (v. 9). This text authorizes preachers, who represent the risen Lord, to occasion the death and resurrection of their hearers.

3. The sermon might begin by observing the discord between the Easter service and the Easter Gospel lesson. The service is full of praise and joy, loud Alleluias, many flowers, joyous music. The resurrection Gospel according to St. John, on the other hand, has tones of frantic confusion, searching for a missing body and, even after believing, a lack of complete understanding. They did not yet understand the Scripture that Christ must rise from the dead. Reading on, we find that Peter and John went home (v. 10), and that Mary stayed on and cried (v. 11).

4. The sermon would then observe that this discord should lead us to ask: What are we doing here? Why are we singing these hymns? Why do we have all these flowers? Why are there so many people in the pews? This, in turn, allows the preacher to ask more pointedly: What are you doing here?

The validity of this question can be shown by noting the unbelief of Mary and the disciples. What were they doing there on that first Easter? Mary Magdalene went to the tomb on the first day of the week out of love and devotion to Jesus, and this showed her unbelief, because Jesus was supposed to be dead. Peter and John went to the tomb after Mary had come to them and this showed their unbelief, because Jesus was supposed to be in the tomb (It might also be pointed out that, even after all this and more [i.e., Jesus appearing to Mary], the disciples would be found hiding in a locked room, and this showed their unbelief, because Jesus was supposed to be dead and they were supposed to be next).

5. The sermon would next acknowledge that this is by no means the first Easter, that we are the New Testament people of God, living after the resurrection of the Lord and awaiting His return and the resurrection of all the dead. But this does not mean that we need not ask about ourselves. I would suggest that the sermon call into question supposedly good works like going to church. Those here out of sense of duty or habit should understand that Jesus' resurrection shattered Mary's sense of devotion. Those here looking for acceptance or understanding should understand that we are confronted here with Jesus Christ risen from the dead, which means that we are in the presence of the Son of God and the Lord of all. Indeed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the event that changes everything, and we would do well on this festival of the resurrection to take stock of how we relate to Jesus.

6. Time, of course, would not permit anything but one or two matters to be looked at. One suggestion would be to ask about how we relate to Jesus as the

Resurrection and the Life. The issues of health care and just war are two in which many Christians in the United States often seem no different than other citizens in their fear of suffering and death. This fear, however, indicates a lack of trust in Christ as the Resurrection and the Life, in whom we should locate our trust, even in the face of death.

But the resurrection of the Lord means that He really is the Resurrection and the Life, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the Son of God. All of our ideas of what is good or right will now be measured according to Him, whether we think it good or not. And even if we believe that we are in accord with Him on this matter, there are always other issues.

But this simply shows us once again that assurance of our place before the Lord can never rest on our own efforts and motives. How, then, can we rejoice in the Lord and His resurrection? When the Lord Himself regards us as His own and declares peace to us. This is what He did with Mary Magdalene (v. 16) and with the disciples (vv. 19, 21). Preachers are sent by Christ Himself to speak in His name, and the sermon would appropriately end by reminding hearers of this authority and proclaiming peace for their hearers.

Joel P. Okamoto

***Second Sunday of Easter***  
***John 20: 19-31***  
***April 3, 2005***

**Notes on the text:** 1. This pericope includes Jesus' first two appearances to the disciples after His resurrection, and it concludes with a succinct summary of the Gospel's purpose.

2. Jesus' first appearance to the disciples takes place on the evening of the first day of the week (v. 19). Early on that first day of the week (20:1), Mary Magdalene had gone to the tomb but found the stone removed and the tomb itself empty (vv. 1-2). After telling Peter and John that some unnamed persons had taken the Lord from the tomb, the disciples run to investigate. They indeed find it empty. The scene, however, gives no evidence of a grave robbery. They find the linen strips in which He had been wrapped still in the tomb, and the headcloth rolled up by itself. When John entered the tomb and saw this, he believed that Jesus had not been taken but had risen from the dead (v. 8).

The disciples then left, but Mary stayed behind. She still believes that Jesus' body has been taken away (v. 13). But the Lord appears to her and comforts her. He sends her to the disciples with this message: "I am going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (v. 17).

3. John may have believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, and Mary may have seen Him and reported His resurrection and His message to the disciples, but the disciples were not taking any chances. They still feared for their lives and had locked themselves in. It is not clear whether "disciples" (*mathetai*) refers specifically to members of the "Twelve" or to a wider circle of followers. In any case, Jesus appears in their midst. He greets them with a word of grace—"Peace be with you"—and He assures them that He is risen from the dead by showing His wounds.

Then He commissions them for service: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent (*apestalken*, from *apostello*) me, so I am sending (*pempo*) you." Moreover, Jesus gives the disciples the Spirit who had descended upon and remained with Him, a

descent and remaining that identifies Him as the Son of God (1:32-34), and whom He had promised them before His death (14:25-27; 15:26-27; 16:1-15), and He grants them authority to forgive and retain sins. The verbs *apostello* and *pempo* are used interchangeably in this Gospel and so can be read synonymously here. Christ speaks of Himself as sent by the Father using both verbs, sometimes in the same situation (e.g., see Jesus' confrontation with the Jews after healing the sick man on the Sabbath [chap. 5, especially vv. 19-38]; the Bread of Life discourse [6:29-59]; and Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles [7:14-36]). The commission itself reflects what Jesus had said before He was crucified: "As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world" (17:18; cf. 13:20).

4. Although John does not make it clear exactly who was present when Jesus first appeared to the disciples, he does make a point of explaining that Thomas was not among them. The report of Jesus' resurrection makes no impact on him. It takes the appearance of Jesus Himself to turn unbelief into belief (vv. 25, 27-28). Thomas confesses Jesus as "My Lord and my God." Jesus, however, does not commend him for his faith, but rather says: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (v. 29).

5. John takes Thomas's confession of faith and Christ's response about faith and moves to a fitting summary statement for the Gospel as a whole. Addressing those who have not seen, he explains: "These things have been written that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you have life in his name" (v. 31).

**Notes for preaching:** 1. John's account of Christ's resurrection appearances function as vindication of His claims about Himself and His work. "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Consequently, their significance is very broad, and certainly broader than that with which a preacher could deal in a sermon of, say, half an hour, and certainly broader than I can identify and discuss, even briefly, in a page or two. This problem, of course, is common. It is more acute, however, on occasions like Easter and Christmas, when the very identity of Jesus and the whole scope of His mission and work are involved. How might the preacher limit the range of a single sermon's discussion without appearing to be arbitrary?

One way would permit concerns and interests of the hearers to determine this range. This approach sometimes is justified as "seeking to be relevant" or "wanting to apply the text" to the hearers. But while these concerns are justified, an obvious danger with this approach is that one ends up interpreting Scripture according to, well, God only knows.

Dangers like this make the axiom "Scripture interprets Scripture" perennially relevant. But the axiom alone does little to address the original problem. Grasping this difficulty (perhaps intuitively) sometimes results in a different problem: taking "Scripture interprets Scripture" effectively to mean, "Biblical doctrine interprets Scripture." Of course, doctrinal formulations have legitimate uses in interpreting Scripture, and among them is the regulation of preaching and teaching. But doctrine is often used inappropriately when it is assumed to be the "meaning" of a text. This happens perhaps most commonly in Lutheran pulpits when the attempt to distinguish Law and Gospel is misunderstood and the sermon is an exercise in "discovering" the doctrines of Law and Gospel in a text (especially when one or the other doctrine is not there). Moreover, this is a particular danger with interpreting the Gospels, especially at landmark events such as Christ's birth, baptism, death, resurrection, and ascension. In our circles, it is common to inter-

pret such events in terms of the vicarious satisfaction. This happens when the point of a Christmas sermon depends on the explanation that the naming of Jesus, "because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21), is a literal prediction of Christ's sacrificial death. It would be much fairer to the Gospel according to Matthew to explain that Jesus died because He saved His people from their sins. This also happens in Easter season sermons on Gospel texts whose goal is to explain that Christ's resurrection shows us that God accepted Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

Dangers like this make this pithy statement perennially valuable: "the meaning of the doctrine is the story rather than the meaning of the story being the doctrine" (Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 126). Frei was not denying that doctrinal formulations emerge from reading, hearing, and using the story of Jesus Christ, but he was urging us to remember that such doctrines as the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas are meant to help us to read, hear, and use the Gospels properly.

Of course, John's statement about the Gospel's purpose may seem as if it is saying that the meaning of the story is indeed certain doctrines, above all, Trinitarian and Christological doctrines. After all, "these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." This statement (and the Gospel as a whole) is the reason **why** we confess that Jesus Christ is "of one substance with the Father" and **why** we confess that He is "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary." This statement (and the Gospel as a whole) is not, however, merely a statement of Christ's substantial unity with God or a statement of His personal union of two natures. To be sure, passages like John 20, in which Christ refers to God as "my God" and in which Thomas confesses Christ as "my Lord and my God," **demand** the kind of reflection that resulted in the Trinitarian dogma "that we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance." (Athanasian Creed) But it is one thing to acknowledge that it raises Trinitarian questions. It is quite another to view it as a narrative form of the answer to such questions.

2. Once again: the very identity of Jesus and the whole scope of His mission and work are involved. How might the preacher limit the range of a single sermon's discussion without appearing to be arbitrary? I would suggest that the sermon would key itself narrowly on Jesus' identity as Son of God, with the purpose of assuring hearers that their faith in Jesus is justified.

Such a sermon would assume that believing in Jesus as the Son of God and as the Way, the Truth, and the Life is often challenged today, and that many Christians are not always up to facing these challenges. Therefore it might begin by identifying and explaining some of these challenges. Moral relativism, which especially questions religiously grounded ethical claims, is one such challenge. Religious pluralism, which regards different religions as equally valid ways in which God may be known and believed in, is another.

The sermon then would point out that sometimes Christians in the United States often are not up to meeting such challenges head on. The bumper sticker that says: "God said it. I believe it. That settles it." amounts to a refusal to face the challenge. Although the Bible is indeed authoritative, an assertion of its authority is a very poor response to those who doubt the Bible's authority. It makes use of the Bible and faith in Jesus Christ look a matter of unthinking allegiance. The response, "Faith in Jesus Christ requires the work of the Holy Spirit," does no better.

To be sure, "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel...." But responding in this way to doubts about the Christian faith only makes faith in Christ look irrational.

3. Next the sermon would observe that challenges about the identity and authority of Jesus as Son of God are nothing new. In fact, the very shape of John's telling of the story of Jesus comes with the question "Who is Jesus?" and with the answer "He is the Son of God." The issue of Jesus' identity is clear from the *prologue*. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God, who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were made. The Word became flesh, and He reveals grace and truth and makes known the one true God whom no one has ever seen. This issue is clear in the way that John speaks about Jesus' *miracles*. John is careful to point out that they do not only show His power and authority. They are signs that reveal His divine glory. This issue is clear in the "I Am" sayings. This issue is clear in the way that Jesus speaks about Himself and His mission to save (see, e.g., John 3:16-21). Above all, the issue of Jesus' identity is what causes the conflict that results in His death. Zeal for His Father's house led Him to cleanse the temple and anger the Jews (3:13-22). It was not only healing on the Sabbath that provoked the Jews to want to kill Jesus, but also calling God "Father," making Himself equal to God (5:18). Jesus claimed, "Before Abraham was, I am," and the Jews wanted to stone Jesus for blasphemy (8:58-59). At the Feast of Dedication, Jesus says, "I and the Father are one," and the Jews picked up stones once again (10:30-31). When Pilate tells the Jews that he finds no guilt in Jesus, they explain that He has to die according to their law because He made Himself the Son of God (19:7). Jesus came speaking and acting as the Son of God, and no one believed in Him. Not only did His enemies kill Him, but also even His closest followers did not believe in Him. Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, Mary Magdalene expected to find His dead body, the disciples locked themselves in a room for fear of the Jews, and Thomas demanded living proof before he would believe in the resurrection of the Lord.

But Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. His body was not taken by grave robbers or His enemies, but raised to life. His resurrection vindicated His identity as the Son of God. His resurrection gave Mary, Peter, John, Thomas, and others an unmistakable and unshakable foundation for believing that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they would have life in His name.

4. Finally, the sermon might move to assure hearers of the rightness of their faith and strengthen their confidence in sharing the Good News about God's salvation through Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus did not rise and appear only for the sake of His followers then. Just as the Father had sent Him, so He sent them with the Spirit into the world (20:21-22) to testify to the truth (see especially 15:27-16:14; 17:1-26), to forgive and retain sins (20:23), and to care for His own (see especially 21:15-19). They carried out their mission in spoken word and, as John himself says explicitly, in written word (20:31; see also 21:24-25). Christians have not and do not pass along to their descendants and share with the world a set of legends or fables. But they testify to what God has done, most basically, how God has made Himself known and works all things through Jesus Christ, His Son, so that those present and all the world might have life in His name.

Joel P. Okamoto

**Third Sunday after Easter**  
**Luke 24:13-35**  
**April 10, 2005**

The disciples from Emmaus are famous characters in Christian preaching, pictures, poetry, and piety, and yet their exact identity is not known for certain. One was named Cleopas, and one guess is that he is the Clopas of John 19:25; the other is not named at all. But it can be (and has been) said that they are, in any case, much like us and act here as many of us often do—sad and bewildered, puzzled about the meaning of Easter and neglectful in the use of Scripture. This may help us to put ourselves in their place as we hear or read the story and to learn the lesson that the Lord gave to them. We are given a glimpse into their hearts.

***Slow Hearts, Burning Hearts***

I. Slow of heart to believe (v. 25).

- A. ***The heartache***—Cleopas and Disciple X had known that Jesus was a prophet mighty in word and deed, and hope had sprung up in them that He would be the Redeemer of Israel. But hope had died with Him. They had heard of a vision of angels, who said He was alive, and of the emptiness of the tomb, but He had not been seen. They lamented that it was now the third day of this grief, so that it seemed too late for hope to be revived—or perhaps they were thinking that He had promised to rise on the third day, and it was not happening. Doubting Thomas was not the only one afflicted with such failure of heart. As for us today, our sinful heart and flesh can also fall into doubt. As we face disappointments and frustrations, are we tempted to think that Christ is forever dead? Do we sometimes live as if He were still dead and buried, with lack of courage, absence of prayer and confidence, failure to believe and confess?
- B. ***The heart treatment***—The Lord came to the disciples on the road, and by some sort of miracle—not the grand miracle of Easter, but a miracle of love nevertheless—they were kept from recognizing Him. Thus we are treated to the wondrous irony of the disciples telling Jesus about Jesus and being amazed that He was so “uninformed.” Why did He do this? To demonstrate the profound truth of what He would say a week later: “Blessed are those who have not seen (the Risen Me) and yet have believed” (John 20:29). He wanted them to learn to believe in the way that is normal for the vast majority of His people—by the power of the Christ-affirming Word. He pointed them to the Messianic promises.

He called them “fools” (*anoetoi*, mindless) for not using their minds to pay attention to the prophetic words. But was He not going against His own pronouncement in the Sermon on the Mount: “Anyone who says, ‘You fool!’”—using a synonym, *moron*—“will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matt. 5:22)? Not at all. In the sermon He was denouncing words spoken in hateful anger, which are like murder. But on the road to Emmaus He was expressing loving concern that Cleopas and Anonymous were foolishly neglecting the source of comfort and encouragement which they sorely needed. The divine love which wants all people to come to the knowledge of the truth has no pleasure in the foolishness which drowns rather than takes

hold of the rope thrown out, which is hopeless because it will not use the anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19), which leaves a suicide note that says (as one really did): “To God I leave a soul that has forfeited His mercy.”

II. Hearts burning with faith and hope (v. 32).

- A. ***Fired by the Scriptures***—He explained what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. What an abundance He had to draw upon, such as Genesis 3:15; 22:18; Isaiah 7:14; 53:4-5; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9; and many more! He said that this meant that the Messiah must suffer and must then enter His glory (v. 26). Luke is noted for drawing attention to the “must” which Jesus saw framing His life and work (Luke 9:22; 17:25). This “must” flowed out of the prophecies of the Scriptures (Luke 22:37; 24:44), which revealed the divine master plan for the salvation of sinners. The realization that the death of the promised Prophet was not a tragic accident or failure, but was in fact the ordered carrying out of the plan of redemption, could not fail to make the disciples’ hearts burn with hope and joy. They now knew that His resurrection and glory must come to pass. May we also be so burned and warmed by the Christ-centered Scriptures, both the prophetic words and the apostolic writings now added to them.
- B. ***Fired by fellowship with the Christ***—The burning in the disciples’ hearts was reinforced and built up by the recognition of His presence, with them after all (v. 31). They could not rest till they had walked the seven miles back to Jerusalem to share the good news with the apostles there. (That’s how the glorious discovery moves God’s people!) The apostles also had good news to share with them (v. 34). And they were privileged to see the Risen Lord a second time that day (v. 36). Here we see the beautiful truth of the church’s fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3), in which its members continually live and are able to encourage each other with His Gospel and grace.

Fellowship with Christ, through which the membership of the church enjoys fellowship with each other, is also found in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor.10:16-17). Some have thought that the Emmaus disciples’ “breaking of bread” was the Holy Supper (vv. 30, 35). Others have thought that it was simply the sort of breaking of bread referred to in Lamentations 4:4, Mark 6:41, and Acts 27:35. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession treats this as an open question (Ap XXII, 22).

The hearts of believers today burn with faith, though we have not had the privilege of seeing the Risen Christ. “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Pet. 1:8).

Thomas Manteufel

***Fourth Sunday of Easter***  
***John 10:1-10***  
***April 17, 2005***

This is Good Shepherd Sunday, which is a favorite for many pastors and parishioners alike. Today’s Gospel reading is a continuation of chapter 9. Jesus continues to address the Pharisees, the thieves and robbers, who are after God’s

people. He addresses them through the parable of false shepherds versus the Good Shepherd.

In 10:1-5, Jesus tells the parable to the Pharisees in its entirety in a general way. He presents many different themes within these few verses, of which any one could be used for a sermon. However, Jesus unpacks some of these themes throughout the remainder of His confrontation with the Pharisees: the Gate (vv. 7-10) and the Good Shepherd (vv. 11-16). Although this is Good Shepherd Sunday, the appointed reading for the day ends at verse 10 with Jesus comparing Himself to “the gate.” The Good Shepherd reading that follows is the appointed text for next year. My suggestion would be to work “the gate” theme and save the “good shepherd” theme for next year.

**Textual notes:** For the context of today’s reading, read John 9. You can also refer to the *Homiletical Help* for February 27, 2005.

Jesus is addressing the Pharisees who have just kicked out of the synagogue the blind man whom Jesus healed. The Pharisees were not looking out for the interests of the people; but rather, they were fleecing God’s people as they looked out for their own interests. This man Jesus was threatening their livelihood.

Verses 1-2: The point of connection is between the Pharisees, who were seeking their own interests at the expense of God’s people and their souls, and Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd over God’s people as well as the Gate to the sheep. The thieves and robbers do not enter through the gate; but rather, they devise their own way into the sheep pen with the goal of slaughtering the sheep.

The Good Shepherd passes through the gate. He calls His own sheep. They are His property and He has ownership rights to them. The Good Shepherd also knows His flock. To Him the sheep are not simply one massive unit of sheep, but rather each one has its own identity and He knows them as such.

In regard to the “watchman” theme, this could be saved for a Bible study. The watchman is mentioned only here and then is dropped from further explanation throughout the parable.

Verse 6: The Pharisees did not understand. But how could they since they were not among Jesus’ sheep.

Verse 8: Jesus does not include John the Baptist or any other of God’s faithful prophets as “thieves and robbers.”

Verses 9-10: Jesus is the “gateway”—the only gateway—to salvation, security and support. There are no other gates which lead into the sheep pen.

***Suggested outline:***

- I. Many false shepherds seek to enter God’s flock in order to slaughter His sheep. They offer false hopes and lead people **away** from true salvation. These are false religions, false leaders, and false teachings which will only seek to serve themselves and do not have the welfare of God’s flock at heart.
- II. Jesus is the Gate for salvation and hope. He opened the way through His death on the cross and His victorious Easter resurrection.
- III. God brought you through the Gate of Salvation in Baptism. You are one of God’s sheep. He knows you by name. He has a one-on-one relationship with you.
- IV. Live your life soundly and securely in peace because Christ Jesus is the Guardian and Overseer of your soul (1 Pet. 2:25). He gives you life, and He gives it to you in abundance—today and forever.

Michael J. Redeker

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
**John 14:1-12**  
**April 24, 2005**

**Comments on the text:** The verb πιστεύετε appears twice in verse 1 and has been translated as if both instances are imperative or as if the first instance is declarative and the second imperative. Some English translations translate the first instance as an imperative but in the footnotes provide the option of taking the verb in the declarative sense. The translation of the verb as an imperative in both instances implies that Jesus is calling the disciples to believe in both God and in Himself. To translate the first instance as a declarative and the second as an imperative implies that Jesus is inviting the disciples to move up, as it were, from faith in God to faith in both God and Himself. The translation of the two instances as an imperative seems to be supported by Jesus' conversation with Philip (14:8-10) and by the doubt evidenced by the disciples after Christ's resurrection. The two instances of the verb in John 14:11 are both imperative.

The words καὶ ἐὰν πορευθῶ (v. 3) have been translated "And if I go" by NASB, NIV, NRSV, ESV, and others. The NLT and Rienecker/Rogers prefer the use of "when" instead of "if." The CEV uses "after." The words "when" and "after" appear to make Jesus' words more definite.

The combination ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ appears only here in the Gospel according to John and nowhere else in the New Testament.

***"Where Do We Go from Here?"***

The events reported in the text took place before the crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Jesus was preparing His disciples for what was soon to take place. Earlier Simon Peter had asked Jesus, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterwards" (The direct quotations in this study are from the ESV).

We are on this side of the events of Passion Week and the Resurrection of our Lord. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. We, however, do not know what the Lord has in store for us in the future. We do not know whether we will die before the return of our Lord or be among those who will be on earth at the time of His return. Several questions come to mind. Where do we go from here? How do we get there? What does our Lord want us to do until then?

Through the text our Lord provides us with words intended to instruct, comfort, and challenge. "In my Father's house/home are many rooms/dwelling places. I am going to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Jesus does not reveal a specific time for His return but says that He will come for His disciples (past and present) and take them to Himself when everything is ready.

While the thought of rooms and dwelling places provides comfort to many, Jesus includes further words of comfort. "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3). An essential component of heaven is "being with the Lord." Saint Paul understood this. In his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul wrote that after the Lord had gathered His people, they would meet Him in the air, "And so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

Thomas spoke not only for himself but also for us. "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Our Lord answered Thomas—and also

us—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

This claim of Jesus to be the only way to the Father is challenged by many religious views which present alternate ways to eternal life. Also, some regard the claim as contrary to the spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness. As Christians we are faced with a challenge and a decision. We need to join Saint Peter who said, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; cf. also Rom. 10:9, 12).

"Meanwhile" as Jesus' disciples of the twenty-first century we await our Lord's "upward call." We are challenged to believe and to confess that Jesus Christ is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" through the words of our lips and the actions of our lives. We are to comfort the bereaved. We ourselves are to derive comfort from the promises of the text. Jesus tells us where we are going and how to get there. We can depend on the promise of Jesus Christ that He will come and take us to be with Him.

Arthur F. Graudin

## ***“On the reading of many books...”***

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?: *Hungering for God in an Affluent Culture*. By Arthur Simon. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. 192 pages. Paper. \$11.99.

*How Much Is Enough?* challenges us to take an honest look at our habits of acquisition and to make some decisions about “enough.” But the subtitle takes us even deeper. Simon does not aim merely to expose the life of affluence, but to lead the reader into a hungering for God. He sets forth that hungering with sensitivity and evangelical fervor, demonstrating that as Christians struggle against the insidious pressures of our culture, they have the resources that God provides—the Word, the Christian community, and prayer—to live the counter-culture life of discipleship in Christ.

Simon develops his themes in language both Biblical and current. In the early chapters he writes of “the seductive power of possessions” and of “mammon.” Mammon means not only money but the whole complex of material wealth, possessions, pleasure, and power. These things themselves are not bad, but the desire for these things is addictive. The life given to acquisition defines the person’s identity: people with “fat wallets and empty lives.” But God has cloaked us in a new identity by our Baptism, having rescued us for the earthly purpose of praise to God and service to Him and to His creation.

The discussion of “three craved idols,” money, pleasure, and power, in chapters five through seven develop the Law-Gospel dichotomy in vital terms. Material things are God’s gifts. “The biblical case against mammon is not against possessions as such, but against possessions gaining control of us. It is our attachment, our submission to them, that is idolatrous” (66). When “having” becomes an obsession and provides our security, mammon has become the master, displacing God as the giver and caregiver. Under the Gospel, however, mammon becomes “a magnificent servant” for generosity to the poor, pleasure reverts to its place in the enjoyment of life in God, and power transforms to servant power for doing good.

The book title “How Much Is Enough?” heads chapter nine. We are tempted to think that having “just a little bit more” will make us happier, but studies show that affluence does not make people happier. Instead, affluence competes for the role of security in people’s lives, and failing in that, leads to anxiety. Trust in God as the giver, who gives “enough,” brings happiness and contentment. Here, Simon suggests a kind of standard to help individuals and families make decisions about particular expenditures—whether this expenditure will enable us to live more fully for God and people in need. He is quick to add that there is no pat answer for a person or family as they decide about expenditures.

The writing is carefully nuanced throughout. On the question of the idols of money, pleasure, and power, the author notes that both “rich” and “poor” are liable to seduction (although as Scripture repeatedly warns, the rich are especially vulnerable). In discussing consumerism, he recognizes that consumption fuels the capitalistic engine of growth which in turn produces jobs and increases wages. Our capitalistic system has devised ways of distributing wealth, notably through free public education and through taxes. Still capitalism has “grave defects.” It needs to be tamed and guided, for despite growing wealth, much of the world remains in poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor, even in our country, continues to widen. God rejoices in bounty for His creatures. He calls us to the task of working

for better distribution of that bounty.

The task of better distributing God's bounty comes into sharp focus in chapter eleven under "Love and Justice." Simon shows that both the Old Testament prophets and Jesus link love to justice. We may give to meet the needs of our neighbors, but love does not stop there. Love calls for public justice. We must live out the gift of righteousness in Christ through a life of practicing love and justice, not only in our private lives but also in the public sphere. Government, too, is a gift of God. We are to see our role as citizens as an opportunity to strive for greater justice for the poor in our country and around the world. (Here, Simon makes passing reference to Bread for the World—the premier lobbying group against hunger—of which he served as the founding director and continues as president emeritus.)

The final three chapters spell out ways to nourish and celebrate the life of discipleship. Simon suggests: (1) "Saying 'yes' to life," even as God says "Yes" to us echoing His "very good" upon creation; (2) focusing on filling ourselves with the goodness of Christ which frees the heart to love and serve; (3) seeking "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" that produces a life of praise and thanksgiving.

A Postscript provides "a few suggestions," nineteen in number, designed to help meet the underlying need "for people of faith to grasp that faith more fully and to follow Christ more devoutly" (183). By this time the reader is well aware that the author himself is highly disciplined in the many facets of Christian life which he walks through with us, and always admitting in a gracious and sometimes humorous way his own shortcomings.

Some readers will be acquainted with the book *Grace at the Table* co-authored by Simon and David Beckman (Paulist Press, 1999). Readers should know that *How Much Is Enough?* is not a mere updating of the earlier volume whose sub-title shows its focus on "Ending Hunger in God's World." The sub-title of the present volume demonstrates its focus on another hunger—a hungering for God.

It happens that the reviewer was a seminary roommate of Art Simon, also a Lutheran pastor. I am proud to commend this book as a "tract for our times." Simon dissects the heart of our American culture and our deep involvement with it, he calls us to resist cultural trends, and he encourages us to find renewal in the life offered in Christ. Preachers and other ministerial workers will find it a great resource for preaching and teaching. Both they and laypersons will find challenge, encouragement, and help for Christian life renewal. Educators may well include it in a bibliography for a course on Christianity and American culture. Persons on the fringe of the Christ-life may find its message calling them back into the community of praise and prayer that the author advocates so engagingly.

Maynard W. Dorow  
Arden Hills, MN

THE WORD OF GOD IN ENGLISH: *Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation*. By Leland Ryken. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002. 336 pages. Paper. \$15.99.

This book is a fair, scholarly "quest to find the right principles of [Bible] translation and to compare how well various translations lived up to those principles" (287).

Ryken, a professor of English at Wheaton College who served as literary stylist for the ESV, asks "what principles should govern what we do with written texts" especially as they are translated (9-10). He concludes that a formal equivalent or

essentially “literal theory of translation” is best. His conclusion goes against the grain of the prevailing theory of Bible translation—that of “dynamic equivalence.” “Formal equivalency” means that one translates the Bible giving greatest attention to the original Greek and Hebrew texts. “Dynamic equivalency” attempts to translate the Bible on a “thought for thought” basis. Its guiding principles give greater weight to the receptor language rather than to the original languages of the Bible, greater attention to the translator’s interpretations of the text, and greater attention to the modern reader’s response rather than to the author’s original words. The theory of dynamic equivalency has similarities to the postmodern idea that words have no true given meaning, but only the meaning that one chooses to give them.

Translated texts that do not correspond to the actual words of the original author are “corrupted text” (28). Ryken applies his concern about corrupted texts to Bible translation. What is needed is “an actual text, not an inferred or hypothetical text” of the Bible. Dynamic equivalency often gives the reader of the Bible in English words and ideas other than what God gave the original authors (147). “Dynamic equivalent translators consistently run the risk of having ‘replaced God’s word with their own’” (166). For Ryken, dynamic equivalency contains within itself a “fatal flaw” which leads him to conclude that though dynamic equivalency “aimed for clarity” it has unfortunately “produced confusion” (195).

Ryken is concerned that dynamic equivalency attacks the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, lessens the authority of the Bible, and destabilizes the text of Scripture for the English-speaking world. After all, if the Bible can be so easily translated, re-translated, and expressed in many different and conflicting ways, how can it be authoritative? (123-138, 199-228). The reviewer has experienced this conflict when several students in his Catechism class reported that one of their teachers had dismissed the Bible because of the many conflicting translations. Conflicting translations of the same passage served as evidence to that teacher that the Bible was simply another book of myth and fairy tale.

Ryken emphasized the idea that “literature incarnates its meaning and ideas in concrete form” (159). There is a parallel here to the Word of God enfleshed in its written form and the Word of God made flesh in Christ’s incarnation. Ryken wrestles with the interrelationship of style and substance, form and meaning in Bible translation, a debate that has ties to the conflicts over style and substance in worship services.

Ryken is concerned that dynamic equivalent translations modernize the Bible, creating a loss of the world of the original text (173-186). Though Ryken does not make this point, a removal of the world of the original text of the Bible is like removing *Huck Finn* and other books from schools because they contain words common to the age when they were written, or display social customs that are no longer “politically correct.” To remove period piece literature from the Bible is to give us something other than God’s Word.

Ryken also expresses concern that modern translations make it difficult to memorize individual passages and whole sections of the Bible because they lack rhythm and flow (268, 284). This reviewer experienced such reality while serving his vicarage in Chicago. Inner city kids with reading difficulties easily and quickly memorized KJV Bible passages because they had style, rhythm, and flow, but kids given a modern version had difficulty memorizing because the modern version lacked such characteristics.

Dynamic equivalent translations specifically target unbelievers and/or those

with limited reading ability. This impoverishes those who have grown and matured as Christians. They continue to receive baby formula rather than the meat and potatoes God desires them to have (Heb. 5:12-6:3).

Dynamic equivalency emphasizes many factors which include readability, the modern age, the modern reader, how the Biblical authors would supposedly express themselves today, the idea that the Bible is a simple book (one without complexity), and that if there is complexity, that it is the fault of the translation or translator. Dynamic equivalent translators believe that the Bible “needs correction” (74-75). There is also the belief that “all translation is interpretation” (85-91). Ryken addresses these faulty ideas and more (67-119). Ryken questions the push for “readability” if it comes at the expense of what the original text really says. Such readability deceives the reader into thinking that the words and interpretations of the translator or editor are really the words of Scripture. Interpretation is not really the function of Bible translators. For people to correctly interpret the Bible, it needs to be accurately translated.

One item Ryken did not deal with is the question of which Greek text should be the basis of one’s Bible translation—the “Byzantine/Received Text” (KJV, NKJV) or the supposedly “older text—the Alexandrine” (NIV, NIVI, NRSV, ESV), except by a passing reference to this debate on page 284. There is great need to investigate whether the ideas currently in vogue about the “best” Greek text are really giving us the best Greek text or not. Works by Letis, Radmacker, Hodges, Robinson and others have raised this question, which needs diligent study and debate before our Synod picks another “official” Bible translation.

The NIV received especially low marks in Ryken’s book, appearing in almost every bad example of dynamic equivalency even though the NIV is a more moderate example of that genre.

As our Synod wrestles with what Bible translation to use in our new hymnal, future catechisms, pew Bibles, etc., this book is required reading. Hopefully it will engender spirited debate on translation theory and a renewed study of the Greek text families on which translations are based. This needs to be done so that we will continue to have “the Word of God in English,” not the words of human beings. Thus English Bible readers will continue to clearly see Christ and His saving words and work, not the words and work of human beings.

Armand J. Boehme  
Waseca, MN

UNDER THE INFLUENCE: *How Christianity Transformed Civilization*. By Alvin J. Schmidt. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. 423 pages. Cloth. \$24.99.

One can state the primary and secondary theses of Alvin Schmidt’s book succinctly. First, in virtually every sphere of human endeavor, Biblical Christianity has been a positive, constructive influence. Second, civilization continues to live off of the cultural capital of Christianity even when its impact is no longer recognized or acknowledged. Finally, many of today’s societal ills can be attributed to the abandonment or even the repudiation of Christianity’s leavening results.

Happily, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the first of the foregoing theses is the *raison d’être* of Professor Schmidt’s book and the one for which he presents the strongest case. Topically arranged in fifteen chapters, the book casts an exceedingly wide cultural net, with each chapter exploring a distinct subject. While every

reviewer will bring different interests to his or her task, I profited most from the chapters on the “sanctification” (here roughly understood as valuing and/or protection) of all human life, the status the Christian Gospel gave to women, and the role of Christianity in the abolition of slavery. These topics seem to be the ones for which the author has the best documentation and that lend themselves most to a narrative presentation.

Indeed, the last comment about narrative presentation should not be taken as a negative judgment about the other chapters of the book. While the chapters do vary in quality (e.g., the chapter on science was very helpful to me, and the chapter on music less so), the book is constructed so that one does not have to read it cover-to-cover or “all at once.” Readers can look for a particular topic, begin there, and be able to pick up the basic argument and infer the connections the author would have them make. The internal cross-referencing is helpful in this regard.

At the same time, the wide scope of Schmidt’s study is both a strength and weakness of the book. On the one hand, seemingly no topic is left uncovered, so curious readers will assuredly find much to interest them. On the other hand, no author can be an equal authority on so many different—frankly, divergent—topics. As a result, the book occasionally relies quite heavily on secondary sources, often the same ones from chapter to chapter, and some of the secondary sources are exceedingly old (e.g., he cites F. V. N. Painter’s *Luther on Education* from 1889 and does not use Marilyn Harran’s *Martin Luther: Learning for Life* from 1997—both of which are Concordia Publishing House titles).

In addition, Professor Schmidt could have been better served by his editor(s). Primary sources are often given in the body of the text, but sometimes they are in the chapter endnotes. Occasionally, the prose reads as an awkward concatenation of secondary source quotations. Finally, the too frequent polemical references to multiculturalism, political correctness, relativism, and secularism detract from rather than enhance his arguments. To be sure, Schmidt has addressed such topics more extensively in his other writings, but here they are often dropped in with little or no elaboration, clarification, or nuance. In many instances, his indictments are probably correct, but sometimes these kinds of dismissive charges leave the reader puzzled (e.g., on page 259, the awkward discussion of affirmative action laws nullifying the rights of the individual).

These caveats notwithstanding, Alvin Schmidt has given the church a book that belongs in the libraries of pastors and their parishes. Scholars can use the book with profit too, but they will often want to confirm Schmidt’s judgments with primary texts and more current secondary resources.

David A. Lumppp  
St. Paul, MN

THE SEED-PLANTING CHURCH: *Nurturing Churches to Health*. By Waldo Werning. St. Charles: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003. Paper. \$12.00.

This valuable book is on “changing church leaders from maintenance harvesters to nurturing seed-planters, and members from donors to disciples.” The author makes a very purposeful use of seed planting in nature to stress the urgent need for the church to follow these principles to properly and effectively carry out its crucial Biblical purpose and plan.

In his introduction, the author states, “The Seed-Planting Church reveals and

unveils the failure of 80% of churches to recognize and change their dysfunctional condition which the scriptures show to be unacceptable” (15). “God’s design is a biblical model. It is the organic, natural body of Christ. It becomes a ‘community of faith’ church. It is led by ordinary gifted leaders who adopt a missional seed-planting model in the place of a maintenance harvest style of the church” (17).

Chapter 3 stresses that God expects His church to plant seeds and nurture His field. The spiritual formation of the church and its members is shaped by a proper, ongoing purposeful use of God’s Word.

Chapter 4 carefully defines the dimensions of an organic church: (1) Defined by its planting and nurturing; (2) Driven by the Gospel of Jesus Christ; (3) Developed by the Seed as food and water; (4) Directed by the Great Commission; (5) Distinguished by its Biblical “delivery system.”

Then defined is the divine system of “disciple making.” God calls His people to salvation, growing in faith, and living the faith. On the basis of grace and the spiritual gifts He gives them, they are to grow and effectively share the faith. Crucial in this is the role of church leaders to properly fulfill their God-given purpose of preparing people to grow in the unity of faith and spiritual maturity and also lovingly speak the truth of faith to others. It is crucial to remember that every believer is involved in the ministry of sharing their faith.

The ongoing need is proper change in understanding and living their faith in stewardship activities. The writer carefully includes the great difference between traditional stewardship based on maintenance and needs and Biblical stewardship based on grace and proper education. Crucial in this is following Paul’s six-teen principles of stewardship giving based on 2 Corinthians 8-9.

The writer also lists six Biblical and practical reasons for believers to give offerings from their income. He notes that Jesus emphasized nine principles to follow the crucial priority to “put God first.” Crucial is the ongoing offering of a repentant heart through the Holy Spirit’s work. He also lists basic stewardship principles.

The seed-planting, nurturing church cares for all members of the church. This includes seeking to reclaim and care for the weak. A healthy church also uses quality control systems. Included is a graph of a “purpose-driven church.” Also included is a graph of the Christian life development process for members and leaders moving from membership to missions to transform a congregation to a Biblical model.

Chapter 8 stresses that leaders led by faith are crucial for the growing faith and health of their church and congregation. They will experience a variety of battles. They understand the nature of the battle and, through the Spirit’s work, know that it is won on their knees. They also reject negative words from themselves and others. They rely confidently on the guidance and strength that God gives them. They remember that God called them and gives them the faith, character, and heart to lead.

Included in the book is an invaluable personal discipleship inventory on public commitment, lifestyle, witness, care, finance, and stewardship. This book on “the seed-planting church” is an extremely helpful resource for every pastor and congregation and worthy of ongoing careful study in purposefully growing in understanding of the true nature and mission of the church.

Erich H. Kiehl

SHOW THEM NO MERCY: *Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*. C. S. Cowles, Eugene H. Merrill, Daniel L. Gard, and Tremper Longman III. Edited by Stanley N. Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. 218 pages. Paper. \$18.95.

Shock and outrage were two of the most prominent reactions to the events of September 11, 2001. Yet those even casually acquainted with the Old Testament are aware that there is some correspondence between the Muslim *jihad* and the Old Testament idea of *herem*. There are roughly sixty battle accounts from the Exodus to 586 B.C. in which Israel is involved in some kind of war, and about one-fourth of these contain clear references to what scholars label *herem*, or “Yahweh War.” But if genocide and ethnic cleansing are morally wrong in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries A.D., was it also wrong in the fifteenth or thirteenth centuries B.C.? Put another way, how are the atrocities of our day that are done in the name of religion different from the slaughter of Canaanite men, women, and children prisoners of war that we read about in the Old Testament? And even more pressing, how could this God command such slaughter, especially since in the New Testament Jesus commands believers to love and pray for enemies?

These questions present a moral dilemma for Christian readers of the Old Testament and evoke another set of queries. How should we apply the Old Testament Yahweh wars? Should a wedge be placed between the Old and New Testaments in order to preserve the integrity of both? Can there be a connection between these ancient accounts of God’s people Israel and the image of God as Savior so prevalent in the Gospels?

In this book, four evangelical scholars wrestle with these questions. C. S. Cowles, a Nazarene who teaches at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, CA, argues for radical discontinuity between the wars of the Old Testament and the message of Jesus in the New. Eugene Merrill, a dispensationalist who teaches at Dallas Theological Seminary, makes the case for moderate discontinuity. Daniel Gard, an Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, puts forth a position for eschatological continuity. Finally, Tremper Longman, a conservative Presbyterian who teaches at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA, argues for spiritual continuity.

Cowles, in his case for radical discontinuity, argues that if God really strikes out in genocidal violence, then this “poisons the well of all his other attributes” (18). He makes the claim that the Old Testament is a document of Israel’s history and only secondarily an authoritative document for the church. He thus sees Israel’s Great Commission as one of annihilation, as opposed to the New Testament’s mission of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. That is to say, “What Jesus introduced was an entirely new way of looking at God” (29). In short, he views the holy war texts of the Old Testament as “pre-Christ, sub-Christ and anti-Christ” (36).

The critique of this view is that—if not in theory, then in practice—Cowles almost de-canonizes three-fourths of the Bible. He also overlooks the fact that if “Yahweh is a Man of War” (Ex. 15:3), then so is Jesus who “judges and makes war,” who is “dressed in a robe dipped in blood,” and from whose mouth “comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations” (Rev. 19:11-15). The revelation of Jesus in the New Testament is no less violent than the revelation of Yahweh in the Old Testament.

The other three scholars—Merrill, Gard, and Longman—distance themselves from Cowles and argue for greater continuity between the testaments in their understanding of Yahweh war. They do so because at its root, Yahweh war is a

battle against spiritual darkness and wickedness in realms that transcend the human and earthly (cf. Gen. 3:15; Job 1:6-12; 2:2-6; Eph. 6:10-18; Col. 2:13-15). The paradigmatic Song of the Sea ought to be understood in these terms, for it not only celebrates Yahweh's triumph over Pharaoh and his armies (Ex. 15:1, 4-5), but also has clear overtones of an even more profound and significant victory. It is one over every competing deity real or imaginary. "Who among the gods is like you, O Yahweh? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). Pharaoh and Egypt become ciphers for Satan and his kingdom, hence "in, with and under" the Canaanite nations are the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). Such enemies cannot be pacified—they must be destroyed. Merrill summarizes this part of the discussion in these words:

The issue, then, cannot be whether or not genocide is intrinsically good or evil—its sanction by a holy God settles that question. Rather, the issue has to do with the purpose of genocide, its initiator, and the particular circumstances of its application. . . biblical genocide was part of a Yahweh-war policy enacted for a unique situation, directed against a certain people, and in line with the character of God himself, a policy whose design is beyond human comprehension but one that is not, for that reason, unjust or immoral. Those very limitations preclude any possible justification of modern genocide for any reason (95).

In his emphasis on an eschatological continuity between the testaments, Gard aptly states, "The great and final *herem* will be imposed not by the church but by the Lord of the church. Thus vengeance belongs to the Lord" (138). Surprisingly absent in his discussion—which is based in large part on 1 and 2 Chronicles—is any discussion on Ezekiel's Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38-39), as well as other prophetic texts that speak of Yom Yahweh, as well as Daniel 7, Zechariah 14, and Isaiah 59:17. His case would be more convincing if he would have expanded the argument beyond the writings of the Chronicler to include how the prophets view Yahweh fighting sometimes for and sometimes against His people.

This reviewer found Longman's analysis the most penetrating. He begins by noting that the term *herem* is notoriously difficult to translate. It may be translated "banned" or "devoted things" and refers to plundered items and people captured during the course of holy war. Moreover, the root *hrm* in Hebrew has the idea of both destruction and separation or devotion, with both nuances occurring together in some passages. Yet at the heart of *herem* warfare is the presence of Yahweh with the army. Where Yahweh is present there is worship—thus *herem* is shaped largely by this fact. Therefore, the Israelite soldier had to be spiritually prepared and offer sacrifices to Yahweh before the battle could begin. For example, Psalm 149:6-7 states: "May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples." Prayer, sacrifice, and celebration all accompanied the waging of war in ancient Israel. Why? Because, as Longman argues convincingly, *herem* was a spiritual undertaking.

*Show Them No Mercy* is the thirteenth in the Counterpoint Series created by Zondervan (other titles include *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?—Four Views on Hell—Three Views on Creation and Evolution*). After reviewing the most recent book in this series, I would venture to say that most, if not all, would serve as excellent adult Bible study resources. But specifically, in *Show Them No Mercy*, the pastor

will have material that is theologically conservative, culturally relevant, and spiritually edifying. A must read during these days of terrorism.

Reed Lessing

GALATIANS/EPHESIANS. By J. P. Koehler. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2001. 536 pages. Cloth. \$31.99.

John P. Koehler, who lived 1859-1951 and served for many years as a professor at the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary (then in Wauwatosa, now Thiensville/Mequon, Wisconsin), wrote these commentaries in 1909 (in German). The English translations of both commentaries were originally published serially in *Faith-Life*, a periodical of the so-called Protestant Conference. Galatians (translated by Elmer Sauer) appeared in 1949 and 1950; Ephesians (translated by Sauer and Gerhard Ruediger) appeared from 1957 through 1961. Northwestern Publishing House published Galatians in book form in 1957. The present volume of 2001 reprints Galatians and also includes Koehler's Ephesians commentary. In this new edition, the Greek New Testament text is also included.

As Professor Ralph Gehrke points out in his preface to Galatians (1957), Koehler originally wrote the commentaries for his seminary students as a sort of study guide. Therefore, there are no footnotes and no bibliography. Hence, the reader cannot trace the many commentaries and exegetes to which Koehler refers. This will diminish the value of this book for the scholarly reader. The publisher of the present volume has continued this lack of specificity with regard to sources by including an English Bible translation (AV?) with certain "Elizabethan forms" slightly updated to more contemporary English. Likewise, there is no indication as to which Greek New Testament text is being cited.

In spite of these weaknesses, it becomes apparent to the reader that Professor Koehler has carefully studied the original Greek text of Galatians and Ephesians, and that he was well acquainted with the scholarly discussion of this book in his day (albeit ca. 1910). His love for exegesis as the *regina* of all the theological disciplines is apparent. Although the terms "historical critical" and "historical grammatical" were not used in his time, Koehler agrees with these methods insofar as he always strove to understand the author of the books of the New Testament in the context of the times (language, culture, historical backgrounds, etc.).

If the book is read with the realization that Koehler wrote almost a century ago, one can glean many theological nuggets from the book, both in methodology and content. The book also represents a particular part of Lutheran history, in that it gives an insight into the theology of a group of German Lutherans who ultimately developed into the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod of today.

Koehler's skill in summarizing a section of a book of the New Testament with deep theological insight is seen, for example, in the following words:

In Ephesians one finds every particle of the doctrine of salvation concisely expressed or faintly alluded to, always phrased in general and all-comprehending expressions intended for the mature reader so that there is nothing one may think of concerning the message of salvation that does not find its proper place in this letter. And then pervading the entire masterpiece is the deep emotion, which at the same time befits every festive or other solemn occasion (357).

It is apparent that this book, though written long ago, can still be read with great profit today.

Merlin D. Rehm  
Bronxville, NY

ISAIAH 40-66, THE PEOPLE'S BIBLE. By John A. Braun. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2001. 407 pages. Paper. \$16.99.

This is a continuation of Braun's commentary on Isaiah 40-66 (see my review in *Concordia Journal*, January 2003, page 111). As such, it is again intended for the educated lay person rather than for the scholar. Consequently, there are no references to secondary literature (other than to Luther), and there is no bibliography. The lay readership that Braun expects perhaps explains his use of "Jehovah" rather than "Yahweh" as the name for God.

Once again, the author acknowledges a tripartite division of the book of Isaiah, and the separate publication of his commentary on chapters 40-66 underscores this fact. (He includes a short excursus on the Third Isaiah question on pages 262-263.) Nevertheless, he is fervent in maintaining that chapters 40-66 were written by the same prophet as chapters 1-39, namely, Isaiah of Jerusalem, in the late eighth century B.C.

Because Braun stresses so strongly that chapters 40-66 are written by Isaiah, he downplays the actual historical background for these chapters, namely, the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. His strong Christological emphasis leads him to leapfrog from Isaiah's day to the time of Christ without discussing that these prophecies were also meant to give hope to the Jews that they would be restored to the land from which they came.

That being said, Braun cannot be faulted for seeing that the main message for the Christian reader is to see how the book pertains to Jesus Christ. He carries this out especially in his comments on the so-called Servant Songs. After discussing the various possibilities, Braun each time concludes: "Little doubt can remain that the one intended in these verses is Jesus Christ" (61).

The book uses the NIV translation (which is printed out in the text) as the basis for discussion. Braun, however, does not follow it slavishly but on occasion points out translation difficulties. In general, the book is well written and easy to follow. In a day when many commentaries on Isaiah see very little, if any, reference to Christ, Braun's forthright Christ-centered approach will be appreciated by many.

Merlin D. Rehm  
Bronxville, NY

UNDERSTANDING OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS: *Approaches and Exploration*.

By John Barton. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003. 212 pages. Paper. \$19.95.

There are only three full-length studies on ethical issues in the Old Testament: Johannes Hempel's *Das Ethos des Alten Testaments* (1938), Walther Eichrodt's excursus in his *Theology of the OT* (1967), and, most recently, Eckart Otto's *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments* (1994). In his collection of essays that have appeared in a variety of other publications now gathered into this one volume,

Barton holds that these three studies are hampered by at least two weaknesses. First, these studies focus upon Pentateuchal laws to the exclusion of other sections in the Old Testament, specifically prophecy. Second, they emphasize the “theonomy” model of ethics to the exclusion of “natural law.”

In Barton’s first essay, he lays the foundation for the subsequent discussion. He notes that in Mesopotamian religion, people were created from the blood of a god who represented chaos and guilt. Thus they bore within themselves elements of a life bound to failure. This negative anthropology was linked to a pessimistic idea of the aim of human life, whose purpose was to relieve gods who had become guilty of the burden of work. Work as the object of human life was seen as a punishment for the guilt of these gods. How different things are in the Old Testament! Basic to Barton’s thesis is that human beings are not God’s puppets in a theater whose audience is other divine beings with their own concerns to which humans are irrelevant. Rather, they are partners with the single God in the only drama God is interested in, the drama played out on earth. This concept gives the human race both a greater glory and a greater responsibility than it usually had in the cultures that surrounded Israel.

Barton then identifies three foundational ideas for Old Testament ethics: obedience to God’s revealed will, conformity to a pattern of natural order, and the imitation of God. It is in the second area that Barton’s discussion on ethics in the prophets, especially Amos and Isaiah, breaks new ground. For example, Isaiah’s famous, “The ox knows his owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but Israel does not know” (1:3), while certainly implying a special relationship of Yahweh with Israel which is based upon covenant, lays its primary emphasis on the unnaturalness of Israel’s rebellion, which is seen as standing in sharp contrast to the purely instinctive natural reactions of animals. In stressing this idea of “natural law,” Barton does not mean that Israelite culture knew about the Western natural law tradition with all its refinements. Rather, he holds that the term reflects ethical ideas that are known by all people. His thesis is that natural law is not just in wisdom literature but also permeates classical prophecy.

At the heart of this book is Barton’s interaction between Amos’ Oracles in chapters 1 and 2 and his understanding of natural law. He suggests that Amos appeals to a kind of natural law about international conduct which he believed to be self-evidently right. And if the validity of moral rules governing the conduct of the nations is, in fact, presupposed by Amos, then it follows that he is invoking common ethical principles, or supposed by him to be common, to all humankind. This is sometimes called “international law”—in the sense not of an internationally agreed upon code but of the divine, revealed law obligatory for all humankind, whether or not they accept it. It follows that in Amos 1-2 the nations are condemned because they have offended the holy will of Yahweh, which is valid for all people. That is, Israel’s neighbors are not denounced for sins which they could not have been expected to recognize as such (e.g., Torah observance), but rather for “crimes against humanity.” Put another way, Amos preaches against the nations not simply because of their disobedience to God, but more so for failing to follow the dictates of their own moral sense.

If this idea of natural law undergirds Amos, Isaiah, and much of the Hebrew Bible, then it is reasonable to ask which Hebrew vocable best articulates the concept (e.g., the Egyptian term *ma’at*). Barton argues that perhaps the closest Hebrew word would be *sedāqa*, for in some contexts the term does seem to be equivalent to “natural law.”

Lutheran theology's focus on the second and third articles has resulted in the loss of this first article idea. The monumental influence of Karl Barth's radical distinction between natural revelation and Biblical revelation (to the degree that he looked unfavorably upon Romans 1, Acts 17 and wisdom literature) has also brought further neglect of this idea.

The attempt is made—and I believe convincingly—to show that the natural-law tradition which has played a prominent role in Western moral philosophy and theology has roots not only (as is universally acknowledged) in the classical world but also in the Hebrew prophets. This means—as William Whedbee has held since the early 1970s—that the prophets echo many ideas from the wisdom tradition. I would further summarize Barton's work in this way: natural law and divine law are two ways by which ethics flow from Yahweh and are not to be opposed as radical opposites.

Reed Lessing

PREACHING CHRIST IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE. By Edward P. Clowney. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003. 189 pages. Paper. \$15.99.

The title intrigued me. That's why I volunteered to review *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*. Now that I have read the book, I give the author (Dr. Clowney, Professor Emeritus of Westminster Theological Seminary) an "A" for his aspiration and a "B" for his accomplishment.

Certainly, Dr. Clowney's goal is a worthy one: to see Christ in all of Scripture and then to proclaim that Christ in all our preaching. That approach, if successful, is the obvious antidote to the moralistic preaching that still abounds in contemporary Christian denominations. That approach is equally an antidote to the more subtle malady of emphasizing textual preaching over Gospel preaching, a practice in which the preacher feels he does God service by preaching the text, the whole text and—nothing but the text. Textual preaching is, of course, a homiletical virtue—but not if it results in the exclusion or diminution of the Gospel. (After all, the advancement of the Gospel is the main reason for which Scriptural texts exist!)

To the author's credit, his sample sermons (occupying nearly two-thirds of the book) are both textual *and* Gospel-centered. In every instance, they thoroughly expound the text selected and they clearly proclaim the good news of eternal salvation and new creaturehood through Christ alone. Exposed to this book, no reader of *Concordia Journal* can be tempted to the self-righteous suspicion that his particular denomination has a monopoly on Christ-centered preaching.

Also the first-third of his book, devoted to the explication of the thesis suggested by the book's title, is Christ-centered. Repeatedly, Dr. Clowney demonstrates Christ's presence in surprising Scriptural locales, finding Christ not only in explicit prophecies about Him but also in Biblical characters, incidents, and place names. For example, in his encounter with Goliath, David is not merely a model for courage; "as the Lord's anointed [he is also] a type of Jesus Christ...who meets and conquers Satan the strong man" (34). Jacob's wrestling with God near the Jabbok River foreshadows Jesus' "wrestling" with God in Gethsemane and on Calvary. Like Jacob, Jesus "is the Victor because he is the Victim" (93). Provocative is the "extra" Gospel Dr. Clowney sees in Moses's striking of the rock in Horeb (Ex. 17:6). "In this trial scene, Moses stands with the rod of judgment in his hand, and God comes to stand before him!.... God is the Rock; he is not guilty, but he stands to

receive the blow of judgment" (29). It is evident from these examples that the author sees typology as a rich source of "preaching Christ in all of Scripture," an approach he defends, "To conclude that we can never see a type where the New Testament does not identify it is to confess hermeneutical bankruptcy" (31).

Moreover, Dr. Clowney understands the Christian Gospel in all its fullness. He sees in the cross event not only Christ's experience of physical death in our behalf but also His experience of hell in our place. "On the cross, Christ bore our damnation" (133). Further, the benefits of this cross event are God's gift to us, not our acquisition. "It [is] not my grip on God that [is] my hope, but his grip on me" (9).

Unfortunately, the thesis section of the book is not pleasant reading—for reasons that defy precise analysis. Dr. Clowney's style is not deep or abstract. It is just that the author's points too often do not come into focus. They seem elusive, "fuzzy." Sentences do not always follow from sentences preceding them and do not always prepare for sentences following them. Transitions from one idea to another are sometimes lacking. Occasionally, I had the experience of reading a paragraph—two or three times—and asking, "Now just what did he say?" Dr. Clowney's substance deserves a better style.

The sample sermons, though never unclear, are not sufficiently engaging. The language is too consistently doxological. It fails not merely to appeal to the ear but even to the eye.

Consistent with his thesis, all of Dr. Clowney's sample sermons find Christ in the particular text informing each sermon and all of them proclaim the Christ so found. But it would have been helpful if each sample sermon had specifically demonstrated a specific kind of Biblical text in which Christ is to be found. The selection of texts for the sermons seems random. There are a number illustrating the discovery of Christ in psalms, sayings, and incidents. Might it have been better to correlate each sermon proclaiming Christ to a specific kind of Biblical text in which that Christ can be found, e. g., narrative, prophecy, typology, song, proverb, parable, epistle, Levitical law, dream, vision, apocalyptic, etc.?

*Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* resembles the occasional student sermon that comes across my desk: good, even quite good, but in need of one or two revisions to become a first-rate sermon.

Francis C. Rossow

MARTIN LUTHER AND BUDDHISM: *Aesthetics of Suffering*. By Paul S. Chung. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002. 434 pages. Cloth. \$44.00.

This book is unique in title and content. It can be a challenge as well as an interest for the traditional approach to the quest for Luther's thought. It is likewise a serious scholarly and original attempt of bringing Martin Luther into conversation with Asian spirituality in general and, in specific, with the Mahayana Buddhist concept of DUKKHA, which means literally "unpleasant," i.e., mental and bodily suffering from the moment of birth to death, the very nature of human existence caused by pain, aggregates and change. This means that life is full of suffering. The author intends to initiate a Buddhist-Christian dialogue staged with the backdrop of Luther's *theologia crucis* and the Buddhist perception of life embodied in Asian cultures, and also by making an analogy between the divine suffering of Jesus Christ and DUKKHA, the ideas of *kenosis* and *sunyata* ("emptiness"), freedom from the phenomenal world or ultimate extinction. This is a huge

task of calling for a new way of doing theology in the twenty-first century, ecumenically and dialogically, in the inter- and multi-religious context, likewise touching comprehensively many theologies mostly progressive ecumenical tenets.

The author, Paul S. Chung, did his doctoral work at the University of Basel, Switzerland, and postdoctoral study on Reformation thought and Asian spirituality at the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California Berkeley. He also had pastoral work at a Korean-American Lutheran congregation in California and a multicultural ministry of the ELCA. All these academic and ministerial experiences are either directly or indirectly reflected in his book.

The book presents a wide scope with massive facts and information. The seven sections in it include various thought-provoking facets, namely: Martin Luther in the context of poverty and religious pluralism, the uniqueness of Luther's life and theology, his doctrine of justification in context, his theology of the cross in context, Luther and Asian theology of the Trinity based on a yin-yang way of thinking, Luther and Asian Eucharistic theology, and a re-visitation of Luther and Karl Barth in interreligious dialogue.

While Chung dedicates the work to Helmut Gollwitzer and Jan M. Lochmann, he consults Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann significantly. In fact, Moltmann wrote a **Foreword**. Chung contends that Barth was influenced and shaped by Luther's theology, broadly speaking, however, discriminatedly, against the main lines of the Lutheran tradition. Moltmann on the other hand also comes from the influence of Luther and Barth and his followers (O. Weber, E. Wolf, and H. J. Iwand) by taking a critical stance. Moltmann represents, according to the author, the theology of "social Trinitarianism" as revealed in his book **The Crucified God**.

As Professor Chung elaborates his views, utilizing the ideas of theologians, to mention a few, John Hick, Paul Knitter and R. Panikkar in the West; and C. S. Song, Jung-Young Lee and Kazoh Kitamori of the East, as well as making reference to Liberation theology and Minjung theology, and pluralistic approaches to religions, he is yet trying to be faithful to Luther's theology of justification and **theologia crucis**, and the classical Christian paradigms.

A few readers and Luther students from the confessional, conservative tradition in knowledge and doing theology may not feel at ease with this volume; nevertheless, this aspect is precisely the value of becoming familiar with this publication. True, it is a new paradigm of understanding, communicating and approaching Luther and his theology from an Asian perspective. One may not agree with such deliberation but one cannot pass it by in this century of enormous challenge and change. It is not a matter of choice today but a mandate to view "the world" that God so loved, that is, an Asian confessional theology in postmodern context of life.

The comprehensive bibliography, glossaries, and index can be very useful and helpful to the readers.

I recommend this rather unusual excursion about Luther and Christian theology to the readers of confessional Lutheran journals, even though many points may not be fully acceptable nor so palatable in taste for the accustomed views. However, it can be a strengthening and challenging experience in knowledge and perspective without sacrificing one's own conviction. May our stance not be more meaningful through a critical encounter with Asian aesthetic consciousness of suffering, pain and **Mitleidenschaft**?

In the **Heilderberg Disputation**, Thesis #20, Luther said:

He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross (*per passionem et crucem*) (LW 31:52-53. WA 1:362. Erratum: not "LW 1:52-53" as indicated in the book, xxiv.).

Won Yong JI

INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT: *Essays on Method and Issues*. By David Alan Black and David S. Dockery. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001. 592 pages. Paper. \$29.99.

In their Preface the editors give the reader an invitation to evaluate the content of their book from two perspectives: (1) that of methods and issues and (2) that of stimulating "a revival of authoritative, passionate, and relevant preaching." The first perspective considers the purpose of the volume. The editors indicate that its purpose is "to enhance New Testament interpretation, teaching, and preaching by providing a useful means of learning what the New Testament is all about, and—whenever possible—the historical reasons why it speaks the way it does" (IX).

The book is divided into three sections:

Part I: Introduction deals with authority, hermeneutics, and criticism; and New Testament interpretation: a historical survey.

Part II: Basic Methods in New Testament Interpretation focuses on textual, source, form, redaction, literary, and sociological criticisms.

Part III: Special Issues is concerned with background studies; the use of the Old Testament; the study of New Testament Greek; discourse analysis; the diversity of literary genres; pseudonymity; interpreting the synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John, the Pauline epistles, the general epistles, the book of Revelation; foundations of New Testament theology; and New Testament interpretation and preaching.

The book also has a list of contributors with biographic information, an index of names of people whose works are cited, and an index of Scripture passages.

On the whole the volume covers quite well the areas one would expect to appear in a work that focuses on interpretation of the New Testament. The study of this volume helps one to find out how evangelical scholars view Biblical interpretation, what some areas of concern are for conservative scholars, and what things need to be taken into account in the process of interpretation.

The second perspective considers the desire on the part of the editors and contributors to stimulate a revival of "authoritative, relevant, and passionate preaching from the New Testament that will enhance the growth of the body of Christ" (X). Wells, in his article on "New Testament Interpretation and Preaching," states, "The test for any tool of study is whether it helps us 'preach...the unsearchable riches of Christ'" (519). This point is crucial for evaluating the usefulness of critical tools. In the estimation of this reviewer, the approach of a number of scholars would make "authoritative, relevant, and passionate preaching" of Christ more difficult. In this aspect they have been less successful.

While all the contributors hold that Scripture is "God's inspired Word written by human authors" (38), they do so with differing appreciation of critical tools.

Some challenge the critical approaches to the New Testament and make a good case for their stance. Others are more favorably inclined toward the use of these approaches with Scriptural inspiration and authority as a presupposition. Their conviction is that such an assumption will prevent critical approaches from undermining the trustworthiness and authority of Scripture. David gives voice to this attitude when he states, "And while critical methodologies have undoubtedly led to a doubting of biblical authority by some, that is not their necessary conclusion but one resulting from assumptions connected to them, or perhaps, even from a misuse of the method" (14).

The goal of the contributors is a laudable one. They aim to tame the critical approach to Scripture particularly in the area of the Synoptic Gospels with the presupposition of Biblical inspiration and authority. Our theologians have tried this with Lutheran presuppositions and have been less than successful. Time will tell whether the approach of evangelical scholars will succeed any better.

Jakob Heckert  
Ann Arbor, MI

THE BOOK OF CONCORD ON CD-ROM. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000. \$39.00.

The Libronix Digital Library System (LDLS) is the software company and technology behind or, as they say, "beneath" the Book of Concord on CD-ROM. Since others have already evaluated this new translation of the Book of Concord, my review will focus on the CD-ROM format. LDLS created the Logos Library System, which is fully compatible with all Logos products, most of which are available from Concordia Publishing House. This platform presents nearly unlimited opportunity for the parish pastor with restricted resources of shelf-space and book-budgets.

Indexes make up more than half the program (if the size of the side bar indicates anything). This says much about the usefulness of this CD-ROM. Searching an index, as one does with a regular book, is extremely easy and productive with the CD-ROM. I found the Biographical Index enjoyable and easy to use. Unfortunately, because the whole page is given, it takes time to find the name—it would have been helpful to have the indexed names highlighted on the page for easy reading. For those names found only in the octavo edition, such as the Greek philosopher Chryssipus, the name appears with a bright red BOLDDED page number to indicate an italicized number in the hard copy.

My "learning curve" accelerated as I searched various topics. After a few erroneous searches because of my own inexperience in doing Boolean searches, the LDLS program worked well. The chief benefit of this CD-ROM is that one can easily find the word or words searched for. This is exactly why the format is so popular.

Other benefits of this resource include the hyperlinks to footnotes and Biblical references. The footnote access through the hyperlink provides the same ease of reading as in a hard copy. The links to a Biblical text (in this case the NRSV) is an aid unavailable in the regular format. Superscripted letters in the Formula of Concord indicate the source used for the articles, as in the K-W hard copy, but on a CD-ROM version. These could have been hyperlinked so that explanations are readily available to the reader. (This is a problem in the hard copy, too, unless one

memorizes page 485 of the K-W edition where the information is given.) Such additional linking would have made the CD more useful than the hard copy and would have provided a good rationale for purchasing the CD version.

The introductory paragraph on word processing says: "It's easy to use LDLS books as resources for writing with your favorite word processor. You can copy and paste, export, and drag-and-drop material from LDLS books into your word processor. You can even choose a citation format and let the LDLS do the footnoting for you!" Here is the rub and my chief criticism. While LDLS can do footnoting, the accuracy of the information is incomplete—for example, Timothy Wengert's name is omitted as co-editor with Robert Kolb and so are the page numbers corresponding to the hard copy. This is somewhat frustrating when preparing a research report.

How the citations are labeled in this program is also somewhat confusing. A common citation from the article on Justification in the Apology, for example, traditionally is cited simply as Ap IV, 211 (and is so indicated on the screen, if the Locator Pane is activated). In the reference however, it appears as "Justification IV [Apology of the Augsburg Confession: 1, III, 211]." The imprecise numbering in the brackets seems to arise from the fact that the preface to the Apology is unnamed in the program, but numbered. The following articles then are numbered consecutively, putting all the references to all subsequent articles one Roman numeral off, so that the article on Justification is 1, III, instead of IV. The confusion of labels continues in other places, too, such as the Small Catechism and the Formula, although it became clear that the Formula reference to 1 refers to the Epitome and 2 to the Solid Declaration. While speaking of citations, another problem, common to both the CD-ROM and the hard copy, is the inability to cite paragraph numbers from the octavo material which was not in the quarto; but that is a problem common to the whole K-W project.

Young pastors and scholars will enjoy this computer-based format, but will also find that hard copies of the Book of Concord will not be easily replaced by this present format. Comparative studies of texts and Latin-German translations can only occur with the hard copy. The Latin text is not designated any differently in the footnotes than the German, so the distinction between the translations does not appear clearly if research is carried on only with the CD-ROM.

My overall experience of the CD-ROM version of the Book of Concord was good. I enjoyed "playing" with the CD-ROM, but I did not find it as helpful as I had hoped. (Compared to the recently produced CD-ROM of Luther's Works in English, the lack of typographical errors in this CD-ROM is appreciated.) Linking terms and searching for phrases will be the best use of this research tool. Pastors seeking direct quotes from the Book of Concord or desiring locations of some terms will find this tool essential. Students or scholars who wish to cite this translation of the Book of Concord may wish to wait for a second edition, which will (hopefully) eliminate some of the major flaws mentioned in this review. At this point, I would not recommend purchasing this CD-ROM version until the glitches are removed. I do not know if Fortress/Concordia will tell us about a new edition, but I will wait.

Timothy Maschke  
Mequon, WI

ENCOUNTERING THE BOOK OF PSALMS: *A Literary and Theological Introduction*. By C. Hassell Bullock. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001. 272 pages. Cloth. \$24.95.

In the *Greek New Testament* (UBS, 4<sup>th</sup> edition), the “Index of Quotations” lists more than 400 quotations from the Book of Psalms. Of course, this list includes phrases as well as complete verses. Yet by any standard, the Psalter has impacted the New Testament in a profound way. Moreover, the likes of Augustine, Ambrose, and Luther strongly encouraged their students to spend significant daily time in the Psalms. Ambrose even went so far as to refer to the book as “a gymnasium for the soul,” where the believer exercises his faith every day. Bullock’s book is a gift to all who pray, live, and love the Psalter. Rather than providing a sustained exegetical analysis of each verse in the Book of Psalms, he surveys the Psalter with an emphasis on drawing out its theological message and practical significance. The book consists of an introduction and survey material with critical, historical, literary, hermeneutical, and background concerns woven within the exposition of the Biblical text.

While stating his case for the Davidic authorship of most of the seventy-three psalms attributed to him and presenting a helpful overview of Hebrew parallelism, Bullock’s greatest contribution is in chapter three, “The Seams of the Garment of Praise: The Structure of the Book.” He begins by stating that the introductory emphasis on the Torah in Psalm 1, as well as the other two Torah psalms of 19 and 119, along with Psalms 37:30-31; 40:8; 78:1, 5, 10, make the Torah the encompassing principle of faith in the Psalter. It is this holistic, contextual and canonical approach to the book that many commentaries miss, simply because they read each psalm in isolation from the rest of the book. Bullock continues in this reading strategy and notes that, after Psalm 89 has introduced the failure of the Davidic covenant, Psalm 90 is a prayer of Moses. While this psalm comes from a much earlier time than the exile, it is the voice of Moses that intercedes for Israel in her time of distress in 586. The compiler of this section of Psalms diverts attention away from the monarchy—which had so miserably failed—and back to the intercession of Moses, whose ministry saved the nation in an earlier time of Yahweh’s judgment (cf. Exodus 32-34). This is similar to the way Hosea, when Israel had violated the Mosaic covenant, shifted the focus from that covenant to the Abrahamic in order to establish Yahweh’s continuing covenantal relationship to the rebellious kingdom of Israel (Hos. 1:8-11). In fact, Moses’ name appears seven times in Book 4 (Psalms 90-106), thus causing the interceding voice of Psalm 90 to continue. This diversion from the failed monarchy may also be seen in the “enthronement of Yahweh” psalms (e.g., Pss. 93, 97, 98) in the same section. The thrust of this section of the Psalter is to turn Israel’s eyes from her transient earthly monarch to her eternal heavenly King, Yahweh.

Bullock’s integration of the Psalter—as opposed to atomization—yields further results. Two royal psalms, Psalms 72 and 89, close their respective books, stamping a royal seal on those collections. Perhaps as much as anything, these royal psalms, helped to keep alive the hope that it would rise again once the Davidic dynasty had fallen. Moreover, the royal psalms (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 144) are deliberately placed in the book in order to give structure and form to the Psalter that points readers to the great Messianic hope of Israel—Jesus of Nazareth.

The last five psalms (145-150) are also strategically placed at the end of the

book, and it is no coincidence that they are psalms of praise. Psalm 149:6-7 states: "May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples." The parallel construction of verse 6 suggests that praise in this psalm becomes the weapon of choice to bring Israel's enemies to their knees. For a people whose armies had been humiliated and their kings deposed, the powerful weapon of worship would accomplish the task of vengeance which the military and monarchy could never do (cf. Ps. 8:3, 20:7 and the worship in the book of Revelation).

Devotional thoughts sprinkle the pages of Bullock's work; e.g., on Psalm 23 the author notes, in part: "The Twenty-Third Psalm is the nightingale of the psalms. It is small, of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh, it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive! Blessed be the day on which that psalm was born, nor is its work done. It will go on singing to your children and my children, and to their children, through all the generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe, and time ended, and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it is issued, and sound on, mingled with all those sounds of celestial joy which make heaven musical forever" (171).

For all of his rhetoric about Yahweh's sovereignty in the Psalter, Bullock does pay some attention to the book's incarnational elements. He has a great section that discusses how David prayed many of the Psalms of Lament and Jesus lived them in their fullest sense. That is, in Jesus, God experienced everything in the psalmists' lives: He faced their emptiness, loneliness, and temptations, and He encountered their enemies.

Numerous pictures, charts, tables, definitions, and devotional thoughts are sprinkled throughout *Encountering the Psalms*, making this book a treasure for those who seek a superb devotional and teaching resource on the Psalms.

Reed Lessing

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY A PROPOSAL. By Brevard S. Childs. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. 90 pages. Paper. \$6.00.

In this little book, Childs, a distinguished Old Testament theologian from Yale, attempts to address the key issues under the topic "Biblical Theology." The book is adapted from a 1992/93 book by a similar title.

The first chapter lays out the difficulty in defining the discipline of Biblical Theology and how it developed. Childs traces its origins to a post-Reformation development which culminated in a famous lecture by J. P. Gabler in 1787. Gabler saw Biblical Theology as a historical discipline. This approach was declared dead by Hermann Gunkel in 1927 as a result of the arguments of the history-of-religion school.

The work of Gerhard Ebeling in the 1950s is considered by Childs as a "valuable start towards reconstituting the field." Ebeling defined the task of Biblical Theology as a study of the connection between the Old and New Testaments by inquiring into "the inner unity of the manifold testimony of the Bible." Childs sets as his task the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of Ebeling's suggestion.

In chapter two, Childs traces the development of both the Old and New Testament canons, especially how and when the Christian church adopted the Hebrew

canon as part of its own Bible, and what the role of the so-called Apocrypha was. He does not definitively answer these questions, but he believes it is the task of Biblical Theology to participate in this search.

Chapter three is a summary of the canonical approach to Biblical Theology that Childs used in two previous introductions to the Old and New Testaments. Childs attempted to show that the concept of canon “was not a late, ecclesiastical ordering which was basically foreign to the material itself, but that canon-consciousness lay deep within the formation of the literature” (39). Childs states that “the juxtaposition of the two testaments to form the Christian Bible arose above all as an affirmation of a theological continuity” (45). On the one hand, the Christian canon asserts the integrity of the Old Testament witness, but, at the same time, the New Testament “comes to the Old Testament from the perspective of the Gospel and freely renders the Old as a transparency of the New” (54).

In chapter four, Childs deals with the difficult concept of the subject matter of the Biblical witness. It involves the question of how the New Testament refers to and interprets passages of the Old Testament. Biblical Theology, according to Childs, must assume the hermeneutical task of listening to the different voices of both the original meaning of the Old Testament and the interpretation of the New Testament, as well as how the early church understood both. Childs speaks of how “the dialogical move of Biblical theological reflection...is from the partial grasp of fragmentary reality found in both testaments to the full reality that the Christian church confesses to have found in Jesus Christ, in the combined witness of the two testaments (66).

In the final chapter, Childs summarizes what he considers to be an ongoing task of Biblical theology, namely, to show how the peculiar nature of “the Christian canon derives from the joining of the Old Testament witness in its own integrity with the New Testament witness in its own integrity” (75).

In this brief book Childs has brilliantly carried out his purpose of surveying the history of Biblical Theology and presenting a strong case that it should take canonical categories seriously.

Merlin D. Rehm  
Bronxville, NY

**PREACHING AND TEACHING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT: *A Guide for the Church*.** By Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. 222 pages. Paper. \$14.99.

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Colman Mockler Distinguished Professor of Old Testament and President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has long been recognized for his theological conservatism and insightful scholarship, and the more than thirty books he has authored have consistently demonstrated that these two virtues need not be incompatible with each other.

***Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*** is no exception. Page after page evidences the author’s allegiance to the authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures. He is conversant with the languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, in which the Bible was first written. His biblical literacy inspires—and intimidates—the reader. His methodology both in interpreting and in preaching a Biblical text is painstakingly precise. Despite the heavy freight it continually carries, Kaiser’s style remains consistently clear and readable.

The best part of the book is, of all things, Appendix B. The only fault I can find with it is that it is an appendix. Why did not the author somehow incorporate the material of this appendix into the body of his work, or at least relocate it as a preface or introduction, where the reader would be less tempted to skip it? In Appendix B Dr. Kaiser traces the theological pluralism and subjectivism of our times to "The Intentional Fallacy," an article in the *Swanee Review* of 1946, which led to the current popular view that "whatever an author may have meant...by his or her written words is now irrelevant to the meanings we have come to assign as the meaning we see in that author's text! On this basis, the reader is the one who sets the meaning for a text" (191). "A text would mean whatever it said to the mind of the reader, not necessarily what its author meant" (192). To combat this emphasis on reader subjectivity Kaiser urges, "The first line of defense...is to insist that the author has a right to determine what his or her text must mean before anyone else says what that text means. This is critical. Should this battle be lost, the disastrous results of modernity and postmodernity are inevitable" (203).

Although he overstates his position, Dr. Kaiser's contention is valid. Surely, the interpretation of a piece of writing should rest more on the thing beheld than in the eye of the beholder. Yet, however objective our approach to Biblical or literary interpretation is—and should be, the fact remains that any interpretation is inevitably affected by the background and experience which the reader brings to that activity. I would submit that a degree of subjectivity is operative even in those who claim and practice the utmost objectivity. It does not follow from this truth that we should declare a field day for reader bias and whimsy. But it does follow that we should recognize the phenomenon, give it its due, and use whatever of value may accrue from it. Author intention is far more important than reader response, true, but that fact should not necessarily make reader response a bad word.

Overstatement also characterizes Dr. Kaiser's commendable stance on typology. "The problem with typology is that many take it far beyond what we have biblical authorization to do" (44). In reference to typological treatment of the tabernacle, he quips, "Surely...some of the ropes and pegs in the tabernacle were meant to hold it up and to help it stand erect!" (43). Although he concedes that "there are more types in the Bible than what the New Testament claims to be types" (44), he risks taking away with his right hand what he has granted with his left hand by cautioning later, "This is not to say that the Messiah may be found behind every proverbial bush in the Old Testament" (113). Although I appreciate Dr. Kaiser's humorous putdown of "over-typologizing," I would have regarded his concession above as more sincere if he had supplied specifics as to when one can go beyond New Testament identification of types. What are the criteria? Certainly, I would argue that not all typological discoveries are the outcome of reader bias. His finds are legitimate if the reader can point to something objective in the Old Testament text (such as elaborate parallels between an Old Testament character and Christ or the significance of a representative role like king or priest) in defense of his discovery.

The author's reservations about "over-typologizing" stem from his antipathy toward what he calls "reading the Bible backward," that is, first going to the New Testament for an understanding of the Bible's teachings and then proceeding backward into the Old Testament to interpret it in the light of the New Testament (26). Again, I agree in part. Certainly, an Old Testament text deserves to be interpreted in its own right and in its own context. Yet, surely, an obscure Old Testament prophecy, for example, can be better understood in the light of its specific and fuller

New Testament fulfillment. Although my teachers may have frowned upon the approach, there were times in high school math when I could better work the problem when I knew the answer! All the exegetical skill in the world would never have helped me realize that the rock Moses struck at Horeb to alleviate Israelite thirst (Ex. 17:6-9) was Christ as Paul informs me in 1 Corinthians 10:4.

There is the same combination of correctness and overstatement in the author's stance on expository preaching versus topical preaching. Dr. Kaiser agrees with Ronald Allen that what distinguishes the former from the latter is that "expository preaching...unwaveringly begins and remains with the biblical text throughout the whole sermon" (50). Immediately, the author rules out the practice of beginning with a human need or concern as the impetus for the sermon (50). Rather, he insists that the sermon originate in the exposition of the text itself. Frankly, if the text is relevant to the need or concern raised, and if the text is fully explicated, I can see little difference in whether one begins with a need or with a text. All the model sermons in Kaiser's book are exemplary expositions of the text, reflecting not only the content of the text but even its structure. Commendable indeed! Yet in a couple of instances Kaiser's sermons preach the text, the whole text—and, unfortunately, nothing but the text. (See pages 77-82 and 95-99 for examples of sermons with, at best, minimal Gospel.) I am positive that the dearth of Gospel in these sermons is not intentional. Most of Kaiser's sample sermons contain adequate Gospel, and he himself says, "Before attempting to speak, teach, or learn from any individual passage selected for exposition or teaching, some *understanding of the whole plan of God found in the whole Bible is necessary*" (186; emphasis mine). But the dearth of Gospel in some of Kaiser's sermons is, I believe, the by-product of too blind a loyalty to a Scriptural text. All Biblical texts are not created equal. Equally inspired, yes. Equally inerrant, yes. But not equally significant! If a text contains little or no Gospel, then the preacher must go outside his text and import that Gospel from elsewhere in the Bible. Texts, you see, are spokes connecting the hub of Scripture, the Gospel, to the "wheel" (the sermon). One cannot leave Gospel preaching subject to the Gospel limitations of the inspired text assigned or chosen.

But this review is wandering from the plan. To paraphrase Shakespeare, "I came to praise Kaiser, not to bury him." And what I see above (to continue the paraphrase) is "a pennyworth of praise to an intolerable deal of criticism." I would like to believe that my criticisms stem from the wish for a very good book to have been even better. But negative criticism was hardly my original intention. Despite his occasional overstatements, Kaiser's "statements," his theses, are valid and beneficial. They are Biblical, sound, orthodox, and scholarly. The book is a methodological delight. Kaiser's descriptions of various Old Testament genres and his demonstrations of how to preach these genres are priceless. The book is worth your money and time.

Francis C. Rossow

## ***Books Received***

- Becker, Matthew. *THE SELF-GIVING GOD AND SALVATION HISTORY: The Trinitarian Theology of Johannes von Hofmann*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004. 320 pages. Paper. \$39.95.
- Boersma, Hans. *VIOLENCE, HOSPITALITY, AND THE CROSS: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. 288 pages. Cloth. \$29.99.
- Brenner, Athalya. *I AM: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. 228 pages. Paper. \$13.00.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *THE BOOK THAT BREATHES NEW LIFE: Scriptural Authority and Biblical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005. 226 pages. Cloth. No price given.
- Burtness, Eric. *LEADING ON PURPOSE: Intentionality and Teaming in Congregational Life*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004. 86 pages. Paper. \$9.99.
- Dever, Mark. *NINE MARKS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH*. New Expanded Edition. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004. 288 pages. Paper. \$15.99.
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