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Editorial

Editor's Note

When people write today, whether it is intended for print or oral delivery, their primary, if not exclusive, concern is the content and how well it reads in a silent manner. They give little or no thought as to how it would sound if read aloud. With our emphasis on silent reading, we tend to think this is the way people have always read. However, that has not always been the case. In the ancient world, literature was written to be read out loud, and people sounded out the words they read. An excellent example of this phenomenon is recorded in Acts 8:30: "Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the Prophet." Ancient tests were meant for the hearing of the ears, not just the silent perusal of the eyes.

Given the need to engage people meaningfully in speeches, such as sermons, there is a renewed interest in the subject of orality (oral communication). This is a subject that should be of no small interest to the church since our faith is based upon an inspired book that was written in antiquity and the Sunday sermon remains one of the main vehicles for communicating the truths of our faith. Accordingly, the articles in this issue of **Concordia Journal** are dedicated to the theme of orality.

In the first article, "The Spoken Word: What's Up with Orality," Dr. Thomas M. Winger notes that reading silently did not become generally practiced until the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. He begins his article by calling attention to the fact that Scripture contains many references to the proclamation of the Word of God being primarily a spoken proclamation. He then casts that in the light of the ancient world's practice of oral reading, with one of the first and few references to silent reading (but with lips moving) being mentioned by St. Augustine in his **Confessions** in reference to St. Ambrose. While that was once considered the primary, almost sole, reference to silent reading, we are now aware of dozens of examples of silent reading in classical times. Ambrose's silent reading was shocking to Augustine because he considered the ears, not the eyes, as being the organ of faith. Augustine's view coincides with that of Plato who considered the written word only a faint image of the spoken word. This antipathy to writing carried over into the early church. The author then notes areas of our culture today where oral communication remains dominant, such as in courts of law, academia, politics, and, of course, liturgical services. He concludes his article by calling attention to ways in which we might be open to orality in our use of God's Word and get a better appreciation of how Biblical authors expected their writings to be used. A greater awareness of orality in ancient and Biblical times might help us to become more familiar with the God's Word and be able to commit it more readily to memory.

In the second article, "Orality in the Prophets," Dr. Reed Lessing addresses the problem of modern prophetic scholarship which divorces orality from literary forms and thus makes it impossible to access the prophets' oracular words. He traces the Old Testament scholarship of initial figures in the field like G. von Rad, H. Gunkel, S. Mowinckel, etc., who contend that the Old Testament prophetic writings were products of a literate, rather than an oracular, world. He then highlights the input of the next generation scholars like C. Westermann, K. Koch, etc. For these scholars, the Old Testament prophetic books are redactions of earlier oral prophecies whose main value now lies in their being depositories of earlier oral material, rather than actually containing the oracular words themselves. Dr. Lessing then asks how orality and written texts can be brought together again. One thing is to be aware that there is not as strong a dichotomy between oral and written language as some scholars have maintained and that in any writing culture orality and literacy co-exist, interact, and mutually influence one another. Israel's prophets were divinely commissioned oral agents of Yahweh who were capable of writing oral-sounding texts and then delivering them orally. Understanding the oral nature of the prophecies enable us to better apprehend the feature of formulaic expressions, repetition and redundancy, and various rhythmic speech patterns.

Dr. Dale Meyer in his article, "PDAs and the Spirit's Sword," addresses the concern that modern preaching be done in an interesting and engaging way that uses various oral devices that enable to the listener in the pew to keep pace with the preacher in the pulpit. One difficulty for many pastors is that their theological education took place in an academic setting in which they were expected to write term papers and sermons that were intended to be primarily literary products with little or no attention being given to effective oral delivery. One major difference in reading a literary work and listening to a sermon is that a reader can pause and reflect while a listener either keeps up with the speaker in terms of content or gets behind and eventually becomes disinterested and turns his attention to other matters. For more effective and engaging preaching, Dr. Meyer makes a number of useful suggestions: always keep the listener in mind in sermon preparation, use illustrations and repetition which give the listener an opportunity to rest and digest the main points that have been made, use questions to engage the listener, and create a personal bond/relationship between by using "you and I" pronouns rather than "we."

It is our hope that these articles will help our readers gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the means by which God has communicated the saving truth of His Word to us in Holy Scripture and enable us to communicate that blessed message more effectively to people of our time.

Quentin F. Wesselschmidt

Theological Observer

Lutheran Scholarship in Korea

Why am I a Lutheran? What does it mean to be a Lutheran? What is the difference between Lutherans and other Christians? Such questions related to the Lutheran identity are certainly prevalent in the places where Lutheran Christians are a small minority. It is very true in Korea where there is only one Lutheran among about 2,700 Protestant and Roman Catholic believers.

We received interesting and very happy news from Korea. For the first time, a Ph.D. dissertation has been written in Korean by a Lutheran theologian and presented to one of the three Korean “Ivy League” institutions, Yonsei University in Seoul.

Park Il-Young, a pastor of The Lutheran Church in Korea and recipient of an STM degree from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis a few years ago and currently an Associate Professor of systematic theology and the dean of students and academic affairs of Luther Theological College/Seminary, near Seoul, wrote a doctoral dissertation under the title: “The Centrality of Luther’s Doctrine of Justification and Its Modern Significance.” This seems to be, according to my estimation, the first scholarly work with such a topic by a theologian outside Europe and North America, written in one’s own language, utilizing the available authoritative resources including the works of Martin Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and many scholarly materials from various traditions.

The degree was conferred by Yonsei University’s Graduate School of Theology to Il-Young Park on February 24, 2003 at the annual commencement exercises of the university. His doctoral dissertation was passed by a five-man panel, one advisor and four readers ***summa cum laude***. Interestingly, these panel members are not Lutheran and not necessarily all friendly to Luther’s thoughts or his doctrine of justification. This obviously meant that Park had to defend and convince them with scholarly arguments and proofs.

Dr. Park indicated that the purpose of his dissertation lies “in examining Luther’s doctrine of justification from a Lutheran perspective and finding its modern significance” with special attention to Korea where Lutherans are a small minority. He sums up the “Lutheran perspective” in the forensic character of Luther’s teaching on justification. The relationship between

The “Theological Observer” serves as a forum for comment on, assessment of, and reactions to developments and events in the church at large, as well as in the world of theology generally. Since areas of expertise, interest, and perceptions often vary, the views presented in this section will not always reflect the opinion of the editorial committee.

the *sola* principle and the paradox principle summarized as what God does “outside us” should be confessed in the *sola* principle, and what happens “for us” and “among us” cannot but be expressed in the paradoxical way. These *sola* and *simul* paradigms can apply to the historical and eschatological horizons which have an important place in modern theology.

Relating to Korea and its cultural and Christian milieu, Park observes:

The tendency of challenging or distorting the doctrine can be easily detected in the Korean situation. The ecumenical movement also has contributed to various kinds of discussion on justification. Ecumenical unity is a crucial task which churches in Korea today face. But some people show their serious concern and worries that the centrality of justification can be weakened for the sake of compromise and mutual concession.

True, there are a good number of Lutheran theologians from the Two/Thirds World who wrote scholarly essays on the doctrine of justification; nevertheless, I do not recall whether there has ever been a doctoral dissertation of such high quality written with such compact content, theological, historical, and ecumenical in nature, with critical evaluations and assessment on various aspects related to the subject of the doctrine of justification.

Park has made clear his own *Lutheran* identity as a Lutheran pastor. His dissertation is to present a true “Lutheran perspective” on the topic based upon Luther’s thinking and the Lutheran Confessions; and furthermore, he made a sincere effort to make authentic the Lutheran identity and the Lutheran *raison d’être*. I believe, Park did a commendable job and thus made a good Lutheran witness, as well as presenting excellent material to the Lutherans and other Christians in Korea and elsewhere. This contribution of Dr. Park, in my estimation, has a special significance for the Lutheran theologians in the Two/Thirds World, stimulating serious theological quest for *Lutheran* spirituality and the true *meaning* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ *in our life today*. I sincerely hope that Lutherans and the community of Lutheran theologians in America and Europe would encourage other Lutherans and enhance the development of the Lutheran theological scholarship outside the Western world.

Won Yong JI

Theological Potpourri

Luther and the “Devil’s Tunes”

K. Joan Sander

Martin Luther (1483–1546) is often attributed with the saying: “Why should the devil have all the good tunes?”¹ As pointed out by James L. Brauer,² this has never been properly documented. In fact, the actual trail of evidence leads directly to Rev. Roland Hill (1744–1833), not Luther.³ Nevertheless, some authors take it a step further. They speculate that some Lutheran hymns may have been based on drinking songs. Even “A Mighty Fortress” is given as an example of this transformation.⁴ The idea that good tunes can be rescued from the devil has proven to be a popular notion among proponents of contemporary Christian music.⁵ Popular songs are “rescued” from the secular realm by rewriting the words for a Christian context.⁶ Attributing a quote such as the “devil’s tunes” to Luther provides a certain authority to such endeavors. But as Brauer correctly suggests, the bulk of Luther’s writings on music would not condone this practice.

There is, however, one sentence of Luther’s that appears to be quite similar to the devil’s tunes quotation. It is recorded in the Table Talk notes of Anton Lauterbach in the year 1538 and those of Caspar Heydenreich

¹As a student of musicology, I came across a reference to the famous saying in the frequently consulted source, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*: “According to what is undoubtedly his most oft-quoted remark concerning music, Luther could not see why the devil should have all the best tunes.” Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1984), 105.

²James L. Brauer, “The Devil’s Tunes,” *Concordia Journal* 23 (January 1997): 2-3.

³See Brauer and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 119.

⁴Calvin Stapert gives a humorous outline of this train of thought in his article, “Beyond Cheap Thrills,” *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought* (November 1993): 3-4.

⁵Here “contemporary” Christian music is used to describe a style of music which emulates the music found currently on popular radio stations and recordings (styles such as Folk, Country, Rock, Jazz, and even Polka music). Of course, the broader definition of contemporary Christian music would include music written recently but in a more traditional churchly style. This second style of contemporary Christian music is usually referred to as “traditional” for clarity.

⁶Examples of this include “Pharaoh, Pharaoh” to the tune of “Louie, Louie” recorded by the Kingsmen in 1963, and a paraphrase of the Words of Institution to the tune of “Blowin’ in the Wind” written by Bob Dylan in 1962.

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from the spring of 1543.⁷ Luther said, “Why is it that for the secular phases of life [*carnalibus*] we have so many fine poems and such fine songs while for spiritual matters we have such poor and cold stuff?”⁸ He goes on to quote “Der Thurnier,” a popular song of his day. He also complains “Mary the mother of God has many beautiful songs, and more of them, than her child, Jesus” and “St. Mary is more celebrated in Grammatica, Musica and Rhetorica, than her son, Jesus.”⁹ It seems that Brauer is correct in his assessment that the devil’s tunes could just as easily be found in Gregorian chant as in the bar room of his day. Further investigation of “Der Thurnier,” reveals that it is indeed a drinking song.¹⁰ It was commissioned by Count Schlick and the town councilors attending a shooting tournament in Joachimsthaler in 1521. The song was composed by the poet and Meistersinger Hans Lutz from Augsburg.¹¹ It became very popular and was even mentioned in the comedy “Speculum mundi” by Bartholomäus Ringwald in 1589.¹² Did Luther mean that we should adapt popular songs such as this for the Divine Service?

Further perusal of Luther’s writings on music provides the necessary context. Luther’s point is not that we need to borrow from the secular phases of life but that we ought to concentrate instead on writing fine poems and suitable music for the church. In his *Formula Missae et Communionis* (1523) he said:

I desire also that we have more songs which might be sung in the vernacular of the people, and which the people might sing during the celebration of the Mass.... But we need poets; as yet we have none who are able to prepare for us pious and spiritual songs (as St. Paul calls them) which deserve being used in the church of God.¹³

Luther had strong opinions both about the quality of the texts and the music to be used in Divine Service. While he accorded music the highest

⁷Given the discrepancy between these dates, one might consider this quotation to be somewhat spurious. This certainly should be considered when weighed against what Luther is known to have written in published documents.

⁸Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau and Böhlingshaus Nachfolger, 1883–), Tischreden, 5:274 (hereafter WA); and Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 22, ed. Joh. Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia, 1887), col. 1539. Cited in Walter E. Buszin, “Luther on Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 32 (1946): 89; and Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 981, no. 3097.

⁹WA 5: 274.

¹⁰Gerhard Heilfurth, et al., eds., *Bergreihen: Eine Liedersammlung des 16. Jahrhunderts mit drei Folgen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1959), 81-84. First edition by John Meier, 1892.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 250. It is worth noting that music commissioned by a Meistersinger would have been of much higher quality than a simple song sung at drinking establishments.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Walter E. Buszin, “Luther on Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 32 (1946): 94. Parentheses inserted by Buszin.

praise, it was always second to theology.¹⁴ This meant that any music used in the church would have to reflect and support the text it accompanied. In *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525), he wrote:

Although I am willing to permit the translating of Latin texts of choral and vocal music into the vernacular with the retention of the original notes and musical settings, I am nevertheless of the opinion that the result sounds neither proper nor correct; the text, the notes, the accents, the tune, and likewise the entire outward expression must be genuine outgrowths of the original text and its spirit; otherwise, everything is nothing more than apish imitation.¹⁵

Not all styles of music were acceptable to Luther. He showed a strong preference for the art music of his day. While some hymn tunes were adapted from earlier German folk melodies, they were always set in this more formal style. Luther made his reasoning clear in his preface to the *Chorgesangbuch* (1524) of Johann Walter (1496-1570):

The music is arranged in four parts. I desire this particularly in the interest of the young people, who should and must receive an education in music as well as in the other arts if we are to wean them away from carnal and lascivious songs and interest them in what is good and wholesome. Only thus will they learn, as they should, to love and appreciate what is intrinsically good.¹⁶

Luther may have lamented that secular music appeared to be more beautiful than the music being written for the church, but this did not necessarily lead to the conclusion that we must borrow from, or even imitate, this style of music.

Luther probably did not say, "Why should the Devil have all the good tunes?" The closest he might have come to it was his comment, "Why is it that for the secular phases of life we have so many fine poems and such fine songs while for spiritual matters we have such poor and cold stuff?" And we have seen that this was not a call for the induction of secular music into the church but a comparative judgment Luther made between the beautiful music of the papists and Meistersingers to the poor music that Lutherans were creating in apish imitation.

¹⁴Luther places music "next to the Word of God" in his preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae* (1538), Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: American Edition*, vol. 53, "Liturgy and Hymns," ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, trans. Paul Zeller Strodach and rev. Ulrich S. Leopold (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 323.

¹⁵Buszin, 95.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 88. The four part settings in this case are polyphonic, with the melody in the tenor voice. Compare this with the mainly homophonic settings we have in our hymnals today.

*The Spoken Word: What's Up with Orality?*¹

Thomas M. Winger

How then shall they **call** upon the One in whom they have not believed?
And how shall they believe in the One whom they have not **heard**?
And how shall they **hear** apart from a **preacher**?
And how shall they **preach** if they are not sent?
Just as it stands written: "How beautiful are the feet of those **preaching**
a Gospel of good things."
However, not all **heeded** the **Gospel message**.
For Isaiah **says**: "Lord, who believed what we put forth to be **heard**?"
For faith is from **hearing**, and **hearing** through the **message** of Christ.
But I **say**, have they not **heard**? Indeed!
"For their **voice** has gone out into all the earth,
and their **words** into the ends of the inhabited world."
(Rom. 10:14-18)

Do these words strike you as foreign in any way? Seventeen times in the space of five verses St. Paul has referred to the Word of God as something spoken, proclaimed aloud, and heard with the ears. Such mouth and ear talk remains foreign to modern, North American Protestantism, to whom being "in the Word" means first and foremost reading the Bible, sitting alone, and in silence with a book. Yet, for St. Paul, the phrase "Word of God" would first have brought other images to mind. For St. Paul and for other Biblical authors like St. John, it is a living and active Word. This Word begins in the mouth of the Father who speaks His Son into the world. The Son walks among us and talks real words into the real ears of real people. This Son continues to speak to us today as His Word continues to be proclaimed and faith is created. But what does that have to do with "**the** Book," "The Holy Bible?" Quite a lot, indeed. As Lutherans, we know that the means of grace called the Word of God is all of the above: Christ Himself, the proclamation of His message, the writings which His Spirit inspired, and preaching based on those writings. But in mainstream North American Christianity, and in the deeply silent, text-oriented, bookish modern world, our understanding of the wholeness of God's proclaimed

¹This essay is a précis of the author's Doctor of Theology dissertation, "Orality as the Key to Understanding Apostolic Proclamation in the Epistles" (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1997, unpublished). This précis records an oral presentation first given to the Concordia Catechetical Academy, Sussex, WI, in June 1998.

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Word has become somewhat muddled. Let me suggest that modern studies of communication media and, even more importantly, classical studies of reading and writing in the ancient world can help us see our way to a fuller appreciation of the Word of God. These studies collectively fall under the title of “orality”—a huge field, to which I hope to give you a very brief introduction.

Introduction: The Discovery of Ancient Oral Reading²

Let me begin with a story. One hundred years ago, consideration of a well-known passage from St. Augustine’s ***Confessions*** gave people the distinct impression that something has changed in the modern world in how we handle written texts. As we come into this story, Augustine has just come to Milan, Italy, and is anxiously anticipating meeting the famous bishop, Ambrose. Yet Ambrose’s busy schedule is getting in the way:

I was excluded from his ear and from his mouth by crowds of men with arbitrations to submit to him, to whose frailties he ministered. When he was not with them, which was a very brief period of time, he restored either his body with necessary food or his mind by reading. ***When he was reading, his eyes ran over the page and his heart perceived the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent [Sed cum legebat, oculi ducebantur per paginas et cor intellectum rimabatur, vox autem et lingua quiescebant]***. He did not restrict access to anyone coming in, nor was it customary even for a visitor to be announced. Very often when we were there ***we saw him silently reading and never otherwise [sic eum legentum vidimus tacite et aliter nunquam]***. After sitting for a long time in silence (for who would dare to burden him in such intent concentration?) we used to go away. We supposed that in the brief time he could find for his mind’s refreshment, free from the hubbub of other people’s troubles, he would not want to be invited to consider another problem. We wondered if he read silently perhaps to protect himself in case he had a hearer interested and intent on the matter, to whom he might have to expound the text being read if it contained difficulties, or who might wish to debate some difficult questions. If his time were used up in that way, he would get through fewer books than he wished. Besides, the need to preserve his voice, which used easily to become hoarse, could have been a very fair reason for silent reading. Whatever motive he had for his habit, this man had a good reason for what he did³ (italics mine).

²Josef Balogh, “‘Voces Paginarum.’ Beiträge zur Geschichte des lauten Lesens und Schreibens,” ***Philologus*** 82 (1927): 84-109, 202-240. Some of the same material is presented in a near contemporary: H. L. Hendrickson, “Ancient Reading,” ***The Classical Journal*** 25 (1929): 182-196. Balogh may be credited with establishing the modern “standard doctrine,” although not without some dispute.

³Augustine, ***Confessions*** 6.3.3. We offer this important passage from the English translation by Henry Chadwick, ***Confessions*** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

What shocked Augustine was that Ambrose read *silently*. This habit was so unusual that Augustine commented upon it at length. Until 1898 this was the only classical writing known to make reference to reading silently. On the other hand, no classical writing specifically mentions that reading was normally done out loud—but what is a universal practice need not be mentioned. Yet here was a detailed, shocking account of a public figure who read in silence! His followers would sit around watching him, trying to come up with reasons why he read silently!

Another fascinating story comes from St. Cyril of Jerusalem's catechetical lectures. Cyril refers to how the catechumens are to occupy themselves while they are waiting to be baptized. He directs them to meditation upon God's Word, but he is concerned enough to take St. Paul's words to the Corinthians very seriously:

... let the young women's group gather in such a way that, whether it is praying [singing] psalms or reading in silence, their lips move but the ears of others do not hear [RV88T < ' • <" (4<f F6T < ° FLP±q ò FJ, 8" 8gÅk : ¥< J• Pg\80, : - • 6@bg4< *¥ J• • 88' JD4' ì J"]. "For I do not permit a woman to speak in the church." And let the married woman do likewise, and let her pray, and move her lips, but let no sound be heard [6" Å J• Pg\80 64<g\F2T, nT <- *¥ : - • 6@XF2T], so that Samuel may come, so that your barren soul may give birth to the salvation of God who hears you. For this is what Samuel means.⁴

(The final allusion is to Hannah, who prayed silently in the temple for a son. Because her lips moved but no sound came out, Eli thought she was drunk—it was so unusual.) Here Cyril requires that women catechumens read in silence to avoid the possibility of a woman teaching in church, for others would listen to what she read. Here again is evidence that reading silently was unusual enough to deserve comment.

Today we are aware of dozens of examples from classical times where a point is made about someone reading silently—either to steal or keep a secret, or out of shock or emotional ecstasy. But the data continue to confirm that under normal circumstances, an ancient reader would not only mouth

Balogh takes up Ambrose again on pages 219-220. Here he notes Ambrose's own words from *Ep.* 47.1, that he often wrote silently, especially at night, in order not to disturb those trying to sleep [*non enim dictamus omnia, et maxime noctibus, quibus nolimus alii graves esse ac molesti*]. Ambrose then claims to derive some added benefit from this kind of writing, that not only the ears, but also the eyes were able to ponder deeply what he was writing [*non solum auribus, sed etiam oculis ea ponderemus, quae scribimus*]. The "linearity" of the dictation process was not amiable to these thought processes. Ambrose, thus, often thought and worked like a modern scholar. Balogh concludes: "*Ambrosius ist die erste, uns 'lesetechnisch' verwandte lesende und schreibende Gestalt des Altertums*" (220) (emphasis original).

⁴Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis*, 14. Reference and translation are from Michael Slusser, "Reading Silently in Antiquity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 499.

the words with his lips, but he would also speak them out loud, even when completely alone, and even when surrounded by people who did not need to hear. Up through the Middle Ages no writer takes particular notice of this fact. It seems that even then, reading was done out loud. The only exception appears to have been the monasteries, where tightly grouped study carrels would have produced an insufferable noise if the monks did not force themselves to read silently, as also late night devotion to the Word would have disturbed those who were sleeping. (St. Benedict's rule, in fact, required those who would read after the sixth hour to do so in silence in order not to disturb the others.) But in society as a whole, in learned circles, and in other parts of church life, it was not until the Age of Enlightenment (the eighteenth century) that reading generally became a silent affair. Today, we consider it childish to read out loud—as adults may read to children or as children may themselves sound out the words until their skills improve. But as far as we are concerned, mature, educated people skim silently.

Ancient people, on the other hand, did not believe that one could become properly involved in the text unless one vocalized it. Some ancient writers, like Augustine, applied Platonic philosophy to the issue: the ink shapes on the page were only signs or symbols; they had no reality, life, or strength until they were spoken out loud and brought back into the world of living language. Silent reading isolated the senses and faculties. Only the eye was involved. The meaning of the words could not reach the mind through the eyes alone. But when the words are spoken, then, says Augustine, are the words on the page brought to life so that they might ring from voice to ear and through the ear penetrate to the mind's understanding.⁵

The facts about reading out loud may surprise you, or maybe you have heard these ideas before. You may think it rather insignificant; you may quite properly object to Augustine's Platonic thinking. But such data about how ancient people viewed the act of reading become quite significant when they are put together with St. Paul's comments about faith and hearing (Rom. 10:14-18). For him, there are **theological, Gospel** implications. As Augustine, on the one hand, cannot imagine the eye to be capable of giving understanding, so also Paul considers not the eye but the **ear** to be the organ of faith. For us, then, there are also **practical** implications about the use of the written Word of God today—whether we are Bible scholars, teachers, pastors, or people in the pew. Most of what we do in serious Bible study has to do with overcoming the gaps that separate us from the original audience of the Scriptural documents. We learn cultural, legal, geographical, theological facts about the people who wrote and received the Scriptures so that we can bridge that gap. Learning how speaking, hearing, reading, and writing happened in earlier times is a significant part of that bridge-building process. The manner in which Biblical writers expected their writings to be received cannot be judged irrelevant.

⁵Augustine, *De dialect.*, 5.11; also *De magistro*, 4.8. Cf. Balogh, 96, 203, 225.

Ancient Antipathy Towards Writing

The Story of Writing—Movement Towards the Alphabet

In order to understand where we are today in our view of writing, we need to be reminded from where writing came. Since creation itself, humans have used some form of “picture writing”—conveying information by drawing *visual representations* of the objects themselves. But the ability to add abstract components like action words and mental concepts appears first among the great ancient civilizations of the Middle East. The Egyptians had hieroglyphs, the Sumerians had cuneiform, both combined pictures of objects with symbols representing abstractions. The next step to be taken was to produce a system which did away with pictorial representation of objects and depicted word *meanings*. In Chinese writing, for example, written characters derived from stylized pictures depict objects and concepts, but not normally sounds. Thus, even today, Chinese writing can be read by people who speak different dialects and even languages, who would assign different sounds to the same characters. The final step was creating a system to record the *sound* of speech rather than the meaning. The Phoenicians are generally credited with developing the first phonetic system. It recorded the smallest sound they could distinguish: the syllable. Hebrew and Aramaic writing is of this kind. Despite the usual descriptions, Hebrew does not really record only consonants, but syllables. Each letter was a shorthand way of recording a syllable. The particular vowel sound in each syllable was simply not recorded (although some early Middle Eastern scripts did have vowel markers).⁶

What is common to all of these early methods of writing is that they were unwieldy, complicated to learn, and ambiguous to interpret. For these reasons, they had little impact on societies in which most everything was still transmitted orally.

It is of vital importance to recognize that the Near Eastern scripts of all shapes and sizes shared two common limitations: (a) they employed a large number of signs and (b) the signs used left a wide range of ambiguity in interpretation. These two factors combined to make them elaborate but also very clumsy weapons of communication, as is amply testified in the records of the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Hittite empires. Only scribes specially trained could handle the script. The governor or executive dictated: the scribe translated his word into script; another scribe on receipt of the script retranslated it back into acceptable speech and read it out to the recipient.⁷

⁶The Greeks also had a syllabic writing system known as “Linear B.” This system is thought to have been lost around 1175 B.C., after the fall of Mycenae, plunging Greece into a “Dark Age.”

⁷Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 117.

Things began to change (and then only slightly) when someone in Greece came up with the idea of a script that distinguished consonants and vowels, in order to write in a purely phonetic way. Although scholars disagree about the precise date when the Greek alphabet was invented,⁸ it happened somewhere around 700 B.C.—and the world has never been the same since. Almost all modern alphabets (note the etymology) are based on the Greek one. From then on, the Greek philosophers began to debate the merit of this new invention. For only when writing gained the ability to reproduce sounds accurately could it begin to threaten oral culture.

Plato's Criticism of Writing

Plato, living in the fifth century B.C., stood at the crossroads of Greek culture. This was between the oral culture of the poets and the new literate culture, which would be taken up by the philosophers. Despite his criticisms of the oral/poetic tradition, Plato himself had some harsh words to say of the “new” invention of writing. His criticisms illustrate the scepticism towards writing which endured in Western culture even into the Middle Ages.⁹ Firstly, in *Phaedrus*, Socrates refers to the legend of the Egyptian god Theuth giving writing to Thamus, claiming it would improve man's memory. Thamus disputes this claim, arguing that writing, first of all, dulls memory.

[Y]ou, who are father of letters, have been led by your affection to ascribe to them a power the opposite of that which they really possess. For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practise their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise (Plato, *Phaedrus* 275B).

⁸Most objections to a late date arose from the belief that Homer's epic poetry must have been composed in writing. Early twentieth-century research into the oral production of epic poetry have dispelled this myth. It is most likely that Homer's epics were transmitted orally for generations before being written down. Havelock's *Preface to Plato* is the classic investigation of the problem.

⁹For example, in English legal tradition through the thirteenth century, a written document was legally binding only as a record of an oral contract. See Michael Clanchy, in *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); and Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). Thorough documentation of this period is found in chapter two of my dissertation.

Secondly, Socrates argues that writing cannot teach, but it is valuable only as an *aide-mémoire*.

He who thinks, then, that he has left behind him any art in writing, and he who receives it in the belief that anything in writing will be clear and certain, would be an utterly simple person, and in truth ignorant of the prophecy of Ammon, if he thinks written words are of any use except to remind him who knows the matter about which they are written (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275D).

Thirdly, writing is mute, silent, undefended.

Writing, *Phaedrus*, has this strange quality, and is very like a painting; for the creatures of painting stand like living beings, but if one asks them a question, they preserve a solemn silence. And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence, but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing... [W]hen ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its father to help it; for it has no power to protect or help itself (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275D-E).

To Plato, the written word is only a faint image of the spoken word, which is “living and breathing.” That’s why “the man who has true knowledge” will not commit it to writing seriously, but only for amusement.¹⁰ Discourse and dialogue are more noble uses of knowledge.¹¹ Plato prefers to stand squarely in the middle between the oral poets and total literacy. In his mind—the mind of one who does philosophy through dialogue—writing is only of value when the author is present to teach and defend it.¹²

It must be remembered, too, that even the reading and writing of the new Greek alphabet was a specialist’s pursuit. The average man on the street could manage to read the inscriptions on monuments (even as I, when in Greece, could read *Eisodos* and *Exodos* and *Trapeza*). But setting words into script using quill and papyrus or parchment was slow and difficult.

¹⁰Plato, *Phaedrus*, 276D: “The garden of letters he will, it seems, plant for amusement, and will write, when he writes, to treasure up reminders for himself, when he comes to the forgetfulness of old age, and for others who follow the same path, and he will be pleased when he sees them putting forth tender leaves.”

¹¹Plato, *Phaedrus*, 276E: “in my opinion, serious discourse about them is far nobler, when one employs the dialectic method [* 4 8g6J46± JXP<®] and plants and sows in a fitting soul intelligent words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them....”

¹²Plato, *Phaedrus*, 277C: “If he has composed his writings with knowledge of the truth, and is able to support them by discussion of that which he has written, and has the power to show by his own speech that the written words are of little worth, such a man ought not to derive his title from such writings, but from the serious pursuit which underlies them.”

Deciphering the words which were written—often with no paragraph divisions, with no sentence divisions or punctuation, and even no spacing between words—this was a task for an expert. Normal practice was to employ a professional scribe when one had something to be written. A rich man could have one permanently in his employ. Common people could use a scribe as we would send a telegraph—pay per use. And then at the other end, a scribe would pore over the manuscript and prepare to read it to those who employed him. In other words, writing was a medium—and a poor one—for carrying out a verbal conversation over great distances in space or time. This must be understood in light of the great role which rhetoric held in Graeco-Roman culture.

The necessary role of scribes in the ancient writing and reading process explains much about the oral character of ancient texts. For example, think about how a document was produced and received. An author “wrote” not by setting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), words flowing silently from his hands. Rather, he prepared himself carefully, and then dictated slowly, word by word, speaking aloud to a scribe, who recorded what the author said. The author would have a chance to check over what was written, but the expense of the process usually prohibited “rewrites.” The manuscript was then delivered to its recipients—whether it was a true letter, an official edict, or whatever. Then a scribe prepared himself and spoke the words aloud again to the intended audience. Even literature produced for artistic or entertainment purposes was handled the same way. Poetry and fiction were “published” not in book form but through public recitations to audiences gathered together to listen. Thus, regardless of the genre, the words of a text were spoken and heard at both ends of the production, not written and read. Consequently, the language of the document was bound to take on different characteristics.¹³

Christian Antipathy Towards Writing

Now, not only Greek philosophers, but also the early church Fathers expressed a certain distrust of writing—and sometimes even open hostility.

Papias: “For I did not imagine that things out of books would help me as much as the utterances of a living and abiding voice [J• B" D• . f FOH nT <- H 6" Å : g<@bFOH].”¹⁴

¹³Chapters 3 and 4 of my dissertation investigate these characteristics.

¹⁴From Papias’s preface to his *Collection of Dominical Sayings*, recorded by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.1; quoted in Loveday Alexander, “The Living Voice: Scepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman Texts,” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions*, ed. David Clines, Stephen Fowl, and Stanley Porter, *JSOT Supplement Series no. 87* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 222.

Irenaeus offers a similar sentiment, saying that he memorized what Polycarp told him of his direct knowledge of John, so that it was thus recorded “not on papyrus but in my heart.”¹⁵

Clement of Alexandria opens his *Stromateis* by defending his choice of writing as a medium against the usual objections: “Now this treatise is not a carefully-wrought piece of writing for display, but just my notes stored up for old age [: @4 βB@ <Z: " J" gÆI (- D" H 20F" LD\ gJ" 4], a ‘remedy for forgetfulness’ [8Z20H nVD: " 6@<], nothing but a rough image [gC* T 8@< • JgP<ä H], a shadow [F 64' (D' "" (? **sic**)] of those clear [! <" D(ä <] and living [! : RbPT <] words which I was thought worthy to hear [! B" 6@F" 4], and of those blessed and truly worthy men.”¹⁶

Galen, a secular Greek writer of the second century, explains that this attitude towards writing concerned what they believed was the best way to **learn**: “There may well be truth in the saying current among most craftsmen, that reading out of a book [! 6 FL((DV: : " J@H • <" 8X>" F2" 4] is not the same thing as, or even comparable to, learning from the living voice [B" D• nT <- H].”¹⁷ Like Plato before him, he thought it was necessary to learn from a teacher in person. Textbooks are of no use without knowing and hearing the author. Only if one has first been taught orally can a textbook be useful as an aide for the memory. Loveday Alexander summarizes:

It is the “living voice” of the teacher that has priority: the text both follows that voice (as a record of teaching already given) and stands in a subordinate position to it (in that it may only be studied with the aid of a teacher and stands ready at any time to be corrected, updated or revised). This would mean that, in this context at least, few ancient readers would have picked up a text to read **de novo** as we would a new novel; writers, conversely, could rely on the nurturing matrix of the teaching situation to expand and explain what was gnomic or technical in the text.¹⁸

¹⁵ C. H. Roberts, “Books in the Graeco-Roman World and in the New Testament,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1970), 61.

¹⁶Alexander, 221. The English translations are her own. Alexander, 242, attributes these attitudes directly to Clement’s links to Platonic philosophy.

¹⁷Opening words from Galen, *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos* 6; quoted in Alexander, 224-225.

¹⁸Ibid., 244. The implications of this ancient attitude are developed in chapter 4 of my dissertation: “Epistles, Apostles, and Orality.” Scripture and teaching office are linked not only theologically but also in Hebraic and Hellenistic thought. There are further implications for the so-called “virgin” reading favored by reader-response critics. Stephen Moore has claimed that a virginal reading of the Gospels was highly unlikely in the early Christian era.

(And I would love to pause and consider the implications of this for our understanding of *sola scriptura* and tradition and how we do catechesis.)

Oral Persistence Today

Today these oral notions are not completely dead. Let me pose a few examples of where orality has persisted in the face of an overwhelmingly text-oriented society:

1. ***Courts of Law***. Despite written documentation, statements, affidavits, etc., we have maintained the traditional rhetorical environment of the courtroom. Why? Partly because the parties involved have the right to cross-examine—a process which is inherently suspicious of pat, prepared, supposedly objective written testimony. Under cross-examination the witness's biases and weaknesses come to light. (Remember Plato's objection to a written document, which could not be cross-examined.) But it is also because litigation is an activity that is conducted by people, and the courtroom provides a forum to do so. The active rhetorical environment of Parliament or Congress is a parallel example.

2. ***Educational Lectures***. In schools and universities the live teacher is far from antiquated. Despite textbooks, videos, and interactive computer learning, the teacher still needs to be there. The teacher can tailor what he says to the responses from his audience, no matter how subtle. And a live voice can capture the attention of the student far more than a textbook. Although modern people have become highly skilled in dealing with text, studies still find that for most people the percentage of absorption for what is heard is higher than for what is read. Consider also the professional or academic conference. What are the advantages of listening to me over against reading a journal article on the subject? I can watch your faces and sense whether you are getting it, then repeat and rephrase until I see the lights come on. You can ask me questions. You can interpret my tone of voice, my stress and intonation, in order to understand which things are important, where the center of it all lies. And when we are finished, you can *klatsch* with me over a coffee and pursue the topic.

3. ***Political Speeches***. Why do the politicians continue to criss-cross the country on tour buses, repeating the same speech over and over again, when they could simply deliver it on national TV or print it in *USA Today*? In this case, I suggest it is the *emotional* impact which counts. The politician wishes to make a personal connection with the voters and to join them together in an audience. Television can strike a multitude of individuals, but it creates no horizontal connections between its viewers. When thousands are gathered together in the action of hearing that one captivating speaker, however, they are given a sense of belonging and togetherness, which encourages them in a united course of action.

4. ***The Divine Liturgy***. For now I am just going to ask questions—although you may already be connecting what has been said above to the

church context. But why do we continue to gather together? Certainly there are things which cannot be done at home on our own—the Sacraments being the prime example. But why do we continue to read the Scriptures aloud in church, even though everyone has a Bible at home these days? Why do we preach, rather than hold group discussions of famous theological writings? Why do we teach the catechism face-to-face, when we could simply assign the children a book to read and test them on it?

St. Thomas Aquinas pondered in his *Summa* why Christ Himself taught in person and did not simply write us a book:

I answer by saying that it is fitting that Christ did not commit his teaching to writing. First on account of his own dignity; for the more excellent the teacher, the more excellent his manner of teaching ought to be. And therefore it was fitting that Christ, as the most excellent of teachers, should adopt that manner of teaching whereby his doctrine would be imprinted on the hearts of his hearers. For which reason it is said in Matthew 7:29, that “he was teaching them as one having power.” For which reason even among the pagans Pythagoras and Socrates, who were most excellent teachers, did not want to write anything.¹⁹

Echoing Plato, Aquinas does not believe that any great teaching could be properly conveyed by writing. The one who “teaches with authority” will proceed purely orally.

Orality in the Scriptures

Christ, the δ ($\text{\textcircled{H}}$)

The preceding quotation from Aquinas reminds me of one of the great oral themes in the New Testament. Christ, according to St. John, is the δ ($\text{\textcircled{H}}$) of the Father. That bit of Greek is usually translated “word” in our Bibles: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God” (John 1:1) and so on. But something has stuck in my mind which I heard from a Greek scholar years ago, who remarked that δ ($\text{\textcircled{H}}$) *never* means “word”—in the sense of one individual vocable, as written on the page or spoken from my mouth. But that is what we usually think of when we hear “word.” Jesus is not that kind of word. δ ($\text{\textcircled{H}}$) means “discourse, utterance, message, speech,” or better yet, “speaking.” Jesus is Himself the Father’s act of communicating with us. In Him God speaks to us. That is what John means. He’s referring to Jesus as the one who speaks to us from God. And that is

¹⁹Question 42 of the third part of his *Summa*. Quoted by Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 122.

very much in line with what we Lutherans primarily mean when we speak of the “Word of God” as a means of grace—we mean that Word of preaching and of Scripture which is proclaimed aloud to people in order to create faith.²⁰

Evidence of Oral Reading

The discovery we began with—that reading in the ancient and medieval world was always vocalized—can be verified quite easily from the Scriptures themselves, if one is sensitized to be looking for it. The first clue is that there is no distinct vocabulary in Old Testament Hebrew for the activity of reading. There is no verb which directly and uniquely means “to read.” In both Hebrew and Aramaic the most common verb used is קרא (to proclaim). From this a noun is derived for the act of reading, or for the pericope read: קְרָאָה (Neh. 8:8; LXX • <“ (<f FJOH)—a noun which the Jews sometimes use to refer to the entire Hebrew Bible: קְרָאָה (that which is proclaimed). There is no avoiding the oral character of these terms. Reading is aloud and interpersonal. There simply is no way of naming private, silent reading in Hebrew. They use either קרא (to proclaim) or אמר (to speak) to refer to reading.

Although there are certainly many examples of letters, edicts, and other documents being read aloud in ancient Israel, I am most interested in the way in which they used the Holy Scriptures, in the oral character of the written Word. And what I have found is, that from the time when God first gave His Word to His people Israel, it was read aloud to them. Moses started it all.

Then [Moses] took the book of the covenant and read [קרא] in the hearing [אזני] (in the ears)] of the people; and they said, “All that Yahweh has spoken [בר] we will do, and we will heed [שמע] (give an appropriate hearing)” (Ex. 24:7).

What happened when the covenant was read publicly is that everyone was joined together by the reading. It not only connected Moses with his hearers, but because Moses was the authorized representative of Yahweh, it can be said that Moses’ speaking was Yahweh’s speaking. In speaking the text, the covenant came into force. Then God commanded that “this Torah” be read again every seven years at the Feast of Booths “in the ears”

²⁰E.g., “firstly through the oral Word [*mundlich Wort*], through which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world, which is the proper office of the Gospel” (SA III.iv). The Confessions regularly qualify the Word with “*mundlich*” (oral) when speaking of the means of grace, often placing it in parallel with Scripture (cf. SA III.viii:3-4). On Luther’s oral rhetoric, see chapter 12 of William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

of all Israel (Deut. 31:11).²¹ When Israel finally took possession of Canaan, Joshua saw to it that this liturgical reading was carried out (Joshua 8:34-35). With all the children of Israel assembled together, this reading of the Torah was certainly קרא (calling out, proclamation) of God's Word.²²

From then on, the Torah, the written Word of God, was kept in the tabernacle or temple and was made known to the people only through oral means: public recitation, worship, and Levitical teaching. It is this background which explains King Josiah's great reform. For a great part of Israel's apostasy from God was their neglect of such liturgical instructions.²³ The Torah had gone lost because no one was proclaiming it anymore, as God had commanded. And the people could not follow what they did not know. One day, after years of neglect, Hilkiah the high priest finds the Torah during repair work on the temple and delivers it to Shaphan the scribe (who seems to be King Josiah's dedicated scribe, a lector for the royal court²⁴). Shaphan then reads the book to the king (2 Kings 22:8-10). That he would read this ancient book to the king is completely natural; Josiah himself would probably find such a task quite daunting. Shaphan is a professional. Josiah then decrees that the public recitation of the Torah in the hearing of all the people should be restored according to Yahweh's own mandate, and this reading initiates his reform (2 Kings 23:1-3).²⁵

On another occasion the faith of the people Israel is again renewed through the public proclamation of the Torah. After the return of exiles to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the walls and the temple, Ezra led the people to a restoration of public worship. The celebration of the Feast of Booths at the proper time was, therefore, accompanied by the reading of the Torah, as specified by God's Word. Ezra the scribe,²⁶ a professional scholar of the ancient texts and a qualified *lector* both by skill and office, commences to read the holy words to all the people (Neh. 8:1-3). It is a lengthy reading, proceeding from morning to midday. For the first time, the reading is not only archaic but in a language no longer vernacular to the people (v. 3), for Aramaic is now their native tongue. So we have the first Biblical evidence of a Targum (v. 8)—a simultaneous translation of the Bible into the language

²¹Josephus, *Antiquities*, 4.209, refers to this mandate.

²²Amos 4:5 [LXX] includes as an example of Israel's apostasy and false worship: reading from the Torah in the wrong place.

²³By the way, the simple fact that the Torah could have been lost for so long is also an indication of the rather different place of books in ancient Israel compared to the modern world. There was no "scroll on every mantel."

²⁴In Esther 6:1 we see another king making use of his lector. It is a rather comical description: the king cannot sleep, so he has the kingdom's record books read to him. The use of lectored reading for entertainment (or medicinal purposes, what we might call the Brandenburg factor) was quite common.

²⁵In Baruch 1:3, 14, the author uses his own book, read publicly, [• < (4< F6T] to bring about repentance.

²⁶Jeremiah is another figure who makes regular use of a scribe, his companion Baruch (Jer. 36:4 et al.). The use of a scribe must be presumed also in 2 Kings 10:6, where it is recorded: "Then he [Jehu] wrote a letter to them a second time *saying* [לֵאמֹר]...."

of the people. The priests and Levites who accompanied Ezra on the podium were there to translate and explain what was read so that the people might understand (vv. 7, 12, 13). For the entire eight days of the festival Ezra read from the Torah (8:18; 9:3). This account is a dramatic portrayal of the oral and public character of “reading” in the Old Testament, indicating how reading is to be understood as נִקְרָא (proclamation).

Although Hebrew had no unique word for reading, Greek did (• <" (4f F6T)—but again, if you look clearly at the context of a few key stories, you can see that it was still reading *out loud*.

1. Zechariah, who had been struck dumb by the angel for his unbelief of the promise, receives his voice again in the very act of writing John’s name. Luke records: “he wrote, *saying*” (Luke 1:63)—for, of course, writing was also normally a vocalized exercise.

2. We see the Old Testament practice of public proclamation of the Torah described both in Jesus’ trip to the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:16ff.) and in Paul’s frequent visits to the synagogues all around the Mediterranean (Acts 13:15). Then Paul refers to it in writing to the Corinthians about the Jews, saying: “to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds” (2 Cor. 3:15).

3. Then there is the most fascinating story in Acts 8. An Ethiopian eunuch was upon his chariot, returning from worshipping at the Jerusalem temple. While he journeyed, he “was immersed in reading [• <g(\<TF6g<] the prophet Isaiah” (Acts 8:28). The Spirit told Philip to go meet his chariot, and as he was approaching, “he heard [3 6@LFg<] him reading [• <" (4f F6@<J@H] Isaiah the prophet” (v. 30). Even though alone, the eunuch was reading aloud, with the result that he could be overheard. Then Philip asks him: “Do you *know* [(4f F6g4] what you are *reading* [• <" (4f F6g4]?” (v. 30). In Hebrew and Greek this is a pun because in both languages the words for reading and for knowing are connected (the Greeks built the verb for reading on the verb for knowing; Hebrew frequently speaks of “knowing” (יָרַע) a text, i.e., “reading” it²⁷). Here we can learn more than just *how* people read back then. The story demonstrates how important it is to connect the reading of Scripture with teaching lest they be read without understanding. It is about catechization. Catechization is an oral process, as the teacher and student come to the truth through discussion. The same sort of thing happened between Jesus and the apostles in the forty days after His resurrection. Although they knew the contents of the Old Testament, they did not yet grasp how it pointed to Jesus. So Jesus had to

²⁷This meaningful wordplay is repeated by St. Paul when he speaks of the Corinthians as his “letter of commendation”: “You yourselves are our letter, written in our hearts, being known and read [(4TF6@ X<O 6" Å • <" (4TF6@ X<O] by all men” (2 Cor. 3:2). Of this connection he has already spoken: “For we, however, write nothing to you but what you read [• <" (4f F6gJg] and understand [;B4< f FgF 2g]. And I hope that you understand until the end” (2 Cor. 1:13). And in 1 Cor. 14:2, • 6@bg4 is used by itself for understanding: “No one hears” = “No one understands.”

teach them to read it Christocentrically. “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45).

4. We also find many references to the actual process of reading the New Testament Scriptures out loud in the context of the Christian church. A few examples:

- a. There is the hotly debated phrase in the Gospels: ὁ • < (4f F6T < <@NT (Let the reader [**lector**] understand) (Mark 13:14)—which may be a reference to the lector and how he reads/proclaims these words to the gathered congregation.
- b. St. John refers to the lector and the audience who will be involved in the public, liturgical recitation of his Revelation: “Blessed is the one who reads [ὁ • < (4f F6T <] and those who hear [α̅ • 6@&Jg] the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it, for the time is near” (Rev. 1:3). One reader; many hearers; the context is liturgical.
- c. Jesus and/or the evangelist point to the other end of the reading process with the oft-repeated cry, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” which occurs in eschatological sections (Matt. [11:15]; 13:43; 25:29 [critical apparatus]; Luke 12:21 [app.]), in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:9; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8), and in the letters to the seven churches in John’s Revelation (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9; 22:18).

Mandate for Oral Reading

In Paul, finally, the descriptions of the public, liturgical reading of Scripture begin to take on the form of a mandate. That is, he commands that the Scripture which he is writing be read aloud to the gathered congregation. This is the purpose for which he has written them. “I adjure you in the Lord that the letter be read [• < (<TF2- <” 4] to all the saints” (1 Thess. 5:27). “And when the letter has been read [• < (<TF2±] among you [pl.], see that it is also read [• < (<TF2±] in the Laodicean church, and that also you read [• < (<ä Jg] the [letter] from Laodicea” (Col. 4:16).²⁸

²⁸Other references to the reading of the epistles occur in 2 Cor. 1:13 and Eph. 3:4. C. H. Roberts, 64, cites a good example of how such letters were circulated for liturgical use in the Christian community:

The clearest reference to the “publication” of Christian texts is to be found in the *Shepherd of Hermas* [Vis. 2.4.3]: “You shall write them,” says the Lady to Hermas in his vision, “two little books and you shall send one to Clement and one to Graptç. Clement shall then send them to the cities overseas, for that is his duty; Graptç shall admonish the widows and the orphans; but in this city [Rome] you shall read them yourself together with the priests [: g]• Jä < BDgF\$LJXDT <] that have the charge of the Church” (64).

The writing is to be read in the church by the presbyters (ministers), and sent abroad to the other Christian churches by the bishop, Clement, in which places it will again be

Secondly, Paul makes this quite pointed command to Timothy, in which he outlines what the young pastor's role is to be in the proclamation of the Word of God: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading [J± • <" (<f Fg4], to the exhortation [J± B" D" 68ZFg4], to the teaching [J± * 4" F6" 8\]" (1 Tim. 4:13). In this way Paul outlines the contours of the ministry of the Word: Scripture reading, preaching, and teaching. What unifies this command is the practice that the church held in common with the synagogue: Christian preaching and teaching were based on the Scripture reading.²⁹ The popular opinion that • <V(<TF4H here refers to Timothy's *private* study of the Word is completely contrary to the Scriptural and cultural evidence we have been discussing. When Paul later refers to all the wonderful things the Scriptures are good for, he is talking about how Timothy as a pastor ("man of God"³⁰) will proclaim these Scriptures into his people and what effect they will have: "Every passage of Scripture is divinely inspired and is useful for teaching [* 4" F6" 8\ <], for convicting [of sin] [! 8g(: ` <], for restoration, for the discipline which is in righteousness, in order that the man of God might be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Oral Use of the Scriptures

Early and Medieval Use of the Scriptures

Justin Martyr in his first *Apology* refers to the way in which the early church fulfilled this mandate to read the Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments. In a famous passage he describes what went on in the Divine Service of his day:

And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles [J • • B@ <O: @<gb: " J" Jä < • B@FJ` 8T <] or the writings of the prophets are read [• <" (\<gl" 4] as long as time permits. When the reader [Ö • <" (<f FJOH] has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites [us] to the imitation of these noble things. (*1 Apology* 67)³¹

read aloud to the congregations. This was the universal practice. Here we also have evidence that the task of reading sacred writings (in this case apocryphal) in church was the responsibility of the pastors [BDgf \$bJgD@4].

²⁹In Luke 4:20-21 Jesus sits down to teach on the basis of the lection. In Acts 13:15 Paul is invited to give a word of B" D" 68ZFgJH "exhortation" following the reading from the Torah and from the prophets.

³⁰That "man of God" refers to Timothy as pastor and not to his Christian hearers is evident from Paul's earlier words: G× *X è -<2DT Bg 2g@ "But you [sing.], O man of God" (1 Tim. 6:11). Cf. the contrast of singular and plural "you" in 1 Timothy 6:20-21 and 2 Timothy 4:22.

³¹Translation from Cyril C. Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 287.

His phrase, “as long as time permits,” is sobering to us moderns. It reminds us that their practice was to read lengthy sections of Scripture, not just snippets—even as, I believe, every book of the New Testament was meant originally to be read in its entirety in one sitting. (And this does not take very long. A Gospel can be read in an hour; an average epistle in fifteen to twenty minutes.) Throughout history, the first half of the Divine Service has been devoted to hearing God’s Word read to the people (the sermon being subordinate to the reading).

In the early Middle Ages, the monastic movement began another form of dedication to the Word. We often have a distorted view of the monasteries as being very bookish places, with monks strewn out around desks, silently studying and copying like scholars in the Library of Congress. But the centrality of the Word in the monasteries was of an oral kind (the above-mentioned rule commanding silent reading only serves to prove the point). On the one hand, their private use of the Word was not what we would call Bible Study or devotions. A number of years ago, a French scholar surprised everyone by demonstrating that *meditatio* among the monks did not mean what we think it means. It referred to the oral recitation of Scripture, which drew the soul closer to God. (In fact, that is what Luther was speaking of in his famous comment: “*oratio, tentatio, meditatio* makes the theologian.”) On the other hand, the daily office, which happened five, six, or seven times daily, was intended as a time to take the brothers through the Scriptures as often as possible. For instance, if three psalms were prayed at each prayer office, the entire Psalter could be prayed through in about a week—fifty-two times a year. (No wonder Luther knew his Psalms so well!)

In view of this, it is sheer Protestantized historical revisionism to assert that no medieval man knew his Bible. It was the Gospel content which was obscured, not the words of the text. Father Walter Ong exposes this bias with an illustration:

The Bible was indeed present to the Middle Ages, but present in the way it could be present to a society still, to our way of thinking, impossibly oral despite its possession of and fixation on writing. Being “in the Bible” in such a culture meant being present via the largely oral tradition through which the society still functioned. If a medieval theological student listened for twelve years (the theology course at Paris once lasted this long) to endless disputations built around the Scriptures and at the same time attended countless sermons quoting incessantly from the Scriptures, he could very well get by without much reading of the Bible, especially since the culture had trained his memory for oral assimilation. The air was filled with the word of God.³²

³²Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 268.

Retaining and Reinvigorating an Oral Approach to the Written Word

What has happened to our use of the Word of God today? We read a few snippets in the liturgy—nothing substantial, maybe seven minutes worth on an average Sunday. We use only a truncated Psalm in the Introit—a bit more if we do the daily office. In daily devotions, if we do them, we read one verse and then have a ten-minute “devotional commentary” on it. We do that a lot. We do it in confirmation class. We proof-text the Bible, using the seven hundred odd passages cited in the old Schwann exposition (the blue catechism). But when do we read the Scriptures at length, out loud, and into our ears? How strange it would be if we asked our congregations to close their Bibles, put down their bulletins with the readings printed out on them, and just listen—to concentrate the organ of faith on the living and abiding Word of God, as His servant proclaims it aloud into their hearts through their ears! But strange as it might seem, we would only be doing what God bids us to do with His Word. In our homes we could pray a whole Psalm *and* read half a chapter of the Scriptures—out loud and to one another! And perhaps we might be content simply to hear and ponder this Word, without muddying it with comments by some “inspirational writer.” For through such active use God’s Word will certainly do what He has promised; it will sink into our hearts, be fluent on our lips, come quickly to mind, and implant in us the faith which is its gift as the Holy Spirit works through that living and powerful Word.

The exegete, also, would be forced to contend with the social and liturgical context of the book that he interprets. In the face of this sort of research, the majority of methodologies practiced in the past two centuries appear hopelessly anachronistic. The source critic, for instance, who imagines a scribe at a desk with four or five scrolls open, cutting and pasting J, E, D, and P together—this is the bookish Victorian scholar projecting himself three millennia into the past, not an accurate reconstruction of how ancient society worked. So also the idea that Matthew and Mark can only be similar if one copied from the other is a complete misunderstanding of how these traditions were transmitted. Redaction criticism fares scarcely any better, with its emphasis on the individual author’s textual manipulation of the tradition. Not only does it anachronistically project back modern man’s idolizing of the creative individual, but it also ignores the fact that these Gospel stories were the common liturgical and catechetical property of the whole church, who knew them intimately and would not permit any individual to treat them as private property. Even the broad spectrum of modern methodologies that come under the heading of literary criticism may fall victim to this trap. The Gospels are analyzed as if they were short stories or novels, using those categories and norms, rather than viewing them (at the very least) in the genre of oral tradition or folklore, even better as orations or sermons. If the results of orality studies are to be taken seriously by exegetes, then

the Scriptures cannot be considered apart from the churchly context in which they arose, and in which they continue to function. “Oral exegesis” must be exegesis that comes from within the church, from the place to which the Scriptures were given, and must be undertaken in service to the church, in the context in which the Scriptures are still read and heard as God’s Word to men.

These are a few suggestions of how orality research might impact the way worshipping Christians and Biblical scholars approach the Holy Scriptures. I think that the thoughtful appropriation of these ideas can have an enormously positive effect. I have not, of course, taken the time to illustrate the perils to which orality researchers have occasionally fallen victim. As with any historical enterprise, it is all too easy to romanticize the past. As with any sociological study, it is tempting to idealize primitivism. One could cite numerous anthropologists who in principle lament the coming of literacy to their subjects as a tragic destruction of a “superior” pre-literate culture. (At the same time, one must be careful not to presume uncritically that all forms of modernization bring cultural progress.) How much preferable it would be if they would avoid any judgement of cultural superiority and simply recognize the uniqueness and value of both oral and literate practices. In applying the results of such research to Biblical studies one must heed the same cautions. I would not want to propose that the oral proclamation of Scripture is “better” than modern silent study, but neither would I accept the reverse. One must take care not to suggest in a quasi-Barthian manner that the written Scriptures only become God’s Word when they are spoken aloud (though we have noted some patristic opinions that come quite close to this error).³³ I hope only that I have engendered a deeper appreciation of how the Scriptural authors expected their writings to be used, and that I have encouraged you to give it a try. It is not in the way of Lutheran theology to pit the various means of grace against one another, but rather to receive thankfully all the means and manners by which God wishes to give His Gospel, “which gives guidance and help against sin in more than one way, because God is extravagantly rich in His grace” (SA III.iv).

³³F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:106-107, discusses the error of “some recent Lutheran theologians” who “have assailed the inspiration of Scripture with the strange contention that not the read, but only the preached Word is a means of grace.” In response, Pieper cites Gerhard: “The statement (Rom. 10:17) that ‘faith cometh by hearing,’ is not to be understood as **excluding** the written Word, but as **including** it, as meaning that God works faith and salvation not only through the oral Word but also through the written Word, since it is and remains one and the same Word whether it is preached and heard or written and read” (*Loci*, “De Scriptura,” §365; emphasis original to Pieper’s German, 3:125-126). What Gerhard quite correctly notes is that the reading of Scripture is part of the oral Word, not an alternative to it.

Orality in the Prophets

Reed Lessing

At various times Old Testament (hereafter OT) prophets have been portrayed as Victorian moralists, occult sages, medieval saints, socialist theoreticians, and apocalyptic visionaries. Yet, from Elijah's jest that Baal did not answer his worshipers' prayers because he had "gone aside" to defecate (1 Kings 18:27) to Jeremiah's wry comparison of foreign idols to "scarecrows in a cucumber field" (10:5), at the core of their being these men were orators of Yahweh's living Word.

This study addresses the problem brought about by modern prophetic scholarship that divorces orality from literary form,¹ resulting in the loss of access to the prophets' oracular words. That is to say, if prophetic books are *only books*, then we have no way of knowing how and what they *preached*; we can only access what they *wrote*.

The tendency among modern prophetic studies is to set up a strict dichotomy, a binary opposition, between orality and written texts. What George Mendenhall expressed a generation ago is still a view widely held: "The writing down of traditions in the ancient world comes at the end of an era, not at its beginning. Writing is used to preserve, not, as in the modern scholarly world, to create."² More recently Brian Peckham writes:

Prophecy was the heir to and of a popular oral tradition, but it was written; and although it is poetry, drama, and oratory composed in direct discourse, all the signs of oral composition and transmission and the clues to an oral society are missing.³

The idea is that Israel's prophetic texts are products of a literate world with signs of oral roots subsumed or erased.

Yet this long-held belief is now being challenged. Just three years ago Ehud Ben Zvi stated that issues of writtenness and orality are now at the center of the study of the OT prophets.⁴ The assumption that writing came

¹Exceptions are found in the so-called Scandinavian school of scholarship (e.g., H. S. Nyberg, Ivan Engnell, Eduard Nielson). While some of their work is dated, these scholars emphasized the importance of oral traditions for understanding the literature and culture of Israel (see, e.g., Eduard Nielsen, *Oral Tradition: A Modern Problem in Old Testament Introduction* [London: SCM Press, 1954]).

²"Biblical History in Transition," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. G. E. Wright (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), 29-49, 34.

³*History and Prophecy: The Development of Late Judean Literary Traditions* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 21.

⁴Introduction: Writings, Speeches, and the Prophetic Books: Setting an Agenda," *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael Floyd (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 1-30, 2.

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at the end of the prophetic task is now no longer an “assured result of historical criticism.” This study will join in the debate and argue, “what therefore God hath joined together”—i.e., orality with written texts—“let not man put asunder.” To best state this case, two related questions form the discussion. First, how did the scholarly guild arrive at the division of orality and written texts? Second, how can these two modes of communication be brought back together so that we may learn from the prophet’s homiletical moves, structures, and strategies?

How Did Scholarship Arrive at the Division of Orality and Written Form?

The line of thinking that divides orality from written texts can be traced back to the form critical work of Herman Gunkel,⁵ who believed that oral compositions and their oral cultures predated the writing of the OT. Prophetic writings of the OT were therefore reworked into literature, thus erasing most, if not all, oral qualities. Gunkel was inspired by the philosophical system of Hegelian idealism, with its central idea being evolution from the simple to the more complex, vis-à-vis thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Building upon this world view, as well as Romanticism,⁶ Gunkel understood Israel’s early religion largely in ecstatic terms, as reflected in their speech.⁷ This speech was always ecstatic, in a pure form (*ganz reinen*),⁸ and in short units.⁹ Thus, he held that the oldest genres

⁵Eugene March writes: “A discussion of form critical research must almost inevitably begin with the work of Herman Gunkel, generally acknowledged pioneer and inspiration of the discipline” (“Prophecy,” *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. John H. Hayes [San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977]: 139-171, 143). The extent of Gunkel’s influence is demonstrated in the studies produced by a number of his contemporaries (for a listing, see March, “Prophecy,” 147-148). For a complete biography on Gunkel, see W. Klatt, *Hermann Gunkel: Zu Seiner Theologie der Religionsgeschichte und zur Entstehung der formgeschichtlichen Methode* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969). Martin Buss places Gunkel in his *zeitgeist* (*Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context*, Journal of the Study of the OT Supplement 274 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 209-262) and demonstrates how Gunkel builds upon the work of Hegel and Wellhausen in arguing that Israelite religion is a movement from the simple to the complex. Hence, Gunkel’s scholarship is tied to a larger framework, a particular *Weltanschauung*.

⁶For a discussion of the Romantic influence on the perception of Gunkel’s prophetic vocation, see Bertil Wiklander, *Prophecy as Literature: A Text Linguistic and Rhetorical Approach to Isaiah 2-4*, Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament 22. (Stockholm: Liber Tryck, 1984), 9-16.

⁷*Die Propheten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917), 118.

⁸*Ibid.*, 120-126.

⁹*Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context*, 359. Gunkel even went so far as to believe that the ancient Israelites could only listen to short units due to their short listening capacity. He compared these Israelites with “our children” (“so wie unsere Kinder”—Genesis, [3rd ed.: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910], xxxiv). All translations of the German and Hebrew are the author’s.

“are almost always completely pure”¹⁰ or even (omitting “almost”) “always completely pure”¹¹ or “completely pure and simple.”¹²

Gunkel believed that in Israel’s oral life only one kind of idea could be said in only one way on any given occasion so that genres appear in a “pure manner.” Any mixture is a sign of decay (i.e., late redactional, written activity). Consequently, he posited a long and complicated history of oral tradition behind the written sources that compose the OT.¹³ This view of Israelite speech created a difference between written texts and oral life, with the written texts being more reflective than the more emotional-practical oral lines. It followed for Gunkel that prophets were incapable of writing long, well-reasoned compositions, characteristic of modern thinkers. Hence, their books are little more than a collection of beads on a string with oral forms overlaid by later editorial work.¹⁴

Gunkel therefore argued that since the basic forms of prophetic discourse are short and self-contained, the exegete’s goal is to identify and isolate these short oral speech units in order to reconstruct the original message of the prophet. The goal is to divide chapters and verses while distributing them among the prophet, then his many disciples, editors, or redactors. He writes: “We must try and imagine their sayings being uttered orally, and not as they now stand on paper, if we are to understand them.”¹⁵ Thus, the oral world described by Gunkel and followed by generations of scholars is part of an evolutionary hypothesis whereby oral means early and primitive—pretextual.¹⁶

The most influential of Gunkel’s students, Sigmund Mowinckel, modified and expanded his teacher’s ideas. In following Gunkel, whose

¹⁰“Die israelitische Literatur, Leipzig,” *Kultur der Gegenwart I/VII*, ed. P. Hinneberg., 1906, 51-102, 54.

¹¹*What Remains of the Old Testament and Other Essays*, trans. A. K. Dallas (New York: MacMillan Co., 1928), 36.

¹²*Die Psalmen*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 28. Gunkel believed Isaiah never produced a coherent collection of sayings. Consequently, Ezekiel was the first prophet to write a book (as noted by Ronald Clements, *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976], 58).

¹³See, e.g., *The Legends of Genesis*, trans. W. H. Carruth (New York: Schocken Books, 1964. First published in 1901, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).

¹⁴Gunkel writes: “Speaking generally, the Hebrew mind had not the type of genius required for lengthy productions, and so the shorter the pieces the more beautiful they are” (*What Remains of the Old Testament and Other Essays*, 29). He believed that because speaking was much more common than writing, “this explains the extreme brevity and small compass of the ancient compositions” (*ibid.*, 62). Gunkel describes the ancient listener as one “whose receptive power was very limited” (*ibid.*). Finally, “Just as we see the development of our children’s minds in the gradually increasing amount that they can take in at a time, so we can trace one feature of the growth of civilization in the gradual increase in the literary units in Israel” (*ibid.*, 63).

¹⁵“Die israelitische Literatur,” 61.

¹⁶For this idea, Gunkel was influenced by Axel Olrik’s 1908 study “Epic Laws of Folklore” (in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965]; Danish original 1908; German translation, 1909; 129-141).

views he believed had “full and far-reaching justification,”¹⁷ Mowinckel writes: “The original datum is the separate tradition, the separate narration, the separate local story, the separate stanza, etc., the binding together to larger units being a later stage in the history of tradition.”¹⁸ In holding to this view Mowinckel further advanced the idea that in prophetic literature orality preceded written texts.

Gerhard von Rad carried the discussion further. He writes: “The separate units consisting of oracles or songs were very soon gathered together into little complexes.”¹⁹ For example, commenting on a section in Isaiah 30:8-15, von Rad writes:

This passage, which comes from the latter period of Isaiah’s life, makes the transition of prophecy from oral proclamation to its redaction to writing, that is to say, to the second, the literary, of its existence.²⁰

In the course of the redaction, earlier oracles are “reinterpreted in sometimes opposite terms because of the very different historical situation.”²¹

The next generation of OT prophetic scholars summarized and expanded the belief that prophetic ideas evolved from oral and simple to written and more complex. Among the most influential of these were Claus Westermann, Klaus Koch, Hans Walter Wolff, and Walther Zimmerli.

In his book *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, Claus Westermann²² takes the oral roots of prophetic literature for granted and attempts to recover—as did Gunkel—the original speeches that were delivered before being collected and organized into books. While rejecting Gunkel’s conclusion that all prophetic speech was ecstatic and ejaculatory, he writes: “It follows from the requirements of the oral transmission that the message that the messenger has to deliver must be short.”²³

Klaus Koch continued this line of thought, namely, that “the basic structures of prophetic texts were short oral genres.”²⁴ He writes:

¹⁷As noted by Marvin Sweeney, “Form Criticism,” *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. Steven McKenzie and Stephen Hayes (Louisville: John Knox, 1999), 58-89, 23.

¹⁸Ibid., 11.

¹⁹*Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 39.

²⁰Ibid., 42.

²¹Ibid., 47. He goes on to write: “The very fact that oracles are so often inverted in this way might suggest that we should regard it as a perfectly normal and theologically legitimate procedure” (47).

²²Trans. Hugh C. White (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967); *Grundformen prophetischer Rede* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1964).

²³Ibid., 105.

²⁴*The Prophets: Volume 1—The Assyrian Period*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 166.

The orally delivered saying was formulated tersely and poetically, so that the listener could easily commit it to memory. When, later on, it was given a fixed written form, individual sayings might be shortened to avoid repetition, or poetic lines might be expanded into prose, in order to make it easier for the unformed listener to understand what was said.²⁵

Based upon these form critical reading strategies, Hans Wolff's commentary on Amos distinguishes three eighth-century literary strata—"all of which for the most part derive from Amos himself and his contemporary disciples"—and three additional strata that are recognizable "by their distinctive language and different intentions."²⁶ The last three strata are the Josianic (anti-Bethel) and Deuteronomistic levels of redaction and a post-exilic "eschatology of salvation," chiefly in Amos 9:11-15. Wolff uses a methodology that separates early poetry from late prose, thus following the idea that prophetic literature evolved from short poetic to lengthy prose statements.

Walther Zimmerli, while not nearly as radical as earlier form critics on Ezekiel,²⁷ believes the existing text incorporates many later accretions by "schools" of the prophet.²⁸ While cautioning against what he calls "a one-sided" use of form-critical methodology, he himself advocates and uses it throughout his commentary on Ezekiel, thus also building upon Gunkel's methodology.²⁹

The fundamental assumption of these scholars is that the prophetic text is not the most fruitful object of extensive study. Rather, the primary value of the text lay in its being a depository for earlier oral materials that are more useful and interesting than the Biblical text itself. Thus, the text is viewed as an aggregate of literary sources often not pieced together very well and easily identified and separated out from later additions. At this time in the history of form criticism there was little interest in studying extensive units of the Biblical text as oral/literary pieces presenting a coherent perspective of their own, since the collectors were not authors who creatively rewrote the original words of the prophet.³⁰ Marvin Sweeney writes:

²⁵Ibid., 165.

²⁶*Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 107.

²⁷Cf. G. Hölscher (*Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch* [Giessen: Topelmann, 1924]), who credited Ezekiel with sixteen poetic texts and five elevated prose sections, 144 verses out of 1,273.

²⁸*Ezekiel*, vols. 1-2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979-1983).

²⁹Ibid., 1:44. Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) analyzes Zimmerli's connection to the form-critical enterprise (17-23).

³⁰For example, George Fohrer outlines his understanding of the process of collection of Isaiah 1-39 in, "Entstehung, Komposition und Überlieferung von Jesaja 1-39," *Beihfte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1967): 113-147. He understands chapters 1-39 to be a collection of seven earlier and once-independent collections (*Sammlungen*) of Isaiah's oracles (117-132). Within each of the seven collections he identifies

These studies stand well within the methodological framework of Gunkel's original program in that they demonstrate a concerted attempt to refine his earlier understandings of form, genre, setting, and intention.³¹

The discipline continued holding to Gunkel's belief that prophets originally delivered short rather than lengthy oracles.³²

Through a series of articles and books, especially *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch*³³ the work of von Rad began to change the form critical lines of thinking. At this same time Martin Noth also contributed important works on the redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua—2 Kings) and the work of the Chronicler (Chronicles—Ezra—Nehemiah).³⁴ Both of these scholars are often credited as pioneers of current OT redaction criticism.³⁵

Wolfgang Richter built upon the methods of von Rad and Noth, as he began to engage texts on the basis of both their *Sitz im Leben* and *Sitz im Literatur*.³⁶ Although he focused largely on the synchronic level, a major

principles used by the redactors to link the individual oracles to one another. These include the principle of using a catchword (*Stichwort*). Isaiah is seen as a collection of collections of material that grew over a period of three centuries or more (see *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. David Green [Nashville: Abingdon, 1968]), where Fohrer discusses the formation of prophetic books on pages 342-362. He demonstrates his understanding of the original prophetic word as a "primitive complex of sounds," thus preserving the conception of prophecy that developed in the Romantic period under Gunkel.

³¹"Form Criticism," 65. Sweeney also writes: "For most of the twentieth century, form-critical study of the prophetic literature has proceeded on the basis of the methodological guidelines laid down by Hermann Gunkel" ("Formation and Form in Prophetic Literature," *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present and Future: Essays in Honor of Gene Tucker*, ed. James Mayes, David Peterson, and Kent Richards [Nashville: Abingdon, 1995], 113-126, 113).

³²For further interpretation of Gunkel's impact on this subsequent prophetic scholarship see Robert P. Gordon, "A Story of Two Paradigm Shifts," *This Place Is Too Small for Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 3-26. For a general history of form-critical studies of the prophets, see Tucker, "Prophetic Speech," *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 31-45.

³³In English, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. K. Kitchen (New York: Doubleday, 1966). John Barton writes of von Rad's work: "It is through his work above all that the redaction-critical approach has really established itself in Old Testament studies" (*Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*, 2nd ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], 47).

³⁴First published as *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle, 1943). A second unaltered edition on just the Deuteronomistic history was published at Tübingen in 1957. Based on this, a second English translation was prepared and edited by D. J. A. Clines, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

³⁵Paul Wegner writes: "Two Old Testament scholars who would probably be considered precursors to Redaction Criticism are G. von Rad (Pentateuchal studies) and M. Noth (studies in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets)" (*An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* [New York: Mellen, 1992], 14).

³⁶Wolfgang Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft: Entwurf einer alttestamentlichen Literaturtheori und Methodologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprect, 1971).

goal of Richter's research was to identify tensions within texts as a means to reconstruct their diachronic or redaction history.

Richter held out the belief that later editing of prophetic collections reflects the concerns and interests of the receptor community. This strategy was influenced by the idea of the prophetic word as capable of being adapted to new situations as well as inspiring fresh oracles modeled on it. Therefore, prophetic texts at this point were viewed as testimonies to a living tradition that continually actualizes the text with new interpretations.³⁷

Also important during this time was the work of Rolf Knierim who, while not abandoning diachronic concerns, stated that the text must be understood first in its final form prior to drawing conclusions concerning its literary history.³⁸ According to Knierim redaction-critical reconstruction looks for inner tension in the text that then points to a literary prehistory.³⁹

Therefore, by the mid-1970s form critics began to build in earnest upon the insights of von Rad, Noth, Richter, Knierim, and others as the emphasis was now placed more upon the work of redactors. Gene Tucker, writing in 1976, captures the heart of this change:

While the recognition and analysis of the preliterate materials must remain an important aspect of the form-critical endeavor, it is only a part of the task. There is a growing awareness that the form-critical questions, i.e., the search for what is typical in the linguistic expressions, can and should be applied to all stages of the literature, including material that did not have an oral prehistory.⁴⁰

While still distinguishing between literature and oral tradition, the new goal was to place greater value upon the literature. Classical form criticism was evolving into what scholarship now labels redaction criticism.⁴¹ The

³⁷This tendency to have a higher view of redactors is summed up by the Jewish scholar, Franz Rosenzweig. He holds that "R" (the conventional symbol for "redactor") should be regarded as standing for *rabbenu*, "our Master," since it is from their hands that the Scriptures are received. This remark is cited in von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose, Genesis* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956); *Genesis*, OTL trans. J. H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

³⁸"Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered," *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 435-468.

³⁹For Knierim's analysis of form criticism, see "Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition and Redaction," *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Douglas Knight and Gene Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 123-165.

⁴⁰*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*, ed. Keith Crim, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 342.

⁴¹Marvin Sweeney locates this evolution in the broader context of world history and literature ("Formation and Form in Prophetic Literature," 114-116). He writes: "Much of the early form-critical methodological discussion presupposes the romanticist conceptions of history and literature that were prevalent throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries.... The experience of two World Wars, the Cold War, the rise of social movements, and the emerging importance of many previously ignored cultures and nations throughout the world, demonstrated the need to examine the social dimensions of human history

difference is in form criticism's archival text designed merely to preserve the prophet's words and redaction criticism's focus on an exhortational text that employs the prophet's words as a means to motivate a community. Describing this evolution Sweeney writes:

The history of form-critical research demonstrates a shift from an early focus on the short, self-contained, "original" oral speech unit to an emphasis on the literary and linguistic structures and modes of expression of the much larger textual compositions in which smaller formal units function.⁴²

Ronald Clements was significant in breaking further new ground, especially in Isaiah.⁴³ He observed that the creative role of the redactor makes it difficult to locate the original words of prophets in general and Isaiah in particular.⁴⁴ His methodology was initiated in response to the need to appreciate books as finished products and not simply as repositories of older sources. Therefore, redactors were understood as creative and their activity as less mechanical.⁴⁵

and literature.... Likewise, a focus on individual authors does not prepare scholars for the role that cultural perspectives, values and ideologies play in the composition of literary works and the means by which they influence the presentation of their subjects. Consequently, the 20th century has seen a rise in interest in both the social sciences and literary theory. These interests have a tremendous impact on the study of prophetic literature in that they focus attention on the literary character and social dimensions of prophetic books" (114-115).

⁴²"Form Criticism," 60.

⁴³See, e.g., "Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 31 (1985): 1-10. An earlier precursor to Clements is J. Becker who published *Isaias: der Prophet und sein Buch*, SBS 30 (Stuttgart, 1968) where he argues that the work of Isaiah was subjected to a major redaction in or just after the exile. He summarizes the major themes and motives that link these redactional sections of Isaiah as follows: "The people are forgiven and return to their land in a new Exodus; Yahweh's kingly rule begins on Zion and his glory is revealed; those returning home from exile increase miraculously both in number and power; the nations come on pilgrimage to Zion while the enemies of Israel are judged" (42).

⁴⁴"The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 117-129, 121. He writes: "Duhm, with his analytical method, was entirely, and almost obsessively, concerned with the problems of original meaning. Such would be in order if the books of prophecy were merely collections, or anthologies, in which the original sense has been retained and the role of the editor, or editors, reduced to a minimum. On the other hand, if the work of the editors has been substantially more than this, then we may expect that they will themselves have injected a great degree of their own understanding into the work. Even at a *prima facie* level it would certainly appear that the very complexity of the final shape given to the book of Isaiah points us to this latter conclusion. The later redactional stages in the formation of the book have contributed more to an understanding of what it means than can be gleaned by modern attempts to reconstruct the story of the 'life and times' of Isaiah of Jerusalem in the 8th century BC" ("Beyond Tradition History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes," 10).

⁴⁵Clements writes, "The overall structure of the book [of Isaiah] shows signs of editorial planning and at some stage in its growth, attempts were made to read and interpret the book as a whole" ("The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," 121).

Today, even as redaction critics argue for a “redactional unity” or investigate the “function” of a unit such as Isaiah 1-39, they retain as a cardinal doctrine of their received wisdom that originally the texts were disparate units, now blended into one.⁴⁶ With redaction criticism, the reader is not confronted with the “historical” prophet, still less, the oral communication of the prophet, but rather with the “presentation” of the prophet, to use a term introduced by Peter Ackroyd.⁴⁷ If books are unified wholes, then the original quest for the authentic words of the prophet is now impossible. Whereas form criticism believed oral utterances lay “in, with, and under” the received text, redaction criticism has essentially abandoned the task of discovering the original prophetic words. The idea is that the oral nature of texts has been completely subsumed due to the many redactional layers placed over the original text.

These scholars frequently speak of the literary growth of a prophetic tradition. Michael Fishbane uses the concept of “explication.”⁴⁸ Herman Barth prefers the concept of “adaptation” as the tradents provided an “interpretation” (*Auslegung*).⁴⁹ Others call it *Fortschreibungen* (continuation).⁵⁰ Whatever term is used, today there is a consensus among OT redaction critics that texts demonstrate a process of continual realization and actualization beginning with the realm of oral tradition and ending in written form, with the written form carrying little or no signs of orality.

⁴⁶See, e.g., Clements who believes the Assyrian prophecies of Isaiah are applied to the circumstances of the Babylonian exile (“The Prophecies of Isaiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.,” *Vetus Testamentum* 30 [1980]: 421-436). Clement’s conception of the developmental process is essentially one of “enlargement” and “supplementation,” whose final consequence is “sequel” collections being placed side by side. This understanding of Isaiah is driven by the assumption that the final form of the book dates at least to after the exile, based upon the historical references (i.e., Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Another example of this scholarship is demonstrated in the message of Hosea to the Northern Kingdom that is then redirected towards the people of Judah after the fall of Samaria (G. I. Davies, *Hosea*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993). “These later voices, too, are part of the prophetic tradition of Israel, and without them we should probably not have had the prophetic books at all” (102).

⁴⁷“Isaiah 1-12: Presentation of a Prophet,” *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 29 (1978): 16-48.

⁴⁸*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 166-170. He writes: “The whole phenomenon of inner-biblical exegesis requires the latter-day historian to appreciate the fact that the texts and traditions, the received *traditum* of ancient Israel, were not simply copied, studied, transmitted, or recited. They were also, and by these means, subject to redaction, elucidation, reformulation, and outright transformation. Accordingly, our received traditions are complex blends of *traditum* and *traditio* in dynamic interaction, dynamic interpenetration, dynamic interdependence” (542-543).

⁴⁹*Die Jesaja-Worte in der Josiazeit*, WMANT 48 (Neukirchen-Vlyun: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 308ff.

⁵⁰So Odil Steck. He writes: “The transmission no longer concretely elaborates the original historical circumstances and addressees in characteristic concentration. The texts of the prophetic books are thus largely stripped of the original communication between prophet and listener” (*The Prophetic Books and Their Theological Witness*, trans. James Nogalski [St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000], 56).

How Can Orality and Written Texts Be Brought Back Together?

In contrast to the belief that orality was early and written texts were late, there is now a significant and growing body of literature that is arguing for the interconnectedness between oral and written forms.⁵¹ Specifically, the work of Susan Niditch in ***Oral World and Written Word***⁵² strengthens ties between the written text and oral word. She believes that “large, perhaps dominant threads in Israelite culture were oral, and the literacy in ancient Israel must be understood in terms of its continuity and interaction with the oral world.”⁵³ Undergirding this line of thinking is Ellen Davis who writes:

The results of recent research in the history of language and its uses challenge this view [i.e., orality early, written documentation late]. It has become increasingly evident that writing did play a creative role in shaping ancient cultures.⁵⁴

Against Gunkel and the entire enterprise of redaction criticism, these scholars suggest that in general the oral world lives in the words of the OT.⁵⁵ Niditch critiques form and redactional views as follows:

This diachronic approach to orality and literacy is, however, misguided, devaluing the power of oral cultures and misconstruing the characteristics of orally composed and oral-style works. Such an approach ignores the possibility that written works in a

⁵¹See, e.g., Burke Long who writes: “Largely captive to written documents, and immune to the constraints which direct observation can provide, Old Testament scholars have been preoccupied with textual models—structure, content, and style—and with oral transmission mostly conceived at being analogous to literary accretion. While understandable, this emphasis has to be judged as seriously flawed. The ground is much less sure than one had come to believe” (“Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and Their Bearing on Old Testament Criticism,” *Vetus Testamentum* [1976]: 187-198). Also important in this regard is Robert C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 4-20.

⁵²Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. Niditch proposes four models for evaluating Biblical material on the literacy/orality continuum: (1) oral performance, (2) slow crystallization of a pan-Hebraic literary tradition, (3) written imitation of oral-style literature, and (4) the production of a written text excerpted from another. Also helpful is Robert Coote, “The Application of the Oral Theory to Biblical Hebrew Literature,” *Semeia* (1976): 51-64.

⁵³*Oral World and Written Word*, 1.

⁵⁴*Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamic of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 31.

⁵⁵Of course there are exceptions. Niditch writes: “The Bible does offer one fairly certain example of composition in a literate mode, the use of a manuscript to produce another written work, namely the author's use in 1 and 2 Chronicles of a history of the kings of Israel and Judah preserved in 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, portions of what we call the Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic History” (*Oral World and Written Word*, 127-128).

traditional culture will often share the characteristics of orally composed works. It misrepresents ancient literacy as synonymous with literacy in the modern world of print, books, and computers and draws too artificial a line, chronological and cultural, between oral and written literatures.⁵⁶

Niditch confirms that especially for the prophets, performances were probably written down and orally delivered.⁵⁷

Further evidence of this connection between orality and written texts is confirmed in that there is no distinct vocabulary in the OT for the activity of reading. In both Hebrew and Aramaic the most common verb used is נקד "to proclaim." The noun derived from נקד is מְקֹדֵד (Neh. 8:8). Both terms are highly oral. Reading in the OT is aloud and interpersonal. There is no way of naming a private, silent reading of an OT text.

For example, in 2 Kings 5, נקד is interchangeable with אמר ("to say"). The king of Aram writes a letter for Naaman to take to Israel, asking that he be healed of leprosy (5:5). When Naaman appears in Israel's royal court, he immediately speaks (אמר) the contents of the letter (5:6), after which Ahab reads it aloud (נקד) for himself (5:7). A similar account is in 2 Kings 19:9-14 = Isaiah 37:9-14. These examples demonstrate the interconnectedness between orality and written texts.

Moreover, at the heart of Israel's faith was the repeated public proclamation of the Torah as it was written down in the books of Moses. "Then [Moses] took the book of the covenant and read (ויקד) in the hearing (באזני) of the people; and they said, 'All that Yahweh has spoken (דבר) we will do, and we will heed (ונשמע)'" (Ex. 24:7). The public reading of the Torah was to be repeated every seven years at the Feast of Booths (Deut. 31:10-11). When Israel took possession of Canaan, Joshua saw to it that this reading was carried out (Josh. 8:34-35). Again, in the OT most texts were written down to be orally delivered.

Another example of keeping thought and tongue together is demonstrated in Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 1: "Now it came about, as she continued praying before Yahweh, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard; so Eli thought she was drunk" (1 Sam. 1:12-13). What would not get our attention today, was attention-getting then—that a person would pray *silently*.

⁵⁶Ibid., 3.

⁵⁷Ibid., 117. She offers a detailed analysis of the orality of Isaiah 1 in "The Composition of Isaiah 1," *Biblica* (1980): 509-524. Ben Zvi also confirms this idea when he writes: "It is reasonable to assume that an authoritative written text becomes the starting point for the oral performances of the literati and for the aurality of an audience" ("Introduction," 16-17).

Indeed, in several sections of the OT, prophetic texts are represented as written *first*, and then presented orally.⁵⁸ These texts were written on scrolls on the assumption that they would be orally communicated, i.e., they were for the *ears*, not for the silent perusal of the *eyes*. The classic example is Jeremiah 36:2 where Jeremiah tells Baruch to “Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations.” If these texts were read aloud or recited from memory before an audience, then the retention of oral features is a practical necessity.

Finally, even a cursory examination of prophetic literature justifies the conclusion that oral communication was the essential—if not the only—feature of their vocation and work.⁵⁹ Furthermore, even if there were no such reports or allusions but only the prophetic words themselves, it is clear from the form, style, and content of those words that the prophets were fundamentally speakers.⁶⁰ Ben Zvi summarizes the argument:

If the literati themselves were immersed in an oral and aural world, it is certainly reasonable to suppose that they were strongly influenced by it in their lives and in their writing.⁶¹

Conclusions

That Israel’s prophets, rather than kings and priests, were the nation’s preeminent religious figures is an especially revealing fact, for their high status was largely unique within the ancient Near East. In Egypt, the priest was the paradigmatic holy man; in Mesopotamia, the central role belonged to the diviner. Each type of specialist embodied a set of distinctive, culturally relevant assumptions. Egyptian society was organized around a stable agricultural cycle: hence the predominance of priest, dedicated to the maintenance of a fixed cosmological order. In Mesopotamia where the

⁵⁸The belief that written texts were composed to be read aloud is also followed by, among others, Yehoshua Gitay, “Deutero-Isaiah: Oral or Written?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 190-194; *Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40-48*, 41; W. S. Vorster, “Readings, Readers and the Succession Narrative: An Essay on Reception,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 98 (1986): 345-369, 353; Edgar Conrad, “Heard But Not Seen: The Representation of ‘Books’ in the Old Testament,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (1992): 45-59.

⁵⁹See Walter Houston, “What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing?: Speech Acts and Prophetic Discourse in the Old Testament,” *Biblical Interpretation* 1, 2 (1993): 163-188.

⁶⁰For studies on the speaking role of prophets see *Interpreting the Prophets*, ed. James L. Mayes and Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Gary V. Smith, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets: The Prophets as Preachers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994); J. F. Ross, “The Prophet as Messenger,” *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 98-107; and Lawrence Boadt, “Poetry of Prophetic Persuasion,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997): 1-21.

⁶¹“Introduction,” 21.

gods were seen as capricious, diviners provided some measure of control over an otherwise malevolent and unpredictable universe. Israel, meanwhile, was engaged in a *historical* drama featuring divine election, human fidelity, and ethical decision. Rather than passively interpreting the will of the gods, Israel's prophets came forward as divinely commissioned oral agents. Yahweh's Word that charts the course of history came through their *mouths* (Is. 6:7; Jer. 1:9; Ezek. 2:8). Recognizing this orality in their writings unleashes a powerful influence in the church's proclamation of this same Word.

To be sure, if there is any consensus emerging among oral specialists, it is that the extreme dichotomy between oral and written language and thought patterns posited by OT form and redaction scholars is most certainly overdrawn. The use to which writing is put in a given society is far more relevant.⁶² Therefore, it might be suggested that prophets composed their sermons in writing in order to deliver them orally, either through reading or memorization. Their writing was a servant of speaking.⁶³ It served as an *aide memoire*. Versed in an oral tradition they could have written oral sounding texts and then delivered them to their audiences. If the Homeric epics in their written form still retain oral structures, it seems worthwhile to attend to this possibility in the studies of prophetic texts.⁶⁴

So what characteristics would we expect to find in prophetic speeches that were proclaimed aloud?⁶⁵ According to the studies of orality we would expect formulaic language, riddles, puns, sound-plays, rhetorical questions, and a definite rhythm in speech patterns. But chiefly we would expect to find the use of repetition, even sometimes a redundancy of thought. Repetition and recapping of major points is necessary in oral communication in order to aid retention and persuasiveness. These are exactly the characteristics of OT prophetic literature.⁶⁶

Finally, it is better to understand that in any writing culture orality and literacy co-exist and interact, as each influences the other. "There is no 'great divide' between the oral and the written in the cultures of ancient Israel but a continuum."⁶⁷ Although important study has been done on

⁶²This argument is characteristic of Jack Goody's works, especially, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁶³Ben Zvi states that there is clear evidence from Mari and Assyria that at times prophetic oral performances were written close to the event and then archived or organized in collections ("Introduction," 27).

⁶⁴Albert Lord notes that there are remnants of Homer's oral poetic composition which no longer make sense in the written version but that are retained as the written "recording" of an oral performance (*The Singer of Tales: Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature* 24 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960], 141-197).

⁶⁵This section is largely dependent upon Boadt, "Poetry of Prophetic Persuasion," 6-7.

⁶⁶Boadt provides examples of formulaic language, riddles, puns, sound-plays, rhetorical questions, and the like in his analysis of Isaiah 5:1-7 and Ezekiel 15:1-8 ("Poetry of Prophetic Persuasion," 12-21).

⁶⁷*Oral World and Written Word*, 78.

orality and prophetic texts, such work is just beginning to contribute significantly to the interpretation of prophetic books.⁶⁸ It follows that any approach to prophetic issues oral and written errs if it views these two modes of communication as incompatible. The result is that the church may view prophetic texts as sermons full of rhetorical devices, moves, and strategies. Indeed, as pulpits model the rhetoric of Israel's prophets the truth of the following hymn verse will resound in sermon after sermon:

God of the prophets, bless the prophets' sons;
Elijah's mantle on Elisha cast.
Each age its solemn task may claim but once;
Make each one nobler, stronger than the last.⁶⁹

⁶⁸See, e.g., Boadt, *Ezekiel's Oracles Against Egypt: A Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29-32*, BibOr 37 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1980), 159-162, where he attempts to apply the principles of Milman Perry and Albert Lord to the interpretation of Ezekiel 32:17-32; Charles Shaw, *The Speeches of Micah: A Rhetorical-Historical Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 1993; Brian Jones, *Howling Over Moab: Irony and Rhetoric in Isaiah 15-16* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); Reed Lessing, *Isaiah's Tyre Oracle*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

⁶⁹*Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982), #258.

PDA's and the Spirit's Sword

Dale A. Meyer

A friend of mine with some thirty years of experience in media—writing, reporting, and consulting for major networks—delights in goading seminarians. I occasionally invite him into my classes to talk about the “real world” of media, which happens to be a context of our call to preach. My friend takes special delight—is it sinister?—in telling the seminarians that he pulls out his PDA (personal digital assistant) whenever the Sunday sermon loses his interest. He figures that whatever he does in the pew with his PDA has to be better than an unengaging media presentation, a.k.a. sermon.

Of course, many listening students think, “I’ll never be that boring.” Why is it that most of us have an inflated view of our preaching ability? That’s a subjective judgment, I know, but I’ve heard very few pastors voice dissatisfaction with their pulpit products. Providence, however, provides bubble busters. I remember one sermon in my last congregation. The church building was old, built in 1915, with a high pulpit that had me looking down on the people in the front pews. As I was holding forth, I noticed my wife and grade school daughter occupied with something other than my words of wisdom. So when I got home, I asked what they had been doing. Daughter Katie, still too young to be a skillful liar, blurted out, “We were playing tic-tac-toe.” Let’s face it, most of our sermons won’t make it into anthologies of history’s greatest sermons. I include myself here as well; I’m no Oswald Hoffmann.

Anthologies aren’t the goal anyway. The purpose is to be a pastoral proclaimer, a **keryx**, of the Gospel to the souls that have been motivated to come to church. That they’re pulling out PDAs or engaging in some other diversion, even listening mindlessly, should invite some self-examination on our part. Could it be that I’m not getting through to my hearers in the best way possible? Thom S. Rainer, Dean of the Billy Graham School of Evangelism, led a project that researched why people had joined a church. The two leading factors identified were the pastor’s preaching and teaching, findings LCMS people like to hear. Unfortunately, it wasn’t told to Rainer by new LCMS members. Rainer’s team interviewed people in churches that had a 20:1 ratio, twenty members to one convert. The national average is 85:1, and I’m told the LCMS ratio is 115:1. No LCMS churches were among the congregations he studied.¹ So let me try a syllogism. If people

¹Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

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are joining churches because of preaching and teaching, and if we in the LCMS have a splendid understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (which I believe we do, an almost incomparable understanding among Christian denominations), then maybe we LCMS preachers aren't being the best proclaimers we could be. Don't get defensive, brother. Martin Luther said that we should not pray the Lord's Prayer when we leave the pulpit because we should not have preached any doctrine for which we need to ask forgiveness.² The issue before us is not LCMS public doctrine which we proclaim Sunday after Sunday. I'm suggesting that we...at least, I, the inspiration of that tic-tac-toe game...could shape our sermons so that the Spirit has a sharper sword to work in the hearer's heart. Something is sure to be unsheathed every Sunday morning. Will it be the Spirit's sword or a PDA?

+ + +

One of our faults is style, and that's what this paper is about. Whoops! I ended that sentence with a preposition. We Missouri Synod homileticians have been conditioned to be so academic. We learned our Greek and Hebrew; our Luther, Walther, and Pieper. Graduates of the old system learned German and Latin as well, and like it or not, read Plato and Kant and Donne and Skinner. Books! "Build your library" was the old Concordia cry. It was all part and parcel of the good liberal arts education that was the basis and context for the study of theology. And when we wrote papers for the professor, we wrote in an academic style, thoughtful, well-researched papers (well, not always!) that the professor could read and ponder. I remember a professor at the Senior College warning us that *Readers Digest* was good for the *hoi polloi*, but had no place in our reading and writing. We were trained to prepare papers for the professor that were abstract and propositional, written in an academic, literary style. Long sentences, complex sentences, and by all means, remember that a preposition is a bad thing to end a sentence with.

Let me highlight two points from that last paragraph. We were trained to write for literate and educated people. I don't know if the story is true, but according to seminary lore, Jaroslav Pelikan once submitted a class paper in Latin for no purpose other than keeping his marvelous mind occupied. Down at the pedestrian level where the rest of us live, we were put in the habit of throwing in Greek or Hebrew, German or Latin phrases into our papers because we were writing for a learned person. We usually knew what kind of degree he had or didn't have. That orientation is fine for classroom exercises but transferring that style to the pulpit will unsheath PDAs faster than you can say, "the Greek word here is *logos*." Goober down at the Mayberry garage won't have a clue what we're talking

²Martin Luther, "Against Jack Sausage," (1541). *Luther's Works*, American Edition (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 41:179-256.

about...and, what's more, doesn't really care. The goal of Goober's faith is salvation, not the theological training that we have. "If we are faithful to the spirit of the Gospel we labor to make things plain; it is our study to be simple and to be understood by the most illiterate of our hearers."³

To be more accurate, I should have said that Goober won't have a clue what we've written about. Not only were LCMS ministers conditioned to prepare academic papers for an educated audience, we were also trained in a style meant for reading, not for hearing. This is my second point. "The style of written prose is not that of spoken oratory.... Both written and spoken have to be known."⁴ Bringing a literary style into the pulpit reveals a false assumption about the communication process. When you're the reader of a paper, article, or book, you can absorb the ideas at your own pace. Didn't the Rams stink last year? Whoa! When the Rams popped up just now out of the blue, I bet you instinctively paused. Huh? What does football have to do with the subject? Reader, you're right. The Rams have nothing to do with this paper except this: In the exchange you and I are having right now you have the luxury to pause, to ponder, and to proceed only when you are ready to do so. Far different is the transaction between a speaker and listener, oral and aural. The people in your pews can't stop to ponder your last sentence. Well, they can, but if they do they'll be left behind because you've moved on. They've no pause button they can push to stop the tape. By the way, keep in mind that many classic speeches and sermons that we read in anthologies were actually delivered in oral style and then reworked for reading. So when the Collect for the Word asks about the Scriptures that "we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them," it's really covering two styles, literary and oral/aural. To feed the people the literary style from the pulpit can lead to aural indigestion.

Consideration of the hearer's ability to process what you're saying.... Consideration, literally: You being considerate of that person who is giving to you of his or her time. The listener's obligation to hear the Word of God does not authorize the inconsiderateness of poor communication. This consideration for the listener, Ph.D. or Goober, leads to the use of several devices. One is that the sermon will have some controlling literary device that will help the hearer follow your line of thought. A visual image that you play on throughout the sermon gives the listener a hook to hang your theological points on. Whoops, another preposition! Anyway, back in the days when I was delivering milk, there were always some fancy suburbanites who would write out their street number on their house. For example, instead of posting the numbers 230 for 230 Highland Drive, they would post "Two Thirty." I always had to take a second to convert "Two Thirty" into "230." We're visual people. One of my first discoveries at the Lutheran

³Charles Spurgeon, *The Company of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 317.

⁴Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1413b.

Hour was that I needed to plant pictures in the imagination of the radio listener. That's just as true for Sunday morning "live" preaching. A visual image is a most helpful literary device for the oral style. For example, a sermon about Jesus as the light of the world will usually, though not necessarily, use the imagery of light and darkness.

The controlling literary device can also be memorable words. For example, a person could write a sermon on the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 under the title, "As We Forgive Those Who Sin against Us." That portion of the Lord's Prayer is not the text, but it provides a memorable way to unfold the sermon. In both of the examples just given, the visual image or memorable words would be intimately related to the theological content of the sermon. That need not always be the case. A sermon on, say, "Coping with Tough Times" might be organized around the word coping, which has no inherent theological content but can be used to carry the goods of the text. Indeed, some kind of image or phrase is like the chassis on which the car is built. Without it, you've merely have fenders and side panels and whatever, paragraphs about this and paragraphs about that without any obvious coherence. The controlling literary device helps hold the sermon together and, remembering that this is being received aurally, gives the listener an organizational principle to follow the development. This is far more effective than announcing three points, an old practice that doesn't work too well in this era of personal digital assistants.

Consideration for the hearer will also lead to the use of illustrations. Much can be said about the proper or improper use of illustrations, but the relevance here is that illustrations give your hearer a rest, a pause button in the progression of the argument. The hearer will not stay with you for too many paragraphs of theological reasoning, good as it may be. That's demonstrated even in literary style. Unless you're a speed reader, and maybe even then, you pause from time to time to digest what you've just read. In oral style that pause for the recipient needs to be built into the script by you the author. Notice that I chose the word "script," for a sermon is more akin to the stage than to the classroom. "The written style is the more finished: the spoken better admits of dramatic delivery."⁵ The use of several major illustrations provides pauses in which the hearer can listen less intently but still listen. That also creates "aha!" moments that bring to life the theological teaching of the previous paragraph(s) or set up the teaching of the following paragraph(s). To quote Spurgeon again: "When an anecdote is being told (the listeners) rest, take breath, and give play to their imaginations, and thus prepare themselves for the sterner work which lies before them in listening to our profounder expositions."⁶

A third consideration for the hearer that we can script into our sermon is to be dialogical or, as it can also be called, dialectical or conversational.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Charles Spurgeon, *The Company of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 318.

Whatever, the point is that you make a conscious effort to directly address the hearer. You know, my English teacher would be appalled. I just split an infinitive. Anyway, if you're in the good habit of watching the crowd as you speak, you'll sometimes see that it takes time for them to hear and process what you've said. Say something funny, and there will be a moment or two before a smile shows up on their faces. Being dialogical helps assure that they're with you before you move on to your next point. Various devices help this conversation of your words and their thoughts take place.

"You and I" is more engaging than "we." When the listener hears "We are sinners," it's easy to think, "Yes, and ol' Fred really is a big one." When the listener hears, "You and I are sinners" it strikes a little closer to home. Ponder the diminished effect if Martin Luther King had said, "We have a dream."

Questions should be used generously. The rhetorical effect of a question is to engage the hearer. Don't you think so? The questions we ask should not spin the listener off on some thought apart from our purpose. So rhetorical questions are good. Many sentences that function well as indicative sentences would function even better in the form of questions. Without changing content, why not turn an indicative sentence into an interrogative?

Repetitions should be used. "Thou shalt not covet" was repeated so that the hearers would understand that they weren't supposed to be enslaved to any person or thing save the God of the exodus. "Comfort, comfort my people," is a repetition for oral emphasis. Sometimes the second repetition can be used for advancing the thought. We'll see that shortly.

Anticipate the hearer's thought process. "Isn't God good?" you ask. The hearer may well think, "Yes, I suppose, but right now my life stinks." So you deal with that thought. "Isn't God good? Maybe you're not so sure because...." This is called prolepsis, seizing on an objection before it has a chance to derail the listener.

Being dialogical has a theological basis. As Christ engaged the world during His visible ministry, His Spirit engages the ways of the world through our preaching. This is a back-and-forth between sin and Law, between works and grace, between Law and Gospel, between first use and third use, and so on. Talking "you and I," asking questions, anticipating their thoughts...this grows out of the engaging nature of God's revelation. It's a homiletical extension of the considerate Christ.

So there you have some general observations. Failure to distinguish between the oral and literary style is the downfall of many an otherwise fine sermon. When the preacher gallops off down the path of his own thoughts, unmindful of the hearer's ability to keep pace, that hearer sooner or later gives up. Out comes the PDA, tic-tac-toe, some other diversion, even mindlessness. You know that many a week's schedules have been planned while you were preaching, many budget or relationship problems thought through, many stares at the slightly moving chandeliers...none of

which were your purpose for the sermon, but they couldn't follow or chose not to follow your thoughts. When we create a vacuum by a use of a style not fitted to oral communication, listeners will inevitably fill that vacuum with some other mental activity. Oral style doesn't mean an artless style. "When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence" was not Paul's disavowal of rhetorical art but of the techniques of a movement known as the "Second Sophistic" (1 Cor. 2:1). Oral style is not artless, not thrown together during the sermon hymn. It is a demanding style, a style whose rigors are readily accepted by the considerate pastor of souls. "Faith comes by hearing..." (Rom. 10:17).

+ + +

Let's take this theory down to practice. A good student of mine submitted a draft for a sermon on the Parable of the Unjust Servant. You know, the guy who was forgiven a great debt but then turned around and foreclosed on the guy who owed him two bits. Let's scrutinize only the first two sentences of the draft sermon:

Did you hear the chains this morning? Did you hear the chains of imprisonment as the parable of the unmerciful servant from Matthew 18 was read?

He's done some good things here. He opens with a direct question, "Did you hear?" and used the second person singular or second plural. He's repeated the question, using the second question to move the thought along. He offers a visual image, very good. These first two sentences are engaging but are still too packed for oral delivery. It's always easy to be a critic, but let me point out a few things.

While I give kudos to the writer for introducing the image of chains, which he used nicely throughout the sermon, I've still got a problem. I can't grasp it as quickly as the writer assumes. "Chains?" I instinctively think. What kind of chains? For some quirky reason my own mind immediately goes to the chains you might put on your tires in winter. Obviously, that's not what the writer meant. "Chains of imprisonment," he clarified. I presume that means the ball and chain that prisoners used to wear, but who talks that way? "Chains of imprisonment" is poetic and, yes, there are times when a sermon will wax poetic by using words like "wax" and other words that people don't use in normal conversation. Better to wax poetic after we've taught our point, not before. While an educated hearer can process "chains of imprisonment," it will still take a second of thought, and poor Goober may not get it at all. Meanwhile, our preacher has gone on to some new point.

The words chosen for these opening sentences could show still more consideration for the hearer. "Parable" is church jargon. You're going to have to listen a long time down at the coffee shop or gym before you hear

anyone use the word “parable.” Wouldn’t the word “story” be more colloquial? “The unmerciful servant” is also jargon. True, it’s the unofficial title of Jesus’ story, but keep in mind that most folks don’t know what “mercy” really means. And more about the quick reference to the Gospel lesson (“Did you hear the chains of imprisonment as the parable of the unmerciful servant from Matthew 18 was read?”) The reference assumes too much. At the beginning of the sermon the listeners probably don’t remember what the Gospel lesson was. Not that they don’t care. They probably do, but they’re bombarded by media throughout the week and things don’t sink in and stay. And the fact that it’s from Matthew 18 is irrelevant. At this moment no one is asking where the parable...excuse me, story can be found. As your marvelous sermon unfolds they’ll probably want to know where it’s from so they can go home and meditate upon it. But at the beginning of the sermon, it’s not necessary. So while the student author was going the right way, his prof hadn’t fully taught the devices of oral/aural style. There’s too much here for a listener to grasp in the few seconds that these sentences require for delivery.

So how might we take those good thoughts that the student wrote and make them more effective? Visual image, questions, repetitions...let’s keep those and then play out the thoughts in a more leisurely way. Perhaps like this:

Did you hear the chains this morning? We’re all familiar with chains. There are chains we can put on tires in winter. There are chains we use to pull a car out of the ditch. There are chains that are on pulleys. There are also chains that are used to keep people in prison. Have you seen movies where slaves are chained? Have you seen TV shows where prisoners wear ball and chains? That’s the kind of chain I want you to have in mind for this sermon, the noisy, clanging chains that keep a prisoner down. Did you hear those chains?

The next paragraph could then rehearse the parable so that the listeners have it in the forefront of their mind.

One consequence of this simpler, fuller style is that the paragraph becomes the basic building block rather than the sentence. A thought that we can communicate with a sentence or two in literary composition should often be given a whole paragraph in oral composition. An exercise I give to Homiletics II students on the first day of class is to ask them to take this one sentence, “Jesus died for your sins” and expand it into a full, almost half-page paragraph. I delight in watching them struggle! The reason for their struggle is obvious—all the years of writing literary academic papers. In that style you can write “Jesus died for your sins” and move on, but in the pulpit that one sentence is too short and too familiar to register much of an impact. Hence, important thoughts need to be given a whole paragraph and a sizeable paragraph at that, not just a sentence or two. So the sermon will contain fewer paragraphs (I normally have only 8-12 paragraphs in my

sermons) and therefore fewer substantiating arguments to the main theme. Sermons must have thoughtful theology, but they aren't *summās* of theology. Remember Goober.

When you begin to write the individual paragraphs, to write.... Quintilian, the last great teacher of Greco-Roman rhetoric wrote, "Give me a reliable memory and plenty of time, and I should prefer not to permit a single syllable to escape me."⁷ "We must therefore write as much as possible and with the utmost care."⁸ When you begin to write an individual paragraph, the most immediate issue is designing that paragraph to help you achieve your rhetorical goal. How will this paragraph move the hearer along your line of argument? Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up somewhere else." In the chains paragraph, the rhetorical goal was simply to plant a specific image in the hearer's mind. I think of this not so much as writing the paragraph but constructing the paragraph. By this stage of sermon preparation you're no longer thinking about what exegetical points you need to make. You've been there, done that. Now you're executing your argument. Every paragraph should have a topic sentence. Then, using short sentences that are simple or compound, normally not complex, string together your sentences in some logical way. For example, the simple chains paragraph I wrote was structured with parallel sentences.

We're all familiar with chains.

There are chains we can put on tires in winter.

There are chains we use to pull a car out of the ditch.

There are chains that are on pulleys.

The rhetorical effect of those three simple parallel sentences is to begin leading the listener through the "What kind of chains?" question. To be absolutely sure the hearer is picturing the chain you have in mind, three more parallel sentences are used.

There are also chains that are used to keep people in prison.

Have you seen movies where slaves are chained?

Have you seen TV shows where prisoners wear ball and chains?

That's the kind of chain I want you to have in mind for this sermon, the noisy, clanging, chains that keep a prisoner down.

A bare bones paragraph like this can be enlarged by adding antitheses. For example, ***There are chains we can put on tires in winter, although that's illegal many places.*** Or a thought can be enlarged: ***There are chains we use to pull a car out of the ditch.*** Goober down at the garage knows all about that. There are many ways to structure a paragraph and, in a moment, we'll see another. The point is that the paragraph is structured to achieve your immediate rhetorical purpose.

⁷Quintilian, *Institutes*, 11.2.44.

⁸Ibid., 10.3.2

Moving from paragraph and sentence construction to diction, word choice.... John Hilton was a popular BBC commentator who talked on July 1, 1937, about the way he prepared his radio scripts.

You know how odd moments stick in the memory. One stays in mine. I was dealing with retirement pensions. I was tired. Tired to the point of writing that awful jargon that passes for English. I'd written something like "I don't want what I've said to discourage you from pursuing this added stimulus...." At that point I said to myself, "now, come on, John, pull yourself together. That won't do: what is it you're trying to say?" And I pulled myself together (tired as I was)—I pulled myself together and searched and found it. "I don't want to put you off. I want rather to set you on." That was all. (What torment we have to go through to find what it is we're trying to say and how to say it in simple words.) That was all. Two simple sentences: put you off—set you on. Each ending with a preposition.⁹

Wait with diction for just a moment and notice some elements of oral style that we've already discussed. Hilton's sentences are short. He repeats key thoughts ("I was tired"; "pull yourself together"; "put you off, set you on"; "that was all"). There's a progression from one sentence to the next ("You know how odd moments stick in the memory. One stays in mine"; "I was tired. Tired to the point of..."). The paragraphs show an obvious organizational principle. Whereas our "chains" paragraph was constructed with parallelisms, Hilton's paragraph was constructed chronologically.

But my main reason for quoting Hilton, and also one reason why William Safire includes this speech among the greatest in history, is because of diction, word choice. To translate Hilton to sermon scripting: Lose your reliance on church jargon. Though the words are true and precious, "justification," "sin," "grace," "faith," and the like are increasingly not understood by postmodern listeners, parishioners included. The words can be "trite," from the Latin *terro*, "worn." They are so common to churchgoers that their impact can be dulled, the sword of the Spirit sheathed, unless given sharpness by synonyms, by antonyms, by context and illustration. Of course, the shorthand words of faith need to be used and taught. "The preacher should take the utmost care to avoid changes or variations in the text and wording of the Ten Commandments, etc."¹⁰ Luther's advice suggests that we not avoid key theological words but teach them; catechesis is the "in" word. But there we go again, using a fine old word and forgetting that it may well strike many listeners as preacher shop talk. To catechize the crowd, use simple words.

⁹William Safire, *Lend Me Your Ears* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 572.

¹⁰Martin Luther, Small Catechism, Preface, 7. (Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959], 338-339.)

I find...that the long struggle to sort out a genuine Christian vocabulary has made me much more wary of religious language that strikes a false note—the narcissistic babble that masks itself as spirituality, the conventional jargon of evangelism, which can narrow all of Christendom down to “Jesus and me,” and preachy gusts of sermon-speak, which, in the words of the great preacher Gerard Sloyan, “is the language of a land with no known inhabitants.”¹¹

Good Lord, deliver us from “sermon-speak!” There are two ways to do that, to choose words that Goober understands. One is to hang out where normal people hang out. The church is not the place to do that. Go to the coffee shop and eavesdrop, talk to the attendant at the gas station, listen to the people behind you at the ball game, watch a talk show, and read, read, read. Get out of the clerical cocoon and listen to real people. That’s first. Second, listen to Hilton...and notice the elements of oral style:

I don’t know anything about others, as I say, but my way is to speak my sentences aloud as I write them. In fact, here’s my...rule, all pat: “To write as you would talk you must talk while you write.” If you were outside my room while I’m writing a talk you’d hear muttering and mumbling and outright declaration from beginning to end. You’d say, “There’s somebody in there with a slate loose; he never stops talking to himself.” No, I would be talking not to myself but to you....

You can scrap, in writing a talk, most of what you’ve been told all your life was literary good form. You have to; if you want your talk to ring the bell and walk in and sit down by the hearth. You’ve been told, for instance, that it’s bad form to end a sentence with a preposition. It may be, in print. But not in talk. Not in talk.¹²

Hey, hey! I can break some English rules! Is the result poorer “literature?” Yes, oral style can seem quite pedestrian when read. The speeches of orators

are good to hear spoken, but look amateurish enough when they pass into the hands of a reader. This is just because they are so well suited for an actual tussle, and therefore contain many dramatic touches, which, being robbed of all dramatic rendering, fail to do their own proper work, and consequently look silly.¹³

Consideration for precious souls is driving us. We dare not let the word of God be chained in a Gutenberg captivity to literary style.

¹¹Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), 7f.

¹²Safire, 571.

¹³Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1413b.

“The sword of the Spirit is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). That’s the word of Law and Gospel. This article hasn’t been about the sword but about unsheathing the sword. That’s our task. Underlying this paper is the assumption that the Word of God does not work *ex opere operato*. The most salvific statements spoken in an unknown foreign language do not work salvation. So also simply getting your doctrinal formulations correct in English isn’t enough. When Augsburg Confession V says that the Holy Spirit “works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel,” we understand “hear” to mean that the Gospel is heard with understanding. “Scripture is an organ of God, and its entire power consists in its being put into use. Otherwise it would be the same kind of power as in the word that is used by magicians and witches in their incantations.... Holy Scripture enjoys power in its appointed use because of God’s promises and because of the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit, who animates the *logia theou* so that they become *zonta*....”¹⁴ The Word of God is effective and the Gospel is the only persuasive power that works salvation. For the Spirit to work through the word you preach, that Word must be heard with understanding. That’s why oral style, and so many other devices of rhetoric, is important. They unsheathe the Spirit’s sword so that “the Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ’s holy people.”

A story from William Barclay in the fine devotional resource *For All the Saints* sums up the goal of speaking God’s Word so winsomely that diversions, like PDAs, will not be brought out.

I was sitting in my club yesterday when a man I do not know came up to me and asked me about a certain famous preacher and theologian. He told me that he had been a regular army officer, and that on Sunday mornings when he found himself posted anywhere near, he used to slip away to hear this preacher.

Once he took his little niece along with him—about ten years of age. When they came out of the church, his first question was: “Well, what did you think of that minister?” “Terrific,” came the surprising answer. “I had two sweeties with me in my pocket, and I clean forgot to eat them!”

That is just about the best compliment I have ever heard to a preacher.¹⁵

¹⁴John Dannhauer in Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia; 1970), I, 369f.

¹⁵William Barclay, *In the Hand of God* in *For All the Saints*, vol. II, ed. Frederick J. Schumacher and Dorothy A. Zelenko (Delhi, NY: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 1995), 250.

Homiletical Helps on LW Series B

—Gospels

Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:36-49

May 4, 2003

Comments on the text: 1. Soon after the resurrected Jesus appeared to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, He appears again to a larger group of disciples. Kindly anticipating their fright at seeing what they at first considered a ghost, Jesus' opening words are "Peace be unto you." This remark contained two levels of meaning. First, it was intended to allay their immediate fear by telling them not to be alarmed. Secondly, it was designed to convey to them that special blessing of peace between them and God that Jesus' recent death on the cross had obtained for them (and for all people).

2. The first approach Jesus uses to convince His disciples of His bodily resurrection is an empirical one (vv. 39-43). Jesus goes out of His way to assure the disciples that what they are seeing is not a ghost or a figment of their imagination. He does this in two ways. To begin with, He points out that, unlike a ghost or a fantasy, He has a body. And though it is a glorified body, it is the very body that three days earlier had been crucified as the scars in His feet and hands make clear. Then, to make assurance doubly sure, He asks for something to eat. He eats it before their very eyes—again to demonstrate that His is a body with the normal needs of a body and doing the things a body normally does. As C. S. Lewis suggests, given the circumstances, Jesus' resurrected body would cast a shadow in the sunlight and make a noise as it tramped across the floor.

3. The second approach Jesus uses to convince His disciples of His bodily resurrection is a Scriptural one (vv. 44-48). Jesus makes clear to them that everything that has happened to Him—from manger to cross to empty tomb—was foretold in the Old Testament. He is indeed the promised Messiah. Actually, Jesus was doing more than matching prophecy and fulfillment, although He was doing that too. He was demonstrating that His death and resurrection were the culmination of a long-range plan of God going all the way back to eternity. More than scattered Scripture passages were being fulfilled—the Scriptures (the sum total and grand goal of the Scriptures) were being fulfilled!

4. But our Lord does more than give evidence, whether empirical or Scriptural, in this resurrection appearance. He gives the capacity to receive and believe that evidence. Verse 45 reminds us that Jesus "opened...their understanding." Evidence is necessary for faith, but it is not sufficient for faith. There must be something to believe, true, but we cannot by our own reason or strength believe it. The Holy Spirit must open our understanding. Jesus not only supplies the objects for faith—He supplies the receptacle for those objects as well, faith itself!

5. Our Lord simply will not quit giving in this text. For not only does He give the evidence and the faith to receive that evidence. He gives the Holy Spirit ("power from on high," v. 49), who is the agent of God to work faith. He also gives the preached Word (v. 47), the instrument through which God's agent manufactures faith. Still more, Jesus gives the ministry to spread the Word ("ye are witnesses of these things," v. 48).

6. Verse 41 describes a peculiar kind of unbelief: the disciples “believed not for joy.” The statement sounds like a paradox; the joy seems to belie the unbelief. It’s an unbelief that flirts with belief. It’s not an unbelief that says, “It’s not true,” but, rather, an unbelief that says, “It’s too good to be true.” Though I do not mean to convert a vice into a virtue, it does seem that the initial unbelief of the disciples “for joy” is far better than the unbelief that stems from intellectual doubts or human arrogance. Is it possible that “believing not for joy” might be our initial reaction on Judgment Day when we find ourselves truly risen from our graves, touching our bodies to assure ourselves that the incredible has occurred, and greeting old friends with surprise almost beyond our capacity to bear?

7. “It behooved Christ to suffer,” translates King James in verse 46. Since “behooved” is a word we seldom use anymore, most modern translations wisely render it, “Christ must [will, should] suffer.” Yet “behooved” is useful in that it accents the propriety of God’s eternal plan to save the human race through Christ’s suffering—not merely the inevitability and determination of that plan. “It behooved Christ to suffer” connotes not merely that Christ’s suffering is going to happen and that God will let nothing stop it but also that what will happen is indeed “meet, right, and salutary,” the best possible thing that could happen for the human race.

8. Note how verse 49 accents that our salvation is a Trinitarian activity. Here we have the Second Person of the Trinity reminding His disciples of the promise of the First Person of the Trinity to endow them with “power from on high”—that is, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.

9. The Epistle for this Sunday (1 John 1:1-2:2) echoes the event of our Gospel reading in surprisingly specific ways. There John records that the disciples have seen the eternal Word “with [their] eyes” and “[their] hands have handled” Him. He echoes their joy at Jesus’ resurrection appearance when he says to his readers “that your joy may be full.” He speaks at length about the commission Jesus gave the disciples on that occasion, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations,” urging his readers to “confess [their] sins,” to “sin not,” and ending with the assurance that Christ is “the propitiation for our sins” and “also for the sins of the whole world.”

10. Similarly, Peter echoes the event of our text in the reading from Acts for this Sunday (4:8-12). Peter, “filled with the Holy Ghost” (the very “power from on high” promised in our text), speaks specifically of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection and attributes the miracle of healing he performed to the power of Jesus’ “name” (the very name mentioned in verse 47 of our text).

11. The initial reaction of the disciples to Jesus’ resurrection appearance, “But they...supposed that they had seen a spirit” (v. 37), and Jesus’ assurance, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have” (v. 39), suggest a delightfully ironic connection between Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. In the context of this scene in our text, the earlier words of Luke 23:46 take on a totally unintended and unforeseen meaning. Luke tells us there that Jesus at the moment of death said to God His Father, “Into Thy hands I commend My spirit” and then “gave up the ghost.” Commending His spirit was simply Jesus’ way of saying that He entrusted Himself to God His Father. Giving up the ghost was simply Luke’s way of saying that Jesus died. But in the light of Jesus’ subsequent resurrection, what He commended to God at the moment of death turns out to be more than a spirit—it is a body, a living, risen body eventually! And in the light of the empirical evidence presented in our text, Jesus indeed “gave up the ghost” (in a sense not intended in

Luke 23:46). For in our text He is not a ghost, but a living, vibrant being of flesh and blood still bearing the marks of His execution!

Suggested outline:

The Resurrected Jesus: A Gift That Keeps on Giving

- I. Jesus gives peace the moment He appears to the disciples.
 - A. He bestows ordinary peace of mind in an alarming situation.
 - B. Above all, He confers that peace between God and people that the world cannot give.
- II. Jesus gives evidence for His resurrection.
 - A. He supplies empirical evidence.
 1. He lets the disciples see and touch His body.
 2. He eats fish to demonstrate that His body is indeed a body.
 - B. He supplies Scriptural evidence.
 1. His resurrection fulfills specific Old Testament prophecies.
 2. His resurrection is the culmination of God's eternal plan to save the human race.
- III. Jesus gives the faith to receive and trust that evidence.
 - A. The Holy Spirit is God's agent to transmit that faith.
 - B. The Scriptures are the instrument through which the Holy Spirit manufactures faith in human hearts.
- IV. Jesus gives a ministry to witness the Good News of salvation to others.
 - A. The Holy Spirit empowers those who witness with "power from on high."
 - B. The Holy Spirit empowers what is witnessed to achieve "repentance and remission of sins...among all nations."

Francis C. Rossow

Fourth Sunday of Easter

John 10:11-18

May 11, 2003

The context: The Good Shepherd discourse follows on the heels of Jesus' giving sight to the man blind from birth, an event that ends with Jesus' retort to the Pharisees that because they say they see, their guilt remains. The evangelist reports no pause between this retort and one of the most beloved speeches of Jesus. In addition, this pericope "joins in progress" this figure of speech (cf. v. 6) just after He declares that He, unlike the thief, came in order that the sheep may have abundant life. Immediately after this pericope, the Jews are divided over what to make of Jesus, as the evangelist had reported earlier in chapter 9, and some of them are certain, after the healing of the blind man and this shepherd imagery, that Jesus has a demon and is insane (10:20-21).

Textual notes: There are a couple of distinct elements to this pericope. One of them is the rich shepherd/flock imagery. The other is the authority that Jesus has from the Father. These two elements appear to be specially linked, rhetorically and theologically, by verses 17-18, which hearken back to verse 11, and by verses 14 and 15, the midpoint of this pericope.

The context, as surveyed above, may give us a framework for the proper interpretation of this text so that we avoid confusion (10:6) and that we do not miss

the **effect** this text had on the Jews. It is important to note that John 10 is in the immediate context of rising tension between Jesus and the Jews. We are only literary moments away from the raising of Lazarus.

It should also be noted that a quick word study on “shepherd” brings many key Old Testament passages to mind, many of which are prophetic indictments against the kings, priests, and false prophets of Israel, e.g., Zechariah 13; Ezekiel 34; Isaiah 56. Of special note is Ezekiel 34, in which Yahweh declares that He Himself will be the shepherd of His sheep (vv.15-66) then calls this shepherd “my servant David” (v. 23). And with this epithet, God indicts especially the kings of His people, who were **supposed** to be good shepherds.

Suggestion for preaching:

What Kind of Shepherd Is This?

Jesus has...

Absolute Authority...to stand fast against the enemy. Who else has such authority? ***Contrast these Old Testament models: Ahaz (2 Kings 16) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-21, esp. 19:32-35)*** Yet, Jesus is a better shepherd than Hezekiah because He has...

Absolute Authority...to know the sheep. Who else has such authority? ***Jesus speaks to the church with intimate knowledge (Rev. 2-3)***. Besides authority over the present flock, Jesus has...

Absolute Authority...to shepherd more sheep to His flock. Who else has such authority? ***Contrast these Old Testament models: Solomon (2 Kings 4:29-34; 10:1-11) and Rehoboam, Solomon's son (2 Kings 12:1-33, esp. 16-33)*** Yet, Jesus is a better shepherd than Solomon because He has...

Absolute Authority...to lay down His life and take it up again. Who else has such authority? ***Revelation 1:10-20 relates what kind of power Jesus has. NB that He “was dead” and now holds “the keys of Death and Hades.”***

What Kind of Shepherd Is This? (Rhetorical note: this question can be very effective if it is asked ***immediately*** after relating the image of Revelation 1:10-20. The Good Shepherd imagery is one which contains ultimate strength and power, the divine kind of power. Our enemies are more than the ones we see with our eyes and our troubles are more than the ones that afflict our minds and bodies. Even though our separation from God includes that which we can perceive, it is much more than we perceive with our senses. Even so, the Good Shepherd, whom God sent to the perceived world as a weak man who perished on a cross, is so much more powerful than all these.)

Not only does He conquer the enemies who prowl around looking to scatter and devour us, not only does He lead His own flock in unity, not only does He lay down His life for the sheep, but He also takes up His life again for the sheep. He also increases the size of His own flock; He even conquers death and hell, our just desserts. Our Good Shepherd does all this by virtue of the authority to call out to all people that sins are forgiven, by virtue of the authority from the Father to bring us to the Father in perfect intimacy, without the division of sin, death, and the devil. The Father has sent no other who can voice such authority.

John David Duke, Jr.
St. Louis, MO

Fifth Sunday of Easter
John 15:1-8
May 18, 2003

Overall structure of the text: This teaching of the Lord occurs in the larger context of what is sometimes called “The Upper Room Discourse.” Jesus’ teaching concerns those who are “His own,” namely, His disciples (13:1) and directs their attention (and ours) to realities both surrounding His impending passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, as well as to their life in the time between the ascension and His return to take them to Himself at the Last Day (14:1-4).

The text can be divided into two sections, each marked when Jesus identifies Himself as the (True) Vine (vv. 1, 5). The first section (vv. 1-4) contains a stronger emphasis upon the disciples as branches, already in the Vine because of Jesus’ word to them and already subject to the pruning of the Father. The second section (vv. 5-8) more specifically focuses upon the bearing of fruit. With the claim that He is the Vine, Jesus includes at least the following truths about Himself and about His disciples, both now and then.

1. He is the true Son of God, the true Israel of God. Israel had repeatedly shown themselves to be a kind of “false” or “treacherous” vine by failing to produce the fruit that naturally flows from the tender and skilled care of a vinedresser (LXX Is. 5:7, “for the vineyard (• : Bg8ã <) of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel”). But in Jesus, the Father’s planting in the world, the Lord of Hosts’ will is perfectly done for the salvation of the world and the honor of God’s name.

2. By virtue of their faith and new birth into Him, Jesus’ disciples are part of this True Israel; they are the branches connected to the vine. Jesus’ disciples have no independent existence—this is the crucial revelation that Jesus imparts. As such, then, although the verb of the clause “remain in me” (: g\<” Jg ¦< ¦: @) is grammatically an imperative, its intended force is not that of a command. Rather, it is an invitation always to remember that they are dependent upon the True Vine both for their very life as well as for their ability to bear fruit as Jesus desires and commands them to do.

3. The Father/Vinedresser earnestly desires that Jesus’ disciples/branches bear fruit abundantly. Although one could run to Galatians 5 for the “fruit of the Spirit,” one need only look to 15:12, “Love one another” for a way to flesh out the meaning of “bearing fruit.” The ability to bear fruit does not flow from the disciples’ own determination or power; it flows from their connection to the True Vine, the one who has loved them and who will, on the cross, love them unto the end. When the disciples remain in Jesus and His words remain in them, they will know what to ask from the Father and because of that asking, they will bear more fruit and bring glory to the Father as those who show themselves to be Jesus’ disciples.

Smaller observations: This text contains one of the “I am” sayings in John: “I myself am the (true) vine” (vv. 1, 5). Interpreters and preachers seem ready to make a hermeneutical leap straight from the ¦(f g\ 4sayings to Exodus 3 and the incident at the burning bush. But the strong majority of reliable and scholarly commentaries warn against this leap. The reason is obvious when the Greek of Exodus 3 and the Greek of John’s Gospel are compared. The divine name in Exodus 3 (or anywhere else in the LXX) is never rendered with ¦(f g\ 4 rather, Ô ê < (“the one who is”) is the LXX’s translation. Moreover, the phrase occurs not infrequently in the mouths of others (Gen. 4:9; 18:27; 45:3; Ex. 4:10; 6:12, 30; John 9:9) and so cannot in itself be the Greek rendering of the Tetragrammaton.

But John's ἵ (f g): 4 sayings are both emphatic Greek ("I myself am"; "it is I myself") and evocative of the repeated Isaianic refrain, "It is I myself; there is no other" (Is. 41:4; 43:10, 25; 46:4; 48:12; 51:12; 52:6). Thus, the "I am" sayings in John emphatically point to Jesus as (in this text) the true Vine...and there is no other! And he certainly does talk frequently with the kind of diction that God uses in Isaiah...!

Suggested outline:

The True Vine's Bountiful Branches

- I. Becoming a branch.
 - A. It does not have to do much with the branch itself.
 - 1. Branches do not have any power within themselves.
 - 2. The picture is a good one—this is what we are like, left to ourselves.
 - B. What matters is where the branch is attached!
 - 1. God has a desire to plant His work and His will in the world.
 - 2. Jesus Christ is the True Vine—the Father's only planting.
 - C. Being attached to Jesus.
 - 1. It comes from above.
 - 2. It comes through the Word.

Transition: Here is where it's possible to make a dreadful mistake. That is, "Now that I have become a branch by what Jesus has done, it is all up to me to produce fruit!"

Now, yes, the Christian life is very effortful at times, and the fruit of good works can call forth everything that we feel we can give. But the real power—the real power to produce fruit, to produce love—that power does not come from within us.

- II. Being a branch.
 - A. Staying attached to Jesus—remaining in Him.
 - 1. "Remain in me"—in Him.
 - 2. What you first heard and believed—keep on hearing and believing!
 - 3. There are many who would like to chop you off—remain in Him!
 - B. The process of pruning.
 - 1. A cliché, but it is true—God is not finished with any of us yet.
 - 2. Openness to the possibilities of the Father's pruning.
 - C. The power to produce fruit.
 - 1. It comes from Jesus, and His Word to you, and His Word about you.
 - 2. It is a real power—a power to love as He has loved us!

Jeffrey A. Gibbs

Sixth Sunday of Easter ***John 15:9-17*** ***May 25, 2003***

Overall structure of the text: Jesus' words in these verses consist of a more general teaching (vv. 9-11) about the mutual love of Father and Son, of Son and His disciples, and about the keeping of the commandments that flows out of that love.

The teaching then moves (vv. 12-17) to explicate more specifically the relationship that Jesus has bestowed on His disciples, their relationship as “friends” that is first filled with His love for them and then also characterized by their love for one another. As is so supremely typical of the Lord’s teaching in John’s Gospel, there is a holistic and integrated character that absolutely prevents the *separation* of Jesus’ love for the disciples from their love for one another, as if the one could exist without the other being created. At the same time, however, the priority (in both order and power) of Christ’s love for His disciples comes through with overwhelming clarity.

Section one: The Son has mirrored the Father’s love for Him in the way that He has loved His own disciples; now the Son urges the disciples to remain in His love. Strikingly, it is through the keeping of the Son’s commandments (ἵνα ἠγάπησῃτε) that they will remain in His love...just as the Son has kept the Father’s commandments and remains in the Father’s love. The comparison is not exactly parallel. The Father’s commandment to Jesus (see John 12:50) has been for the Son to perform the work that will give eternal life to all who believe. This is a wonderful way of thinking about the work of Christ. The Father who loved Him said to Him, “Go, accomplish salvation for the world.” Jesus, in perfect love for the Father, keeps that commandment.

The Son’s commandment to His disciples, however, is simply, “Love one another.” There surely are implications for the mission of the church in this “new commandment” (see John 17:21). Because Jesus has loved them, He has also given them a command, and in His love the disciples will begin (however imperfectly) to carry out that command. In a sense, they cannot help themselves, so powerful is the love that Jesus has given them. In knowing Jesus’ love for them and in living lives that seek to keep His commandment to love one another, Christ’s joy will be in the disciples, and their joy will be filled up to fullness (v. 11).

Section two: Christ’s words now flesh out the meaning of His love for the disciples—and in this fuller explanation and revelation of His love, the disciples will find power for the task of loving one another. Christ names His disciples “friends.” Readers must avoid the anachronistic modern reading that would automatically regard people who are “friends” as on roughly equivalent levels. The ancient world is one marked by patronage, by benefaction that superiors bestow upon inferiors. Thus, Pilate wishes to be regarded as “Caesar’s friend” (John 19:12). Pilate is bound to Caesar and bound to render him honor and obedience in return for a certain status. But in ancient relationship of “friend,” between a superior and an inferior there is no doubt as to who is who. The “friends” of Caesar exist to serve and honor Caesar. If they do not do this in sufficient quantity or quality, they can expect the wrath of the one who had named them “friends.”

Jesus names His disciples “friends.” This is not a relationship between equals. They do not choose Him; He, the Savior and Lord, chooses them and bestows upon them this relationship. But unlike the world around them, here the Superior shows His shocking and “unworldly” willingness to *serve them* and to give His life for...His “friends”! Truly, no greater love—and no more unexpected love—could be found!!

As to His friends, Jesus also reveals to the disciples His will and His desire for them. In love, He calls them to bear fruit—the fruit of loving one another. Thus they will respond to the Lord and Master who makes them His “friends” and who loves them so well—they will love one another.

Grammatical notes: There are a few grammatical points of special interest in this text. As is more common in John, the evangelist expresses possession frequently

through the use of the possessive adjective ἰ: ῆ (vv. 9, 11, 12) rather than only employing the genitive of the personal pronoun (: @; vv. 10, 11, 14). Another strong characteristic of John's style is the use of ἔ<" clauses in apposition to a demonstrative pronoun, to make clear what the "this" or "that" actually is: "**This** is my commandment, namely, that (ἔ<") you love one another just as I have loved you" (v. 12; see also vv. 13, 17).

Introduction: There is a *lot* of confusion in our world about love. There is confusion first of all about what love is. Jesus clarifies: Love is keeping the commandments. Jesus showed His love for the Father by keeping **His** commandment, and Jesus' disciples will show love for Him by keeping His commandment—to love one another. That is what love is: obedient action.

But there is also confusion about where we can find strength and power to love one another. This text teaches us about that power and about the love that has first come to us so that we might then love one another.

First Comes Love, and Then Comes...Love

- I. Love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father.
 - A. "God is love"—a perfect mutual love and commitment from eternity!
 - B. The Son loves the Father—and that means that He keeps the commandment that the Father gave to Him.
 1. Love means obedience—and here is a perfect love, the only perfect love for the Father!
 2. The Father's command (John 12:50)—bring eternal life to all!
- II. Love of the Son for His disciples.
 - A. He is clearly the Greater One—He determines how the relationship will go.
 1. They do not choose Him; He chooses them.
 2. The normal "friend" relationship in first-century society (see notes above).
 - B. But the Greater One stoops to serve the lesser.
 1. No greater or more unexpected love than this!
 2. He puts down His life.
 - a. John 13: Jesus **puts down** His garments and **takes them up again**, as a picture of what He will do on the cross (see also John 10:17).
 - b. John 19: On the cross, Jesus serves those who, under all "normal" circumstances, should be serving Him...namely, His "friends."
- III. Love of the disciples for their Master.
 - A. Remain in His love.
 1. Acknowledge your need for it—sinner that you are!
 2. Acknowledge that He has met your need—and rejoice in a love greater than all!
 - B. Keep His commandment to love one another.
 1. To go out of your way for the needs of another.
 2. It is because of the flow of love—first comes His love...and then comes our love for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jeffrey A. Gibbs

Seventh Sunday of Easter
John 17:11b-19
June 1, 2003

This is an “in-between” Sunday. It falls between two major festivals: the Ascension of Our Lord, celebrated on Thursday just a few days ago, and the Day of Pentecost, to be celebrated one week from today. At the same time, as one of the seven Sundays of Easter, this day continues the victory theme of the great season of our Lord’s Resurrection.

The preacher can capture the twofold mood of this day in his sermon: The Resurrection of Christ prepares us for the “in-between” time in which we are living. We live “in between” our Lord’s “going away” and His “coming back,” between His Ascension and His Parousia. It can seem like we are all alone and unprotected. We Christians live in a hostile world. But Jesus has been praying for His church! He went to the cross to die for His church—indeed, to die for the sins of the whole world. Christ’s Easter Resurrection is the proof that by His death He has conquered death and the devil and all the forces that oppose God’s will and God’s people. All of this fortifies us for the long haul, for living in a hostile world during this “in-between” time.

Suggested outline:

Living in a Hostile World During This “In-Between” Time

Introduction: This is an “in-between” time. The Seventh Sunday of Easter falls between Ascension and Pentecost. It’s a kind of isolated, awkward Sunday. Similarly, we live in an “in-between” time, this time between Christ’s ascension and His return. We can feel isolated, alone, and out of place living as Christ’s people who are “in the world” but not “of it.” Today our Lord prays for us and prepares us to live in this world during this “in-between” time.

- I. We live in a hostile world.
 - A. The world hated Jesus’ disciples. We see examples of this in the New Testament and the history of the early church. All of the apostles were persecuted. All but John died a martyr’s death.
 - B. The world hates Christians today. We see examples all around us, in the news of the day. Persecution is intensifying. The world hates Christians for claiming to have the only truth, the only way to God.
 - C. We can feel alone and unprotected. We lose heart and give up. We walk in danger all the way.
- II. But Jesus has been praying for His church!
 - A. Our text here in John 17 is part of our Lord’s “High Priestly Prayer.” Before He returns to His Father, Jesus prays for His disciples.
 - B. He prays that they would be protected—not taken out of the world, but protected from the evil one. The danger is not so much that we would endure sufferings but that we would lose our faith.
 - C. He prays that they would be “sanctified,” set apart for God’s service, by the truth of God’s Word.
- III. Jesus prays this even as He sanctifies Himself for us.
 - A. He says this as He’s about to be arrested, tried, etc. This is the night in which He was betrayed.

- B. Jesus set Himself apart to complete the service for which the Father had sent Him into the world: To go to the cross for us!
- C. The Father glorified Jesus by raising Him from the dead! Christ has won the victory!

Conclusion: The Father has heard Jesus' prayer. The result? We have joy! The joy of sins forgiven! The joy of eternal life! Easter joy! We are protected by the power of God's name. We are sanctified by the truth of God's Word—sent into the world to live as those not of it. Jesus prays for His church, and this strengthens us to live as His people, in the midst of a hostile world, during this “in-between” time.

Charles Henrickson
St. Louis, MO

The Day of Pentecost
John 7:37-39a
June 8, 2003

The Living Waters of Pentecost

Introduction: How can someone who is thirsty become a source of refreshment for others? It happens through “The Living Waters of Pentecost.” Through these “living waters,” not only is your own thirst quenched but then from you streams of living water flow out to others, to quench their thirst. That's what this Day of Pentecost is all about.

Suggested outline:

I. Are you thirsty?

In the Gospel for today, from John 7, Jesus begins by saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” That thirsty person is you. Oh, not that everybody senses that thirst. There are a lot of people walking around, dying from lack of spiritual water, who don't even realize their need. They think everything is OK: “I don't need God. I don't need ‘saving’ or anything like that. If I do decide to dabble in spirituality, it will be on my own terms, and it will fit my own opinions.” That's the view of many in our culture today.

But Jesus calls attention to our need by offering us a drink that will quench our thirst. He offers us the water of life, and that awakens in us the realization that without Him we are dying. We need what Jesus has to give. “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”

Here is the nature of that thirst. You and I discover that we are sinners, wandering aimlessly in a dry desert of our own making. We used to live in a garden where the waters were abundant. But we thought we knew better than God, and because of that, we lost our access to the water of life. Sin became like sand in our mouth, dry and gritty. Our throats became parched, and we were unable to quench the burning sensation.

II. Come to Jesus and drink!

But Jesus has something to give to people dying of thirst. “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” Jesus calls us; He invites us to come. Come to the only place where your thirst can be quenched. Come to Jesus. He is the only one who can give you what you need. Only Jesus has the forgiveness

that washes away your sins. Only He has the righteousness that satisfies your thirst. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Only Jesus has this water of life. Come to Him and drink.

And so you do come, and you do drink. You believe in Jesus Christ your Savior. And He satisfies that thirst which would otherwise end in death. Jesus gives you life—His life, new life, eternal life. Think of what Jesus told the woman at the well: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." Yes, this is the water that you drink: Jesus' gift of the water of life, His life-giving water that becomes in you a never-ending spring welling up to eternal life.

What a Savior who gives such a gift! "Come to Him and drink," that is, believe in Him and cling to Him by faith, for He is your very life! Where else could you go? Yes, faith is that simple trust in the Savior—to rely on Him for your salvation, and not on yourself. Faith is simply being at the receiving end of God's gifts. It is that empty, open hand which receives the gifts God so freely offers. Faith means giving up on our own works and holding on to the work that God does for us. Faith is listening to Jesus' invitation, "Come to me and drink," and then responding, "Yes, here I come, Lord. Thank you for giving me your water of life."

Today, on this Day of Pentecost, we're reminded that even this "coming to Jesus," faith itself, is a gift of God. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings us to Jesus. Remember what we learned in the Catechism: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him." That is to say: "I believe that I cannot believe. I did not want to come to Christ—indeed, I could not come—unless the Holy Spirit had first come to me and preached Christ to me and worked in my heart the faith that brings me to Him." But thank God, the Spirit has done this faith-creating work! "The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

So now you do believe. You have come to Jesus. You have had your thirst quenched by drinking His water of forgiveness and life. You trust in the one who died on the cross for you, taking your sins upon Himself, so that you would not die eternally. You trust in Him who rose from the dead on Easter morning, showing that what He did on the cross really worked—that He did in fact pay the full price for our sin and that now, as a result, death has lost its hold on those who trust in Him. You believe in the Lord who ascended into heaven, not to leave us or abandon us, but to be with us in a new and even greater way.

III. Streams of living water will flow.

This same Jesus promises to pour out from heaven the Holy Spirit, to empower the church to bear witness to Christ to all the nations of the world. That's what Pentecost is all about. That's what Jesus refers to when He says: "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." You see, not only has your own thirst been quenched, you then become a source of refreshment for others. Maybe "source" isn't the best word. "Channel" or "conduit" or "vessel" is more like it. You become a channel for God's blessings, a conduit for the water of life to flow through. You will be a vessel for bringing the life of Jesus to others. The living water which you yourself receive—that drink of life wells up within you, and now streams of living water flow out from you to bless those around you.

That's what happened to Peter on the Day of Pentecost, wasn't it? He himself had come to know Jesus and His forgiveness. Then at Pentecost Jesus bestows on Peter and the others the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that they will proclaim the Good News to the world. That's what Peter does. He preaches the message of the crucified and risen Christ. He calls his hearers to faith, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins." And so the church grows. The living waters of Pentecost flow out from Peter to quench the thirst of many.

Now you may not be a Peter; you may never have the opportunity to preach to three thousand people at one time. In fact, most Christians are not called to preach publicly at all, not as ordained servants of the Word. But that does not mean there won't be streams of living water flowing out from you. There will be! Watch it happen! The life of Jesus you have received will overflow and spill out and splash blessings on the people around you. The waters will flow—in your words and deeds, in the love and forgiveness you show to others, in the testimony you speak to others of what Christ has done for you through the ministry of your church.

Conclusion: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." See the wonder of the living waters of Pentecost: Not only is your own thirst quenched, the streams of life flow out from within you to others. Come to Jesus, then, in the power of the Spirit. Come and drink and live!

Charles Henrickson
St. Louis, MO

The Holy Trinity
John 3:1-17
June 15, 2003

The Difference Between Night And Day

Today is Trinity Sunday. In John 3:1-17 we are allowed to overhear a conversation between Jesus and the unbelieving Nicodemus. Proclamation on this passage from John's Gospel affords the opportunity to examine God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the context of a world that is not inclined to take Jesus at His word (3:11, 32). If John's account of Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus demonstrates the tragedy of not receiving and believing, His account of the equally uncomprehending, yet believing Samaritan woman is an example of a mission "success story." The love of God for the world is the basis of God's mission to send His Son in order that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life (vv. 16-17).

Our passage is structured around three truth statements of Jesus: "• : -< • : -< 8X(T F@4.." (vv. 3, 5, and 11) in response to Nicodemus' incomprehension. The conclusion of the passage gives us a glimpse into the heart of God whose love for the world forms the origin for the mission of the Son and the disciples of Jesus Christ. The stark contrast in the passage between belief and unbelief, life and death, is reflected in the metaphor of light and darkness: Nicodemus comes to Jesus "at night." The difference between what he thinks he knows about Jesus and who

Jesus truly is, is the difference between night and day.

Verses 1-2: As a Pharisee, Nicodemus would have been perceived as being “blameless” in all the righteousness of the law. Concerning the setting of Nicodemus’ visit to Jesus, we are only told that it was “at night.” The contrast between light and darkness is a theme that appears later in chapter 3 and immediately after Nicodemus’s second appearance in John 8:12. It is also mentioned at the beginning of chapter one (vv. 4-5): “In [Jesus] was life and that life was the light of mankind. And the light in the darkness is shining, but the darkness has not overcome it.” Nicodemus is literally “in the dark,” but this is true figuratively as well when it comes to his estimate of Jesus’ person and work. He is impressed with Jesus’ signs and ready to acknowledge Jesus in terms that are desirable, calling Him “teacher come from God” (words more true than he realizes!). But as his conversation with Jesus ensues, we see his unwillingness to receive Jesus’ words and his apparent confidence in Jesus’ identity reveal his tragic misunderstanding of Jesus as the promised Messiah and Son of God.

Verse 3: This is the first of Jesus’ truth sayings. In order for the truth to dawn upon Nicodemus, he must recognize not only who Jesus is but also who *he, Nicodemus*, is before God. The word – <T 2g< can either mean “anew/again,” as Nicodemus seems to take it, or “from above,” which is the sense in which Jesus uses it (see also John 3:31; 19:11, 23).

Verse 4: Nicodemus is in the dark. He takes Jesus’ words in earthly terms. We can compare his reaction to that of the Samaritan woman to the term “living water” in John 4:10. He seems to think Jesus means by – <T 2g< merely being born “anew” or “a second time” (v. 4). But more importantly, he does not recognize that seeing the kingdom of God results not from a new birth, but “from above,” or from the Father (v. 16).

Verses 5-8: Jesus’ second truth statement elaborates His first one in verse 3. It indicates that for true knowledge of God and entrance into the heavenly kingdom, a heavenly birth brought about by water/Spirit (John 1:33; cf. Ezek. 36:25-27; Titus 3:5) is needed. As unbelief is unable to determine the origin or destination of Jesus (John 8:14), whose word is Spirit and truth, neither will it recognize the origin or destination of the Spirit of Truth in those who are born of Him (14:17).

Verse 9: Nicodemus refuses to receive the Word of Jesus. He is *still* in the dark.

Verse 10: Jesus’ reference to Nicodemus as “the teacher of Israel” contrasts greatly (and ironically) with Nicodemus’ label of Jesus in 3:2 as “a teacher come from God.”

Verses 11-17: Jesus’ last truth statement elaborates on His first two and concludes with an explicit statement that corrects Nicodemus’s first assumption: Jesus is not only a teacher come from God, but the “one and only Son” given by God out of His love for the world in order that whoever believes in Him might not perish but be saved. Jesus’ “testimony” in John’s Gospel refers to His relationship with the Father, and testifies to the fact that the Father sent Him (5:36; 8:13-18). It is this message that Nicodemus and other unbelievers are not receiving. Jesus then invokes the type-antitype relationship of the serpent “lifted up” in the wilderness by Moses and Himself. Again, we find evidence of an “earthly” and “heavenly” meaning in Jesus’ words. The “earthly” meaning of BR’ T is “to lift up” or “elevate.” Jesus was literally elevated off the ground on a cross as the bronze snake was elevated on a pole by Moses. A deeper “heavenly” meaning, however, comes across when we recognize that as the one who would lay down His life on the cross, the Messiah Jesus would be exalted as victor over the “ruler of this world” whom He

would cast out (12:31). He would ascend into heaven as victorious and risen Son of God. Although Jesus' being "lifted up" on the cross does describe the sort of death by which He would die, it does not ultimately signify a defeat, but rather, the place where His victory would ultimately be accomplished (19:30). John 3:16 is the culmination of Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus. Who Jesus is and what He came to do is a matter of life and death for "the Jews" and for the entire world. His death is for all people, that they might believe in Him and have eternal life.

Suggested outline.

- I. Nicodemus: In the dark literally and figuratively.
 - A. He thinks himself enlightened—and seems at first to be so—about Jesus' identity as "a teacher come from God." But this is a judgment based primarily on Jesus' works, not His **words**. Many examples might be given in which people are brought to inquire of God's purposes through signs and wonders, but in which faith ultimately comes from the gift of the Spirit given through the words of Jesus.
 - B. He considers what Jesus says about a heavenly birth "from above" as a nonsensical second birth. According to our own tendency toward an earthly understanding of God such as Nicodemus demonstrates we also resort to a kind of "default" religion according to which we remain in control of our destiny, rather than according to which heaven has its way with us.
 - C. Jesus' words are challenging, and Nicodemus is befuddled. He responds, "How can this be?" As "reasonable" as the Christian faith might be to believers, and as winsomely as we will want to present the Gospel to inquirers, no one has ever been "argued" into the kingdom of God. The truth of the Gospel and the mysteries of the Holy Trinity can only be accepted by way of God's grace, through faith. For an example of a seeker who was just as befuddled by Jesus yet believed in His words (see the example of the Samaritan woman, John 4:1-29, 39-42).
- II. Jesus' words brings "enlightenment" and life.
 - A. Jesus' words about being born "from above." In many parts of the world, family of origin or birth order determines one's social standing throughout life. Those believing in Jesus are born from above and have the highest pedigree of all: they are nothing less than children of God (John 1:12)!
 - B. Jesus' words about being born "of water and the Spirit." In Ezekiel 36:25-27 a time was foretold when God would "sprinkle clean water" on His people and make them "clean (i.e., presentable to God) instead of unclean." He would "put [His] Spirit" within them. This renewing work of God through water and Spirit is associated in John with the death of Jesus (19:29, 33-35; 20:19-23). Our birth from above is likewise accomplished through Jesus' death, the blessings of which are delivered to us today through Holy Baptism (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:20b-22).
 - C. Jesus' words about God loving the world has the result that He gave His one-and-only Son, "lifted up" on the cross, in order to save the world. Here we find the origin of the Christian mission: the love of the Father for the entire world, a love which is not frothy sentiment but is so real that it entailed the life of His own dear Son. These words are perhaps the most difficult words of Jesus to fully understand, although they are perhaps the most familiar words in the entire Bible. We may not fully comprehend

this awesome love of God, but we believe in these words of Jesus, we trust in His promises, and are saved.

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Second Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 2:23-28
June 22, 2003

Liturgical context: Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the Old Testament lesson for the day, is one of the Old Testament passages that deals with the observance of the Sabbath. The specific motivation provided here for the observance of the Sabbath is the remembrance of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Exodus 20:8-11, a portion of the Old Testament lesson listed under the One-Year Series, might be more appropriate because the usual motivation for the observance of the Sabbath is the reminder that the Lord (YHWH) rested from His work of creation on the seventh day. There is no contradiction between these two motives. Both were equally valid. An analogy would be the three reasons Christians give for observing Sunday as the day of worship: the first day of the creation week, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the first day of the week, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first day of the week.

The thrust of 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 is provided by verse 5: "...we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord..."

Textual comments: Some commentators find a contradiction in verse 26. They point out that according to 1 Samuel 21:1, 2 Ahimelech was a priest at that time and not Abiathar. The critical apparatus in NTG27 indicates that the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke omit the reference to Abiathar. Some manuscripts also omit the reference. Other commentators maintain that there is no contradiction. They point out that the word ἡμέρας plus the genitive can indicate a more general period of time—"in the time of."

Since there are no quotation marks in the Greek text, another concern has been expressed as to whether the words of verse 28 are the words of Jesus (NIV, NRSV, NASB, CEV, NLT, ESV) or the words of Mark himself. To understand the words to be the conviction of Mark would be in keeping with one of the purposes of the Gospel According to Mark: to lead the reader to join Mark and the centurion in affirming that Jesus was/is truly God's Son (Mark 15:39).

The Pharisees' accusation that what the disciples were doing was not lawful was based on the rules and regulations that they had added to the rules and regulations in the Torah. They accused the disciples of working on the Sabbath.

In another episode (Mark 7:1-8) the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of eating without washing their hands. Jesus responded by calling the Pharisees hypocrites and with a reference to Old Testament Scripture: "This people honors with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (ESV).

In the text Jesus also refers back to a Scriptural precedent, 1 Samuel 21:1-7. David and his men were hungry. They ate food set apart for sacred use. They were on a mission. Their need for food took priority over rules and regulations. There is no indication of condemnation of their actions. (Incidentally, the words "the house of God" in Mark 2:26 do not refer to the Temple in Jerusalem.)

Jesus and His disciples were on a mission. As the wider context indicates, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and rise again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34, 45).

There are four designations—explicit or implicit—for Jesus in the first two chapters of Mark’s Gospel: the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Son of David, the Lord.

According to the text of NTG27 Jesus Christ is referred to as Son of God (Λῆος υἱός) in Mark 1:1. Some manuscripts omit the words or use different words. At Jesus’ baptism a voice from heaven proclaims “You are My beloved Son” (Mark 1:11).

While it is not explicitly stated in the text, elsewhere in Mark Jesus is referred to as “the son of David.” The blind beggar Bartimaeus calls out twice, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:46-48; see also Mark 12:35-37).

In Mark 2:10 Jesus identifies Himself as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου “the Son of Man” who “has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” The designation “the Son of Man” has been traced back to Daniel 7:13-14 where “one like a son of man” is equated with “the Ancient of Days.”

In Mark 2:28, which appears to be the key verse of the text, the Son of Man is described as “Lord even of the Sabbath.” In the New Testament the Greek word κύριος is often a translation of the Hebrew יהוה [YHWH/Yahweh]. With this understanding, Jesus is identified with the Creator of the Old Testament. According to Genesis 2:1-3, when God finished the work of creation, He rested on the seventh day and “blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.” The Gospel of John (1:1-3) refers to Jesus as “the Word.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (ESV).

Jesus the Christ/the Messiah, the God-man, the Son of God, the Lord/Creator is “Lord even of the Sabbath.” As God, He inaugurated the Sabbath as a day of rest. The concept rest includes not only rest from physical activity but also spiritual rest (Matt. 11:28, 29). Jesus elsewhere is reported as saying, “Come to Me, all who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...and you will find rest for your souls” (ESV).

Jesus Himself used the Sabbath as a time for teaching (Mark 1:21; 6:2) and a time for healing (Mark 3:1-5).

People cannot win God’s favor through observing laws of any kind. “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1).

Suggested outline:

Jesus Christ Is Lord!

- I. Jesus Christ is:
 - A. The Son of God (Declared so at His Baptism).
 - B. The Son of David (True man, a descendant of David).
 - C. The Lord—The Creator (One with the Father and the Holy Spirit).
 - D. The Son of Man (The promised Messiah; very God and very Man).
- II. Jesus Christ fulfilled His mission.
 - A. He suffered and died for the sins of all people.
 - B. He rose as Victor over death.
- III. Jesus Christ has freed His people:
 - A. From the need to win God’s favor.
 - B. From the burden of laws and regulations.

- C. For rest for their souls.
- D. For willing and joyful worship:
 1. Individually.
 2. Collectively.

Arthur F. Graudin

Third Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 8:27-35
June 29, 2003

Behind Jesus

On this Sunday of St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles, we are reminded that these servants of the Lord were sent to preach the Gospel (Mark 4:15) and to lead others to Christ—not to themselves (1 Cor. 3:5-7, 21-23). Though in our Gospel text for today Peter is the exemplar of both faithful confession as well as of demonic seduction to thinking “the things of men,” the real focus of our text is not Peter at all, but Jesus, whose kingship is radically represented not in worldly authority, but in the cross. As one called and sent by Christ, Peter would indeed “lose his life” for Jesus and for the Gospel. But his thinking the things of men is only too much like our own. What Christ would ultimately accomplish through him and the apostle Paul, ***by way of the cross***, is the reason for our celebration today.

Verse 27: Caesarea Phillipi, near the source of the Jordan River, was in an area outside the region of Galilee. It was near Mt. Hermon and was known in ancient times as Paneas (from the Greek ***Paneion***, a grotto dedicated to the Greek god Pan). The city was rebuilt by the tetrarch Herod Phillip and named Caesarea by him. As Herod Phillip’s capital, the city functioned as a center of both worship and government. It would have been a city of great splendor and its environs would have afforded a setting of natural beauty.

Verse 28: See Mark 6:14-16. The disciples’ answer about what “people” say about Jesus exactly echoes that heard earlier in Mark by Herod Antipas, regarding Jesus’ identity. There might thus be a dramatic, though ironic contrast being underlined between the “kingship” of Herod and the authority over sin and the devil that is drawn near in the person of Jesus Christ. (The title “king” is used of Herod in 6:14, but is probably used somewhat ironically, since Herod was actually a tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.)

Verse 29: Note the placement of the pronoun. “But ***you***, who do you say that I am?” “The Christ” or “Messiah” was a term that Jesus appears somewhat reluctant to use about Himself, perhaps because of the political overtones associated with the term in the minds of His listeners. In order for the disciples to grasp the true meaning of “Christ” they would need to witness the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Verse 30: This verse contains the first of three usages of ⓄB4J4 VT in the entire passage (see verse 33 below).

Verse 31: This is the first of three of Jesus’ predictions of His coming suffering, death, and resurrection (see also 9:31 and 10:32-34. The latter prediction is likewise followed by Jesus’ instruction about the radical nature of God’s kingdom that is “drawn near” in Him [1:15]).

Verse 33: Note the use of ἐπιβιβάζω throughout Mark. It is used by Jesus to cast out demons or otherwise exercises His authority over the powers of nature (see 1:25; 3:12; 4:39; 9:25). However, it is used three times by others besides Jesus in a way that is clearly revealed to be presumptuous (here, and also 10:13 and 10:48). Jesus' rebuke of Peter in this passage illustrates that the latter's thinking "the things of people" and not of God is opposed to the purposes of God's kingdom, and, like the demonic activity depicted throughout Mark's Gospel, is to be overcome by the Word of the Christ.

Verse 34: The use of the vocable ὑποβιβάζω is an echo of Jesus' original call of the twelve (1:17). It also echoes Jesus' rebuke of Peter in verse 33. That Peter is told to "get behind" Jesus in verse 33 indicates that the call of discipleship implies separation from all that does not come from God. Note also how many people will hear the phrase "bear/take up one's cross." In the popular idiom that phrase has been reduced to "putting up with something unpleasant." A cross would have been a shameful form of capital punishment in Jesus' day, akin to an electric chair or gurney for lethal injection, today. "Taking up one's cross" has therefore lost the meaning that is clearly elaborated in verse 35: giving up one's life in a manner deemed shameful by the world. This radical call of Jesus, radical yet so meaningful against the background of "life" which Christ has won for the believer, is to be emphasized.

Suggested outline:

I. Peter's Rebuke:

- A. Follows upon true confession of Jesus' identity as "Christ." Herod Antipas, "king" that he is, lived in fear that Jesus might have been John the Baptist come back from the dead. Peter and the disciples knew better; they knew what the others did not....Jesus was the promised Messiah. Yet their picture of what the Messiah was to accomplish was based on a popular political model of king, with all the accompanying perks. This understanding of Messiah needed correction.
- B. Is entirely reasonable and rational, according to our human way of thinking; you and I would have said the same. "The Son of Man must suffer and be crucified? Only *sinner*s were deserving of suffering and punishment by God...and you are a righteous man, Jesus! Is this the sort of talk that is becoming of a king?" You and I, unlike Peter at this stage of his walk with the Lord, live in the joyful aftermath of the resurrection, but we still feel at times that the cross is best avoided. Either we reduce the cross of discipleship to an absurd standard (e.g., giving up chocolate for Lent) or else assume that a "real sacrifice" in one area (e.g., material reward) merits indulging in another (lording it over others). We are loath to follow Jesus to the point of giving up our very lives.
- C. Is all the more dangerous for Peter, since he was a kind of spokesman for the disciples. Although Peter attempts to "take Jesus aside" and talk about what he thinks must make some sense to him (v. 32), we read in verse 33 that Jesus' rebuke of Peter came upon His "seeing his disciples." If it was important that Peter and other leaders of the early church understand and practice true discipleship in Jesus' day, it is likely to be important for leaders of the church today too.

II. Jesus' Rebuke:

- A. Confronts with power that which is opposed to the "kingdom of God,"

namely, sin, death, and the devil. Like the rebuke of God in the Old Testament (Ps. 104:7; 106:9; Zech. 3:2), in Mark's Gospel Jesus' rebuke gets results (see notes on v. 33 above).

- B. Is reminiscent of His call to discipleship. Both the call to Peter as a disciple (1:17) and Jesus' rebuke of Peter here concern "getting behind" Him and "following him." Peter would fail to follow where his Lord would lead; he would yet deny his Lord three times. Jesus' rebuke, harsh as it is, thus demonstrates His mercy. It is a call to wake up and to recognize just how wide a divide there actually is between the things of God and the things of people. Ultimately, Peter's and our salvation are at stake (v. 35).
- C. Jesus' rebuke of Peter in Mark 8 is a preview of His ultimate defeat of Satan, which would be accomplished on the cross. Peter and Paul, even after they came to recognize and believe in Jesus according to God's terms, would still think the things of people at times. But the cross of Christ was what they preached...not themselves (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1 Pet. 2:21-25). We celebrate what God accomplished through them, and, according to what He has accomplished in us, we follow Christ.

Jonathan Blanke
St. Louis, MO

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 4:26-34

July 6, 2003

Introduction: It is easy for Christians nowadays to become discouraged at the plight of the Christian church. Faced by growing persecution abroad and dismissed as irrelevant or condescendingly tolerated in our own country, the church seems to be falling on hard times. It is struggling to retain its unique identity in a swampland of religious pluralism and relativism. Ours is a culture in which one set of beliefs and values is considered to be as true as any other set of beliefs and values, and there seems to be no generally accepted, authoritative way to adjudicate the difference. Even the church itself sometimes considers tolerance (admittedly, a virtue) to be the only virtue—or at least a much greater virtue than a passion for truth. Occasionally, we hear churchmen themselves insisting that all truth claims are relative, a matter of one's perspective; that the views of all people must be validated; and that we should never impose our beliefs on others.

We desperately need the assurance Jesus provides us in today's Gospel reading, namely,

The Gospel Works—And the Christian Church Grows

- I. The assurance of Jesus' first parable (vv. 26-29).

The first parable emphasizes that the Gospel grows mysteriously, gradually, but dependably. Human involvement is minimal and perfunctory. A man, of course, sows the seed and harvests the crop. But while the seed is growing, he goes on with the routines of life, getting up and going to bed. The power for growth is in the seed, placed there by God. It is God-power, not manpower, that makes the seed of the Gospel grow. (The man "knoweth not

how," v. 27.) Secretly, slowly, but predictably, the seed grows—and you can count on a harvest.

II. The assurance of Jesus' second parable (vv. 30-32).

The second parable emphasizes the contrast between the insignificant origins of the Gospel growth and its impressive results. These results are more than impressive—they are beneficial to large numbers of people. ("The fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it," v. 32.) That God brings great things out of small is His style, His signature, evidenced by the phenomenal growth of the church from an obscure stable in Bethlehem and a shameful cross near Jerusalem, as well as evidenced by the great things that have come to pass in our own lives and in those of neighbors nearby. God's ways are not our ways.

Bonus Gospel: The expression "great branches" (v. 32) gives us extra opportunity to tie the cheering promises of both parables to the power of the One who spoke these parables, Jesus Himself, who lived, died, and rose again to channel His saving and sanctifying power to us through the agency of His Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of His means of grace.

Exegetically, the expression "great branches" simply dramatizes the vivid contrast between the smallness of the mustard seed and the largeness of the plant that grows from that seed. The description is simply a parabolic detail testifying to the point of the parable: the phenomenal growth of the Gospel and the Christian church.

But these "great branches" owe their greatness to the greatest of all branches, Jesus Christ. Isaiah says, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Is. 11:1). Jeremiah says it this way: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jer. 23:5). Zechariah says it the most economically: "Behold, I will bring forth my servant the **Branch**" (Zech. 3:8). This is the branch—or sprig—talked about in today's Old Testament lesson, Ezekiel 17:22-24, cropped off from a lofty cedar, planted on a high mountain, and ending up as a "goodly cedar" sheltering "all fowl of every wing."

Is it any wonder that when this Branch, Jesus, entered Jerusalem in characteristic fashion, humbly seated on a donkey, He should be greeted by a multitude cutting down branches and spreading them in His path. Symbolic perhaps?

Conclusion: Given the encouragement of the parables in our text and given the power of the One who told them, we can "be...steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as [we] know that [our] labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Francis C. Rossow

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 4:35-41
July 13, 2003

Liturgical context: Job's friends had tried to console him. In Job 38:1-11, the Old Testament lesson, Yahweh begins His answer to Job: "Then the LORD answered

Job out of the whirlwind..." (NASB). Yahweh reminds Job that He is the Creator of the earth and the waves of the sea. The Epistle, 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, reminds believers who Christ is and what He has done for them: "He (Christ) died for all." He "rose again on their behalf." "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature ("creation" [ESV])." God "reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (NASB).

Textual comments: The antecedent to the pronouns "them" and "they" is not provided in the text. The antecedent "His disciples" is in verse 34.

The storm is described as "a furious squall" (NIV), "a fierce gale of wind" (NASB), "a great windstorm" (NRSV, ESV).

The disciples are portrayed as fearing that they were about to die.

The humanity of Jesus is evident in His sleeping in the boat. Jesus' divinity is indicated by His authority over the wind and the waves. The disciples, however, did not realize who this was who was in their midst.

According to Mark, the disciples address Jesus as *didaskale* (Teacher). [Matthew has the disciples address Jesus as *kurie* (Lord); Luke has *epistata epistata* (Master, Master), though a variant reading has *kurie kurie* (Lord, Lord).] Mark has numerous direct and indirect references to Jesus as Teacher. Jesus in His role as Teacher was testing His disciples as to who they thought He was.

As Jesus continued on His mission He taught His disciples that He had come into the world to suffer, to die, and to rise again to win the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life for all people (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:45).

The words with which Jesus stilled the storm—*F4 B*, *BgN\ TF@*—do not appear in the accounts of Matthew and Luke.

Scholars have noted similarities between the storm account in Mark and the one in the first chapter of the book of Jonah. Both accounts refer to a mighty storm. Both Jesus and Jonah go to sleep. The men in both accounts are afraid. The elements cease their raging. While Mark has no specific mention of Jonah, Matthew refers to Jonah in relationship to Jesus' stay in the grave three days and three nights (Matt. 12:39, 40).

The words *@BT °PgJg BVFJ4*—"Do you still have no faith?"—seem to indicate that Jesus was disappointed that the disciples had not yet learned that He was true God as well as true man. Matthew has Jesus refer to the disciples as *ı 8A` B4J@*—"You of little faith." Luke has the words *B@° BVFJ4H°: T <*—"Where is your faith?"

Suggested outline.

Introduction: Physical, mental, and spiritual cause us who are Jesus' disciples today to become afraid and to lose courage. Like Jesus' disciples in the text we fail to remember that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man. We forget the promise of Jesus to be with us (Matt. 28:20). We forget that Jesus has claimed us as His own in Holy Baptism and sustains us with His very Body and Blood in His Holy Supper. As did the disciples, we too need to ask and answer the question:

Who Then Is This?

- I. Jesus as Teacher:
 - A. Teaches us by testing our faith.
 1. Not that we might lose it;

- 2. That we may grow in faith.
- B. When storms of life engulf us, Jesus would remind us that:
 - 1. He as true God (stilled the storm) is in control of all things.
 - 2. He as true Man (slept) can sympathize with us.
- II. Jesus Christ as the God-man who died and rose again for us has provided us with spiritual resources.
 - A. In Holy Baptism He claimed us as His own.
 - B. In His Holy Word He has promised to be with us (Matt. 28:20).
 - C. In His Holy Supper He comes to us under the bread and wine with His very Body and Blood to strengthen us through:
 - 1. The forgiveness of sins He won for us (Matt. 26:28).
 - 2. The reminder that we have eternal life (1 John 5:11).

Arthur F. Graudin

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43

or Mark 24b-34

July 20, 2003

In a TV commercial for a local congregation a youngish pastor sits relaxed in a chair with no background scenery and dressed in very casual attire. He very soft-spokenly asks the viewers, "Do you believe that the Bible is true and that what Jesus Christ says is true?" He then confesses that this is what he believes. Next he assures the viewers that, if they believe this also, Jesus will help them; then he says that Jesus will set them free. There are some good things about the commercial, such as a public confession of the truth of God's Word, the reality of Jesus Christ, and that the viewers' trust in Him will not be in vain. But there is a theology of glory here in that we are promised that Jesus will help us, and, in today's context, that will most likely be interpreted by most viewers as God-provided solutions to their temporal problems or as divinely assured realization of their temporal aspirations. There is nothing in the commercial to suggest that the promised help is for the spiritual maladies of people. The commercial comes a little closer to being theologically correct when we are assured that our faith in Jesus Christ will set us free, but the pastor does not say what we will be set free from. A well-informed Christian grounded in the theology of the cross may well interpret this to mean that we will be set free from the guilt of our sins, from Satan, and from the grip of eternal death. Others may simply interpret it to mean that they will be set free from whatever hinders the realization of their hopes, ambitions, and goals in this life.

This was one of the problems that Jesus had when He performed miracles. He was seen as a problem-solver, as one who could relieve people from the worries and hardships of this life. Often the reasons for the performance of His miracles were not understood. The primary purpose of our Savior's miracles was to establish His divine authority—to prove that He had control not only over the forces of nature in this world or over the weaknesses and infirmities of our human bodies, but more so that He has the power to give and re-give life to people temporally and eternally. He wanted to show us that we can trust in Him not only for every need that we may have in this life, but especially for our need for eternal salvation. Secondarily His miracles manifest His great love for people in all the conditions of their lives and

that He will bless them in this world as well as in the next. Our redemption begins with the onset of faith. Augustine once said that a person begins to die as soon as he takes his first breath. We might also say that eternal life begins as soon as we receive the faith that the Holy Spirit works in us.

The miracles of Jesus are more than wonderful little stories about marvelous and unusual events in which sight, hearing, ambulation, and life itself are restored. The miracles are evidence of God's great love for us, of His interest in every single aspect of our lives (even our minor maladies), and, especially, of His overcoming the power of sin in our lives and eventually restoring us to the immortal state with which he had gifted Adam and Eve when He created them. Granted, Jesus does not translate anyone to heaven in these texts or make a promise such as He made to the penitent thief on the cross, but, by restoring one individual to a former state of health and another to life in this world, He assures us that He has the power to restore the image of God lost in the Fall and to resurrect us on the Last Day.

The danger of the miracle accounts is that we may simply see them as assurances that God will continue to perform miracles in our lives along the lines of an earthly problem-solver. We see evidence of this view in major sport broadcasts—the player who kneels down and thanks God or crosses himself when he has scored or executed an outstanding play. Another instance may be people who claim to experience an upbeat emotional elation as they leave a rousing worship service that stirred their feelings more than it conveyed to them any profound theological truth.

There are two possible Gospel lessons appointed for this Sunday. Both are miracle accounts. One is a miracle in which Jesus cures a woman of a physical ailment and the other a miracle in which Jesus restores life to a child. What is interesting here in chapter 5 is that one miracle is contained within the account of another. Verses 24b-34 are framed by the introduction to the miracle involving Jairus's daughter and by the conclusion of that miracle account. While we often and rightly emphasize that the purpose of Christ's incarnation and redemptive work was primarily for our spiritual and eternal salvation, the intertwining of these two accounts remind us that, while Jesus' suffering and death was for the purpose of our eternal resurrection, He also is not unmindful or uncaring about our need for blessings in this life.

It is interesting to note some of the similarities and dissimilarities in these two miracle accounts. These may help the pastor decide which miracle account to preach on, or they may motivate him to conflate the two accounts into a single sermon. Both miracle accounts begin in the context of a large crowd. In spite of the pressure of the crowds, among whom there must have been many people desirous of a miracle, Jesus takes time to heal one individual and to raise another. Both individuals requesting miracles seem to have been strangers to Jesus; yet He loved them enough to take time out of His hectic schedule to help them. One of the suplicants is a named religious leader; the other an anonymous woman. In one case a father intercedes for his daughter; in the other a woman petitions Jesus for her own personal need. In the case of Jairus's daughter Jesus transmits his healing power by touching her—He takes the initiative; in the other miracle the woman taps Jesus' healing power by touching Him—the suppliant takes the initiative in receiving the healing power of her Savior. In both individuals their physical conditions were worsening and had progressed beyond the power of human help; Jairus's daughter actually dies before Jesus arrives at her house. In both miracle accounts the people are overwhelmed and amazed that they had received such a great blessing

from Jesus. There is enough material here for several sermons. One possibility is suggested below.

Suggested outline.

Jesus—A Loving and Interested Worker of Miracles

- I. Miracles are evidence of God's love for all people:
 - A. Those who are strangers because of the alienating power of sin.
 - B. Those who are already His children (reference the raising of Lazarus).
- II. Miracles are evidence that God is interested in all our needs:
 - A. Needs that might seem trivial to us.
 - B. Needs that are beyond human help.
 - C. Needs that are spiritual and eternal.
- III. Miracles are evidence that God has overcome the power of sin, defeated Satan, and conquered eternal death on our behalf.
 - A. Sin no longer has the power to rule our earthly lives.
 - B. Satan has been defeated and his power over us curtailed.
 - C. Eternal death no longer has a claim on us.

Conclusion: These miracles assure us that God does indeed love us, no matter who we are, that we can cast all our cares upon Jesus, as He has invited us, that we can have confidence that He will help us according to His wisdom and will; but above all they assure us that Christ has overcome the power of death and that He has the power to raise us to life everlasting. This is the heart of the Christian faith. Ours is not a theology of glory but a theology of the cross. Our petitions for God's help must always be made within a theology of the cross.

Quentin F. Wesselschmidt

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 6:1-6

July 27, 2003

Textual notes: There is no escaping the text of verse 5: Mark actually writes, "He was unable to do a solitary miracle there...." Only one significant manuscript tries to soften the blow, as W renders it: "He was not able ***any longer*** to do a miracle" (italics mine). Regardless, St. Mark clearly wishes his reader to consider the possibility of the ***inability*** of Jesus to do a miracle in His own hometown.

An important phrase in this regard is found in verse 3: "And they ***were offended in him***" (italics mine) which seems to carry a meaning that they found something in Him to be offended at, a phrase which occurs exclusively in the Gospels, and in St. Mark, only here. The key here is that they had known this wise miracle-worker since He was knee-high, nothing more than a carpenter; that was grounds for them to be offended.

Two more important phrases are found in verse 6: "And he ***actually marveled*** on account of their unbelief, and he proceeded to go around the villages ***in a circle*** teaching" (italics mine). With this imperfect form, St. Mark has called our attention away from the inability itself to the ***reaction*** Jesus had to His inability. In addition, Mark 3:34 paints the same sort of picture in the same kind of context. In that text,

Jesus passively rejects His blood kin by asserting that those in a circle around Him, who do the will of God—those are His mother and brother and sister, not those who have a biological familial claim on Him.

Context: This one (as His kinfolk call him) who stills the storm (4:39), who casts out Legion (5:1-20), whose garments release power into those who touch them (5:27-34), who even raises the dead (5:35-43), and who sends the Twelve with authority over unclean spirits (6:7-13)—this one cannot do a miracle (beyond a few healings!) in His hometown.

What the text means: St. Mark seems to be intent on demonstrating that the Son of the Most High can—and did—fail, in a narrow sense. Whether or not unbelief is the *cause* of His failure is beside the point. The fact is that they rejected Him, apparently because they “knew” Him, and as far as they were concerned, He was not what they wanted Him to be. This unbelief, however, did cause Jesus to marvel, a singular event in Mark, but He did not miss a beat, continuing to teach throughout the region, creating a veritable host around this amazing unbelief. Unbelief at Jesus’ teaching is the exception, not the rule.

Suggestions for preaching: I know a man who was pastor of an old congregation filled with aging people. He bought a bus and drove it all over the sizeable town, a town filled with unwanted people, people who were criminals, drug addicts, and otherwise no-good-niks. He drove in great big circles, literally calling out to people to get on the bus to his church. His congregation, however, would not have these people, and actually told them to leave, in no uncertain terms, and even once, quite directly, “We don’t want these kind of people here.”

When it comes right down to it, they didn’t like the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins for all people. Instead, they liked to hear how they were a good congregation because they were the third generation of Lutherans in that area. They liked the familiarity of each other so much that they could not tolerate the unfamiliar sights, sounds, and smells of these unwashed heathen in their grandparents’ sanctuary. And this bus-driving pastor was not the kind of pastor their grandparents’ sanctuary deserved.

Not surprisingly, this congregation continues to be aging and near dying, but the other congregations in the area are burgeoning, filled with those formerly unwanted who had an undying thirst to hear more about this carpenter who went around in ever-widening circles preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The pastor with the bus is now an unpleasant memory to the old congregation. So, in a narrow sense, his ministry failed, but only as an exception. The circle of growing congregations around this one is proof.

Congregations young and old take heed! The ministry of the Son of the Most High will succeed with or without you, and if you do not repent, you will find Him at the Judgment marveling at your unbelief. In turn, you who do not have a familial claim to a congregation, take heed! The bus is on its way.

John David Duke, Jr.
St. Louis, MO

On the reading of many books... ”

HEAR THE WORD OF YAHWEH: *Essays on Scripture and Archaeology in Honor of Horace D. Hummel*. Edited by Dean O. Wenthe, Paul L. Schrieber, and Lee A. Maxwell. St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2002. 208 pages. Cloth. \$27.95.

Reflections on Horace Hummel generate a host of apocryphal thoughts, some to be confirmed, others to be denied. In the realm of reality was his ongoing gesturing with “a mighty hand and outstretched arm” as he waxed so eloquent on the sublimities of a particular facet of the Old Testament that the class would normally go five minutes beyond its scheduled ending. Also to be confirmed is this reviewer’s conversations with other Hummel students that fondly took note of those who had “mastered the master’s” theological vocabulary. At that point the budding theological student was officially called a “Hummelite.” Hummel’s phrases still echo down the corridors of Concordia Seminary: “Israel reduced to one.... There are three types of types.... Torah is not, repeat, *not* equivalent to the Pauline understanding of law (let the student never make that mistake!).... Now—but not yet.... That’s a distinction without a difference.”

Indeed, Horace Hummel’s effect on the revitalization of Old Testament studies in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod can hardly be overstated. To quote from the forward of this book: “He professed and proclaimed with clarity and conviction that the words of the Hebrew Scriptures are not mere words in an ancient language. Instead, they are living and active words about flesh and blood people, whose salvation was wholly dependent, by grace, on the God named Yahweh through the presence, power, and proclamation of the Word Becoming Flesh.” Again, “From spade to stole, from history to theology, from the prophetic Word proclaimed in words and signs to the Prophetic Word Made Sure and Made Flesh, Horace Hummel articulated a rich Biblical theology and left a legacy of service that is defined by the highest academic and intellectual standards.” Indeed!

Dr. Hummel’s teaching always accented Christology and worship, employing an incarnational and sacramental hermeneutic with an eschatological perspective. His exposition of the Old Testament, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), sets forth the interpretation of Scripture in a manner that is consistent with confessional Lutheran theology, while also employing the finest fruits of modern scholarship. Students and colleagues alike contribute to this Festschrift that was presented to him on September 25, 2002, on the occasion of the Thirteenth Annual Theological Symposium on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Paul Schrieber’s contribution explores the Law/Gospel dialectic of Hosea 1:6-7. While eschewing the redactional understanding that interprets verse 7 as a later, pro-Judean addition, Schrieber postulates the idea that the prophet was deliberately ambiguous so that his audience would receive the verses as either Law or Gospel. The concluding verse in Hosea, 14:10, evokes such a reading. It says, in part, “Who is wise? Let him discern these things. Who is perceptive? Let him know them.” The wise and perceptive reader/hearer of 1:6 would then answer its question, “For indeed shall I forgive them?”—with a repentant and affirmative, “yes!”

Dean Wenthe’s study is entitled “Amos 9:11-15: The Blood of Jesus in the Booth of David.” Similar to Schrieber’s article, he begins by distancing himself from the “cut and paste” form and redactional reading strategies that universally

assign texts like Amos 9:11-15 to a late, post-exilic date. Wenthe rejects this interpretation, not only on theological grounds, but also because other ancient Near Eastern texts contain messages of judgment *and* deliverance. He also notes that deliverance is hinted at earlier in Amos as when, for example, the prophet indicates that judgment will not be total (e.g., 3:12; 5:4-6, 14-15). Wenthe goes on to meticulously note how Amos 9:11-15 has been interpreted in Rabbinic and New Testament literature, with focused attention on the latter's Christological applications vis-à-vis Acts 15:16-17.

"Drinking the Cup of God's Wrath" is authored by Paul Raabe. He explores the literary idea of metaphor as it relates to fifteen texts in the Old Testament that employ the idea of "Yahweh's cup." Raabe's article is a shorted version of his excursus under the same title in his Anchor Bible Obadiah commentary which is a masterful thirty-five pages of detailed study on this metaphor. In this Festschrift he summarizes ten points that are associated with Yahweh's cup of wrath and then draws some connections with similar texts in the New Testament, namely, when Jesus "drinks his cup" in His passion and when Babylon in the book of Revelation "drinks her cup" at the eschatological judgment.

To this reviewer, the most helpful article in the Festschrift is Andrew Bartelt's "Dialectical Negation: An Exegetical Both/And." He begins by calling attention to several prophetic texts (e.g., Jer. 7:22; Hos. 6:6; Joel 2:13) that appear to negate Israel's worship life. In order to salvage an Old Testament theology that encompasses *both* Word and Sacrament Bartelt introduces the idea dialectical negation. Stated simply, such texts are best understood as examples of "both/and" thinking rather than "either/or" propositions. This reviewer found Bartelt's discussion to be much like the fallacy discussed in D. A. Carson's book titled "Exegetical Fallacies" labeled "an improper appeal to the law of the excluded middle." Rather than exclude "the middle" dialectical negation holds that in some texts (Deut. 5:3 is another stellar example) ideas are much more complementary than contradictory. Bartelt takes the discussion a step further by linking this "both/and" understanding of these texts to James Kugel's idea of Hebrew poetry. Namely, in a normal bi-colon line the movement is "A, and what's more, B." Bartelt then writes that it is therefore likely that "this idiom of dialectical negation is deeply rooted in the thought patterns underlying biblical expression." One example from the New Testament will indicate how this idea serves the pastor/teacher of God's Word. When Peter states that the prophets "sought to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow they were not serving themselves, but you" (1 Pet. 1:11-12). A simplistic reading of these verses easily gives the impression that the Old Testament prophets were not at all serving their own time and did little else but predict the future, a view staunchly attacked by Horace Hummel "all the days of his life!" Bartelt goes on to write: "However, if one translates what Peter says in verse 12 as dialectical negation, the integrity of the prophets as preacher to this own time is preserved: 'It was revealed to them that they were not (just) serving themselves, but you.'" Additional insights conclude the article where the author notes that dialectical negation is well woven into the fabric of Lutheran theology. The "both/and" position correctly states our understanding of the material and formal principle, faith and reason, Protestant and Catholic, Law and Gospel, doctrine and mission, etc.

In positing a canonical, Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological hermeneutic, Christopher Mitchell's article, "The Song of Songs: A Lutheran

Perspective,” whets the appetite for his forthcoming commentary on the Song in the Concordia Commentary Series. Mitchell finds New Testament parallels that assist in his interpretation, with the foremost of these being Ephesians 5:21-33. Key here is verse 32: “This mystery is great; but I refer to Christ and the Church.” Within the union of Christian husband and wife this mystery is contained—Christ’s union with His body, the church. Since in Matthew 12:6 Jesus designates Himself as “one greater than Solomon” it follows that, in the Song, a number of passages portraying Solomon in relation to his bride are indicative of the greater realities of Christ and His church. One quote will serve as typical of Michell’s rich reflections. “One of the most prominent Gospel motifs in the Song is the Great Reversal. The lowly, despised, suffering Shulammitte is elevated, honored, and filled with joy though the power of sublime love.... Ultimately, the Great Reversal motif applies to the entire church, washed clean in Holy Baptism and adorned as a glorious bride fit for her heavenly Groom.”

Space only permits one more reflection. Lou Brighton’s intimate knowledge of the book of Revelation is evident in his offering, “The Rainbow: A Sign of God’s Covenant with His Creation.” In the New Testament there are only two appearances of God’s “bow”—both in Revelation (4:3 and 10:1). And in both cases the Greek word *iris* is used and not the much more frequent *toxon* of the LXX. Brighton asks why and arrives at this insight—it is possible that John in Revelation used the less frequent *iris* due to its Greek mythological connotations. In this way John rescues the understanding of *iris* from its pagan ideas and triumphantly declares that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ promises through His *iris* the truth of His covenant first made with Noah in Genesis 9:13. This is in contrast to the pagan idea of *iris* as a goddess-like messenger.

Other contributions are made by Alan Ludwig, “Ezekiel 43:9: Prescription or Promise”; Roger Cotton, “A Biblical Theology of Leviticus Focusing on Chapter 19”; Merlin Rehm, “Contributions of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Textual Criticism of the Old Testament”; Sarantis Symeonoglou, “From Gilgamesh and Achilles to the Phalanx”; N.E.W. Symeonoglou, “Bulls, Birds, and Snakes: The Iconography of Mycenaean Ring-Kernoi”; Michael and Neathery Fuller, “Archaeological Discoveries at Tell Tuneiner, Syria”; Mark Brighton, “A Comparison of Literary Conventions in Judith with the Ancient Greek Novel”; Andrew Steinmann, “The Use of Gender-Neutral and Gender-Sensitive Language in the Church”; and Norman Nagel, “The Word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi: Liturgically Received in the Didache.”

Those who sat at Horace Hummel’s feet will read this Festschrift and recall his brilliance and passion for almost every aspect of the Old Testament. Yet anyone who has a deep love for the Hebrew Scriptures will find that this book will bring greater understanding and love for the Word Becoming Flesh.

Reed Lessing

THE NEXT CHRISTENDOM: *The Coming of Global Christianity*. By Philip Jenkins. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. 270 pages. Cloth. \$28.00.

Every generation is called to meet the challenges of its own age. While we learn from the past, we live and work in the present and future. Therefore, we need literature that provides serious and honest descriptions of the present and well-based projections of the near future. Philip Jenkins has written such a book, one that reflects an enormous amount of careful and discerning research. He is

Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State University.

Jenkins tells his readers about the biggest story of the millennium that was missed by the Western media. The center of gravity of the Christian world is shifting to the Southern Hemisphere. While secularization dominates the West, Christianity is sweeping through Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa will soon displace Europe as the chief Christian heartland. The centers of Christendom will be located in cities such as Addis Ababa, Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, and Manila. "By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world's 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites. Soon, the phrase 'a White Christian' may sound like a curious oxymoron, as mildly surprising as 'a Swedish Buddhist.' Such people can exist, but a slight eccentricity is implied" (3).

The two biggest players in the emerging Christendom are Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism. Christians of the Southern Hemisphere tend to be far more conservative when it comes to moral teaching. They take the Scriptures at face value, and they are more interested in personal salvation and the teachings of Scripture than in progressive political concerns. They tend to have a strong supernatural orientation. One does not have to convince them that the devil exists. They are big into prophecy, dream-visions, faith-healing, and exorcism. In light of these dominant trends in worldwide Christianity, one can only smile at Bishop Spong's 1998 book, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*. This book argued that to survive, the church must become relevant and abandon outmoded supernatural doctrines and traditional moral positions.

The Scriptures often speak to Southern Christians in a much more immediate way than to those of the post-Enlightenment West. "[M]artyrdom is not merely a subject for historical research, it is a real prospect" (218). The book of Revelation makes immediate sense to them. "To a Christian living in a Third World dictatorship, the image of the government as Antichrist is not a bizarre religious fantasy, but a convincing piece of political analysis" (219-220). The Old Testament emphasis on exile hits home to millions of Christian refugees. New Testament warnings about discretion and humility can make the difference between life and death in a country where interfaith tensions might lead to bloodshed. In many ways, they are better prepared to understand the Bible than we are.

Jenkins expects religious conflict to continue between Muslims and Christians, especially in places where one or the other is in the minority. Some of the flash points are the Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Issues of faith must not be ignored by Western governments, even when it comes to international politics. Commenting on the Yugoslav crisis of the 1990s, Jenkins writes:

The net result of the Allied intervention was a massive advance of Muslim power and militancy within southeastern Europe, at the expense of ancient Christian communities. At the same time, the oppressed Christians of the Sudan were receiving no support from NATO, or any Western or Christian entity. Even mainstream Western churches were unwilling to be too forthright in denouncing persecution. For Konrad Raiser, head of the World Council of Churches, the main lesson of the massacres in Indonesia and Nigeria was that Christians needed to reassess their missionary endeavors, to avoid causing offense to other cultures (186).

Whereas secularized Westerners tend to think in terms of politics and economics, the average person in the South values religious identification more

highly than allegiance to any nation-state.

Hopefully, no politically correct fear of “proselytizing” will hinder us from investing in the church’s mission to the Southern Hemisphere. But for whatever reason, the Northern churches have generally failed to respond to the global Christian shift to the South. For example, the Northern Hemisphere is four times better supplied with Roman Catholic priests than the Southern Hemisphere, even though the South is where the vast majority of Catholics live. “[I]t almost seems as if the Church has scientifically assigned its resources to create the minimum possible correlation between priests and the communities that need them most. The Devil himself could scarcely have planned it better” (213).

Christianity is booming in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In an extraordinary book, Jenkins summons all of us to take today’s reality and tomorrow’s reality seriously.

Paul R. Raabe

INTRODUCING THE REFORMED FAITH: *Biblical Revelation, Christian Tradition, Contemporary Significance*. By Donald K. McKim. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 261 pages. Paper. \$27.95.

Most Lutherans have a very general understanding of “Reformed” theology that often unintentionally classifies Calvinists, Zwinglians, Arminians, and Wesleyans into one generic and indistinguishable category. Donald McKim, a prolific author, articulate theologian, and gifted editor, provides American Christians and certainly interested Lutherans with an indispensable resource for understanding the peculiarities and distinctive emphases of Reformed theology in light of contemporary and ecumenical perspectives.

As an introduction, McKim places Reformed theology into its larger Biblical and historical context. This common Christian perspective leads naturally into the Reformation claim of participating in an evangelical and catholic heritage. Lutheran readers will recognize how we share many similar Protestant perspectives on the Biblical foundations and historical backgrounds of Christian doctrine and also on common contemporary concerns as McKim sets them forth in this rich and readable reference.

Setting forth the basics of the Reformed faith in nineteen chapters, McKim examines the Biblical, historical, and (if unique) Reformed perspective on fifteen key doctrines of the Christian church. He provides a wealth of material on Scripture, the Trinity, creation, providence, humanity, sin, the person of Christ, the work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, church, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, Christian life, and the reign of God—along with an introductory chapter on being a “confessional” Calvinist. In three final chapters, he describes the distinctive emphases of the Reformed faith, gives answers to “some common questions,” and offers a “Catechism of Christian Faith and Life,” which McKim prepared in the hope that others would adopt or adapt it. The work also has helpful study questions at the end of each chapter, fifty pages of notes, an index of non-English terms used in the book, an index of names, and a well-prepared subject index.

Calvinism is a distinct form of Protestant theology. The unique way in which it was strongly influenced by Luther and Calvin, yet modified by later reformers, provides it with its peculiar features. While giving typical Reformed perspectives of Christian doctrines, McKim shies away from several controverted Calvinistic

topics, particularly predestination and millennialism. He admits that there are a variety of millennial views held among teachers in the various Reformed churches, but he only adverts to the distinctive double-predestinarian view held by most Calvinists. This is somewhat disappointing, since he is rather thorough in so many other areas.

How Calvin differed from other Protestants on the Lord's Supper, especially Luther and Zwingli, in light of their rejection of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, is addressed unequivocally. McKim articulates Calvin's exceptional, albeit not always comprehensible, explanation of Christ's spiritual presence in the Sacrament. Christ is "spiritually present, though not physically or locally present," notes McKim (150). His multi-page presentation on this topic is remarkably careful, yet the subtle distinctions and lucid commentary only underscore the subtle vagaries that have haunted Calvinists since the sixteenth century. Of these ("Sacramentarian") distortions the formulators of the Book of Concord said, "Many important people were deceived through their magnificent, alluring words" (FC SD VII 6). And so it can still be seen today when one Lutheran body affirmed the **Formula of Agreement** with several Reformed denominations a few years ago.

Knowing that the root of this nuanced perspective of the Lord's Supper comes from a less than firm commitment to a grammatical-historical hermeneutic of Scripture is important and evident in McKim's earlier chapters. Concomitantly, throughout the work there is also a weak Christology that unwittingly separates Christ's two natures, rather than sees the humanity and divinity of Christ as relating effectively and Biblically in the shared characteristics of the whole divine-human person, Christ Jesus.

Every Lutheran pastor is aware that congregation members are engaged regularly in conversation with Reformed Christians. This book will serve as a helpful guide for pastors when questions turn toward the beliefs of Presbyterians, members of the United Church of Christ, and other non-Arminian Reformed churches. To that end, McKim lists the twenty-three denominations that fall under his more specific label of "Reformed."

This book is a pleasure to read, review, and recommend for further study, deliberative consideration and careful appraisal by all Lutheran parish pastors. Pastors who have opportunities to study and work with Reformed colleagues will enjoy the discussions that will inevitably arise over our denominational distinctions as well as appreciate the resulting necessary return to the Lutheran Confessions for clarification and explication of our foundation in the Biblical Lutheran faith.

Timothy Maschke
Mequon, WI

A SMOOTH STONE: ***Biblical Prophecy in Historical Perspective***. By David Arthur. New York: University Press of America, 2001. 426 pages. Cloth. \$74.00.

A Smooth Stone is a survey of the Hebrew prophets that begins with the preclassical seers, expands to the prophetic attacks on individual sin, and ends with the prophetic assault against Israel's religion. Arthur's thesis is that in time, the chasm between the Yahweh of the dynastic cult and the Yahweh of clan religion became so wide that it could no longer be bridged. A reaction set in, eventually leading to the appearance of the classical prophets, whose messages culminated in

the total rejection of the Yahweh of the dynastic cult. Into Israel's stable, yet static scheme, these prophets inserted a radical disjunction. Israel was rejected, its covenant with God terminated. Formerly, Yahweh had led His people to freedom; now He would send them back into captivity. "To put the matter in theological terms, the biblical God is a God of dissent, a God inimical to pious verities and smug assertion. This is a God not of the status quo, but of protest and demolition" (92).

The book "is intended not just for specialists, but for the general reader as well" (ix). Technical jargon is omitted, and where it is used the reader is referred to a glossary in the back of the book. Footnotes and scholarly debate are kept to a minimum.

One of the main strengths of *A Smooth Stone* is that the author deftly synthesizes large amounts of Biblical material. For example, he states that classical (writing) prophets drew eclectically from their varied heritage. Like the tribal seers, they obtained secret knowledge through visions; unlike them, however, they regarded dreams and omens as inferior means of revelation (Jer. 23:25-28). Like the men of God, the classical prophets had no formal attachment to a cult site; unlike them they spurned magic and wonder working (Ezek. 13:17-20). Like the ecstatic prophet, Yahweh directly inspired their speech, but rather than jabber unintelligibly, these prophets uttered artistically composed sayings.

Arthur's definitions of terms are simple and to the point. He defines *nabi*, *neum Yahweh*, *sod*, *ish elohim*, *bene elohim*, etc., in terms that are textual and insightful. For example, he notes that all "men of God" are also identified as prophets. However, the reverse is not true. Most prophets are never called "men of God." Though the two roles overlapped, they were by no means synonymous. A prophet was an official charged with a specific task, that of announcing the word of Yahweh. The "man of God," on the other hand, was characterized by supernatural gifts.

Also in the first half of the book Arthur explains the conflicts between monarchy and prophet, king and clan, Yahweh and Baal, urban and rural, communal solidarity and individual conscience. Along these lines the discussion about true and false prophets is helpful. False prophets acted to uphold the existing social order, of which they were an integral part. It was their task to inspire worship of the national deity, to secure the prerogatives of the king, and to defend the realm against outside enemies. The true prophets, on the other hand, were typically allied with a secondary cultural nexus: a persecuted cult or disenfranchised class, or more broadly, with rural clan tradition. These prophets generally saw themselves as defenders of older social and religious values, which had been supplanted by the different value system of urban society. The true prophets were, as a result, adversaries of the existing regime: where the institutional prophets predicted glory and loot, they predicted defeat and disaster.

Additionally, *A Smooth Stone* discusses the Hebrew prophets in light of those at Mari in a helpful manner. For example, what made Israelite prophets unique is neither the form nor content of their speeches, but rather their recurrent refusal to follow the agreed script (e.g., Micaiah ben Imlah and Elijah). Up to, and including his analysis of Amos, Arthur remains very textually based.

In his discussion on Amos he notes that such an all-out negation of the status quo was atypical of ancient thought. Rigorous conformity to tradition was the predominant ideal. For Amos, however, reversal and negation were the incessant themes. In his time so massive a denial was unprecedented. The author's thesis is that this pattern recurs again and again, with its momentum building and building.

“Divine revelation, it seems, is simply conventional thinking turned upside down” (152).

The section on Ezekiel, almost a third of the book, is engaging, if not downright suspenseful. It is at this juncture, however, that Arthur inserts a new hermeneutic, not fully explained until the end of the book. With Ezekiel *A Smooth Stone* begins to interpret textual discontinuity as certain signs of redactional activity. This hermeneutic allows Arthur to understand the discontinuities in Ezekiel as the prophet’s additional later reworking of older prophecies in light of changed religious struggles in Jerusalem. Throughout the prophecy key oracles are transformed into apocalyptic allegory. The final form of texts takes on, at times, completely new meanings.

For example, the prophet’s extended allegory of Israel’s history in chapter 16 is actually a parody of the high priest. The Tyre Oracle of chapter 27 is not aimed at Tyre but rather is an indictment of Jerusalem, and the Tyranian ship in this chapter is a thinly disguised metaphor for the Jerusalem temple. But if Tyre is a cipher for Jerusalem, who is the “king of Tyre” in chapter 28? Arthur argues that the “king” is none other than the high priest. Again, in chapter 32 Judah is the real target rather than “Egypt.” The idea is that textual discontinuities are signs Ezekiel later revamped his messages in order to bring the final and fully edited book together under one motif—the total rejection of Israel’s religion. “As the book progresses, Ezekiel continually adds depth and variety to his scheme, thereby building an inexorable momentum that propels the sequence toward a final, shattering resolution” (235).

Discussing chapters 40-48, Arthur asserts that in its basic iconography the new temple seems little different from the old, corrupted one. “That Jerusalem still persists in her idolatry is, in fact, precisely the point of Ezekiel’s vision” (260). What the chapters disclose is not the promise of a glorious future, but the persistent reality of delusion. Arthur postulates that it was Ezekiel’s skirmish with the false prophets, depicted in chapter 13, that drove the exiled priest toward “a policy of deliberate deception” (262). By tracking the use of “wall” in the book, it is concluded that the restored temple was destined for destruction—even before it was built. Hence, these chapters are “salvation oracles modified to function as oracles of doom” (272).

With Ezekiel 38-39 the book “arrives at its ultimate destination” (274). Arthur identifies Gog with Yahweh, Himself. Indeed, through similar vocabulary in chapters 1 and 38 the “inexorable logic of the tradition pointed to a startling conclusion: Yahweh would destroy himself” (277). The rejection of Israel’s religion is therefore complete.

Arthur begins his discussion on Isaiah by locating the book’s final redaction in the middle of the fifth century during strife between the Zadokite priests and minority residents of Jerusalem. The book of Isaiah takes up the cause for this persecuted minority who could not prevail in a power struggle with the priestly hierarchy. The interpretation of Isaiah 6 in light of 44:18ff. follows the same hermeneutic used in Ezekiel; namely, locating similar vocabulary and then concluding that the same vocabulary means the same referent. This, then, results in the idea that, in the book’s final fifth-century redaction, what Isaiah really saw in chapter 6 was Molech, a false god, who commands the destruction of Jerusalem. This idea then informs much of Arthur’s reading of *melek* in Isaiah. “Pronouncements originally directed against the *melek* of Assyria were therefore taken up and reapplied to the *melek* of Tophet [i.e., Molech]” (377). Much like his interpretation

of the Tyre oracle in Ezekiel, Arthur understands Isaiah's Tyre oracle in chapter 23 to also be a cipher for Jerusalem. Again, two ideas drive these conclusions. First, he postulates an "Isaianic school" whose work is detected by textual discontinuities. Second, similar vocabulary means a similar referent. This hermeneutic climaxes in his discussion of Isaiah 14:3-20. By means of matching up vocabulary and noting discontinuity, Arthur concludes that the fifth-century book of Isaiah laments the death of Yahweh, so complete is the final prophetic rejection of Israel's religion.

Applying the prophetic destruction of Israel's religion as depicted by the final form of Ezekiel and Isaiah, Arthur writes, "We have seen that several postclassical prophets attacked the traditional picture of God as King; taking their criticism a step farther, one could argue that the whole notion of a male-dominated cosmological hierarchy should be rejected" (394). Arthur's ultimate application of his reading of the prophets is as follows: "What are all the catechisms and creeds and canons but a desperate attempt to wall off a small, safe circle from the crushing immensity of the universe? Unable to bear the dizzying heights of unlimited mystery, we have settled for a more attainable—if more complicated—half-truth. Better a known trifle than the terror of infinite possibility" (395).

The questions I have for Arthur center upon his hermeneutic. First as important as intertextuality has been for helping sense the unity of Biblical books, I wonder if it may not also become a distraction in his case? His fascination with the way a poetic theme or a rhetorical expression is repeated within Ezekiel and Isaiah tends to lead to an interpretation that has no external controls. Can verbal correspondence be the sole determiner of a text's meaning? That is to say, just because Ezekiel 32 has similar vocabulary with Ezekiel 16 may only mean that Jerusalem is on the same level as Egypt. The message is that Israel has become like one of the nations. So likewise in other places. Similar vocabulary does not necessarily always indicate the same referent. Because *x* and *y* are alike in certain respects doesn't mean they are alike in *all* respects.

Second, to be sure, the textual discontinuities in Ezekiel and especially Isaiah are incomparably greater than those found in western writings. But is Arthur's exegesis of those discontinuities the only interpretation? Could one not rather turn the usual problem on its head and understand that we are faced with a text which had originally been a whole, and which has then been disjointed from the outside by redactional interpreters? Arthur could at least entertain the idea that the discontinuity is an original intentional act designed by the speaker/writer for the purpose of persuasion. That is to say, the stylistic elements perceived by redactional scholars as indicators of less-than-skilled editorial work might be devices widely accepted by ancient Israelites as part of the repertory of skilled writers and speakers.

Finally, *A Smooth Stone* only attributes several salvation oracles to Ezekiel (mostly in chaps. 34-37). But this is another problem. In their final form both Ezekiel and Isaiah contain many more texts that can be understood as salvation oracles. Theologically this is because of Israel's creed, namely, "Yahweh is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loyal love" (Ex. 34:6; et al.). Yahweh's "anger lasts for a moment, his favor a lifetime" (Ps. 30:6 [MT]). Yahweh is not only, and even not primarily, a God of judgment, but a God of salvation. Arthur fails to bring this idea into the discussion due to the fact that he mistakenly brackets out Israel's other writings in the Torah and the Ketabim. These would correct his bias toward Yahweh as being only a God of destruction. A more holistic reading of the prophetic literature, specifically in light of the Pentateuchal curses *and* blessings of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, would better integrate Arthur's

presentation with normative Mosaic Yahwism.

To its credit, *A Smooth Stone* leaves the reader with the idea that Biblical prophecy is unsurpassed in visionary scope, moral insight, and imaginative impact. Even now, more than two and a half millennia later, the words of the prophets retain an uncanny power to annoy, hearten, fascinate, and/or appall. The book is lucid, engaging and well written, but finally what would strengthen the argument is a more thoroughgoing discussion and defense of the hermeneutic employed and a more integrative approach that reads prophetic literature in light of the entire Hebrew canon.

Reed Lessing

WE BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST: *Essays in Christology*. By Curtis A. Jahn, ed. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1999. 312 pages. Paper. \$12.99.

In the year 2000, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod celebrated its 150th anniversary. In preparation for both that event and the 2000th anniversary of Christ's birth, essays on Christology were presented at their twelve district conventions in June 1998. The authors are WELS professors (seven), pastors (three), and Synodical administrators (two). I am happy to recommend to our readers this fine collection of essays on the person and work of Christ. The twelve essays are:

Richard E. Lauersdorf, "Jesus—The Final Word from God."

Wayne D. Mueller, "What Do We Mean, Jesus Is Lord of the Church?"

David M. Gosdeck, "God Became Our Brother."

Paul O. Wendland, "Now That God Is One of Us: A Study of the Communication of Attributes in the Person of Christ."

Leroy A. Dobberstein, "The Office of Christ."

Richard D. Balge, "The Active and Passive Obedience of Jesus Christ."

John C. Jeske, "Christology and Justification: A Vital Link."

Paul M. Janke, "Christ in Us: The Place of the Doctrine of Sanctification in Reformed and Lutheran Teaching."

Forrest L. Bivens, "How Does Our Christology Impact Our Daily Lives?"

Eric S. Hartzell, "A Living, Active, Powerful Christ for the Church of the Next Millennium."

Ernst H. Wendland, "Jesus Is Coming Again."

James R. Janke, "'We (Still) Do Not Have the Same Spirit': A Critique of Contemporary Reformed Christology and Its Impact on the Doctrine of the Lord's Supper."

The authors particularly emphasize how doctrine and practice go together, how what we believe, teach, and confess about Christ is very practical for faith and life. In general, the essayists do a good job of presenting traditional Lutheran Christology with frequent citations from Luther and the Lutheran Confessions (especially the Formula). Occasionally, one might wish to see more contextual exegesis of the various Biblical passages and more incorporation of the early church fathers into the discussion. For example, the debate between Luther and Zwingli basically amounted to a replay of the debate between Cyril and Nestorius. However, Gosdeck's essay offers a nice discussion of the incarnation according to the early church fathers.

At the heart of Christianity is Christ. That is why it is called “Christ-ianity” and we are called “Christ-ians.” This collection of essays serves Lutheran congregations well by keeping our focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Paul R. Raabe

GOD’S LESSER GLORY: *The Diminished God of Open Theism*. By Bruce A. Ware. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000. 240 pages. Paper. \$15.99.

Why pray for guidance? A fresh look at this question—in light of those times in which following one’s conviction after praying for guidance has led to sorrow—underlies, in part, the denial by Open Theism that God knows the future. Rather than knowing the future, God, according to Open Theism, lovingly risks the future with His free creation. In *God’s Lesser Glory*, Bruce Ware has argued his side for the traditional reformed view of divine foreknowledge—as even-mindedly and fairly as his passion for God’s glory will allow.

Although Ware has structured his book according to summary, assessment, and impact of Open Theism, he is constantly engaging in his own commentary. At each point, Ware wants the reader to see what he views to be the weakness of the Openness argument. For example, he counters his opposites’ use of a “straight-forward reading” of the Biblical texts when it suggests that God grows in knowledge (e.g., Gen. 22:12) or that He repents of decisions in light of new information (e.g., Ex. 32:14) by claiming that a consistent application of their hermeneutic would result in denying omnipresence and omnipotence as well (Gen. 3). Likewise, he asserts that it is inconsistent for Genesis 22:12 to indicate that God is ignorant of Abraham’s devotion, but that Jesus could predict Peter’s three denials because of “intimate familiarity.” In emphasizing the divine repentance texts, Ware argues, Open Theists do not adequately treat those Scriptures that deny that God can in any way change His mind as people do (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29). Then he rehearses several of the passages, which on the other hand, assert that God does know the future. Ware defends God’s glory: “For the believer, there are simply no accidents or tragedies in which God is, as it were, a passive bystander.”

In seeking to defend God’s glory, neither side contemplates paradox in the mystery of God. Although the Open Theists are rightly charged with boxing God within history, they seem to rightly charge Ware’s “classical” view as placing God in a box outside of it. For example, in defending God’s wisdom in response to human counsel, Ware asserts: “God knows better, **he would be acting as a fool were he to carry out our wishes**” (169, emphasis his). God, however, seems to do just this when establishing human kingship for Israel. Contrary to Open Theism’s understanding, God does foreknow the future free-choice of His people and gives Moses instructions for a future king (Deut. 17:14-20). He later makes clear, however, that this course of action is not His preference and will bring hardship to Israel. Contrary to Ware, He still grants the request (1 Sam. 8-9). By prejudicing a philosophical construct of God’s glory, each side fails to appreciate the paradox in the Bible’s portrait of God, which Lutherans describe in terms of hidden and revealed.

Pastor-theologians who still take Scripture seriously as objective divine revelation will appreciate this debate between adversaries who share this opinion. It should certainly prompt the gears of thoughtful reflection to grind on the relationship of the reader’s own practice with personal, confessional theology. For those unfamiliar with the debate, Ware quotes extensively from his opponents and

seems to leave citations within sufficient context to be fair to their author's intent. Reading the Open-Theists themselves, however, will provide helpful insights into their central critique (which Ware never addresses) of the "classical view" as being deterministic. Ware's footnotes provide a thorough bibliography of Open Theist publications.

John Rhoads
St. Louis, MO

A MODERN GRAMMAR FOR CLASSICAL HEBREW. By Duane Garrett.
Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002. 400 pages. Paper. \$34.99.

Duane Garrett is a professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. In the first half of this book, he introduces the essentials of Hebrew (hereafter HB) grammar while allowing students to interact with unedited Biblical texts early in the learning process. In the second half, Garrett discusses the derived verbal conjugations and introduces many ideas that are not normally included in elementary HB grammars (i.e., HB poetry, text linguistics, text criticism). Another unique aspect of this book is the author's use of diglot weaves—sentences that include both English and HB. Included throughout the grammar are graphic illustrations with a focus on pedagogy that appears to be ready made for the classroom. It is literally a step-by-step approach.

Lessons from the HB Bible begin in lesson four with what the author calls "Guided Reading." Through chapter eighteen Garrett leads the student through Psalm 112 by supplying extensive lexical, morphological, and syntactical notes. This means that certain forms, such as imperative verbs, are actually introduced in part before later chapters cover the idea in a more complete manner. This might be confusing to the student, yet Garrett builds upon the opportunity to prepare students for what will follow. Following Psalm 112, narrative readings from 2 Chronicles make up a major part of the homework. Extensive translational notes aid the student in moving from mere vocabulary recognition to the proper interpretation of HB syntax. Three-fourths of the way through the book, exercises from Jonah begin, and the student is left to him/herself to make syntactical decisions while some translational comments continue.

Garrett always explains grammatical concepts in a thorough manner in English before introducing the HB concept. For example, in the discussion on the weak verbs the author writes over two pages to outline the tendencies of these ornery forms, and he frequently uses English examples to drive the point home. An answer key in the appendix invites self-learners to advance quickly.

Out of the sixty-two chapters, this reviewer found the following lessons to be very helpful: "The Basics of Hebrew Poetry," "Basic Concepts in Hebrew Text Linguistics," "Basic Issues in Textual Criticism," "Reading Biblical Proverbs," and "Reading Biblical Prophecy." These chapters are helpful, due in large part, because most elementary HB grammars don't include these discussions and most advanced grammars use nomenclature that is difficult for the beginning student to understand. The chapter on poetry is typical of this section. Garrett defines terms such as "stanza," "colon," and "hemistich." He then moves on to discuss HB parallelism with a clear three-page analysis of Jonah 2. In this section, however, the author could have made more use of Adele Berlin's now classic fourfold understanding of HB parallelism (i.e., lexical, syntactic, morphological, and

phonological). Again, in the chapter on HB text linguistics (“mainline” and “offline” clauses), Garrett deftly illustrates the concepts by means of a three-page analysis of 1 Kings 17:1-13. In such a way relatively complex material is easily learned through examples and illustrations.

In the areas of textual criticism and cantillation marks, Garrett offers lucid definitions, but the real strength of the book is again apparent when he illustrates these concepts. For beginning HB students, these chapters can almost be labeled as priceless.

A weakness that remains in virtually all elementary HB grammars also turns up here; i.e., HB vocabulary is not presented by cognates, thus leaving the student with a disjointed and confusing idea of how HB actually works. This aside, Garrett’s grammar will nicely supplement any introductory HB course and belongs on the bookshelf of every serious student of Yahweh’s Old Testament language.

Reed Lessing

TRINITY: ***One God, Three Persons***: The People’s Bible Teachings. By Richard D. Balge. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2001. 152 pages. Paper. No price given.

This is one of twenty-five volumes of “The People’s Bible Teachings” planned by Northwestern Publishing House. They are written especially for lay people. Almost all of the topics of systematic theology are to be covered in these volumes.

This book, written by a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, is a very readable study of the doctrine of the Trinity. In chapter one, the author discusses how God can be known. He asserts, on the basis of Psalm 14:1, that atheism is not “natural,” because there is a “natural knowledge of God.” On the other hand, the only revelation of God that proclaims the way of salvation is the Bible.

Balge’s book is a very straight-forward presentation of the orthodox Lutheran position on the Trinity. The strength of the book is that every statement is backed up by Scriptural citations. He is well aware of the fact that the term “Trinity” is not found in the Bible but was a product of the early church. Therefore, he takes care to point out the development of the doctrine in church history.

Typical is his discussion of *filioque*, a phrase that was added to the original Nicene Creed, perhaps in A.D. 589. He shows how this phrase split the Eastern and Western churches in 1054.

Chapter 8, “Some Ancient Errors and Their Modern Counterparts,” is brief but clear. He continues this theme in chapter 10.

Chapter 9 on “Arianism” is, in fact, a helpful summary of the development of what is traditionally called the Nicene Creed, but which is more accurately known as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. In this connection, he states that the phrase, “only begotten Son,” in the King James translation of John 3:16 is actually a mistranslation. He prefers the New International Version translation, “one and only.”

The weakest part of the book, in my opinion, is his treatment of “The Trinity in the Old Testament” (chap. 10). Balge seems to read into a number of passages specificity concerning the Trinity, which it is doubtful the original writers had. For example, when he says, “These uses of Isaiah 6 in the New Testament leave no question that the angels who sang ‘Holy, holy, holy’ were praising the Holy Trinity” (70).

Though this book is designed for the “people,” the “For Further Reading” section is very brief. It contains mostly references to a three-volume book of essays published

by Northwestern Publishing House. It would have been well to include a few works from outside the narrow confines of WELS and LCMS such as, "The Trinitarian Controversy," edited by William G. Rusch.

All in all, however, this volume meets the goals set for itself, and it can certainly be a valuable addition to any Lutheran church library, as well as the private collection of the educated lay person.

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EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DOGMATICS. Vol. IV. By Adolf Hoenecke. Translated by Joel Fredrich, Paul Prange, and Bill Tackmier from the German edition of 1909 and 1912. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1999. 401 pages. Cloth. \$31.99.

The appearance of a translation of the four-volume dogmatics of Adolf Hoenecke (1835-1905) is welcome to confessional Lutherans. He was the foremost theologian of the early Wisconsin Synod, and this work was the first important dogmatics produced by German Lutherans in America, a defense of Lutheran theology from Scripture and Lutheran Confessions "in muscular academic prose" (as the translator's Foreword says, xii). The last volume is the first to be translated so far.

There are four indexes, for the Lutheran Confessions (the Triglotta is used), Scripture passages, subjects, and works cited in volumes I-IV. References from Luther have been adjusted to fit the Weimar edition. There are helpful footnotes by the translators, sometimes indicating a text revision on the basis of the original manuscript left by Hoenecke at his death.

Hoenecke commended C. F. W. Walther's theology in volume I and on page 207 in this volume. Francis Pieper, in turn, highly praised Hoenecke and stated that he found no doctrinal differences between him and Walther (*Christian Dogmatics*, I, 171-178). This invites comparison between this volume and Pieper's volume III (on more or less the same topics). The reader will find solid agreement between Hoenecke and Pieper/Walther, the only differences occurring in what Pieper would no doubt consider non-fundamentals. Both writers make knowledgeable and appreciative—but still critical—use of the orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians. They have the same view of church and ministry, though later WELS teachers veered in a different direction, some even defending Johann Hoefling's denial of the divine institution of the pastoral office (unlike Hoenecke, 189, and also Wisconsin's current Statements on Church and Ministry).

Unlike Pieper, Hoenecke presents all his material under numbered theses and points (the translators have made additional subdivisions with headings for the reader's convenience). Hoenecke's order of topics is of interest:

- Volume I: Prolegomena.
- Volume II: God; Man.
- Volume III: Soteriology; Election; Christology; the Holy Spirit's work.
- Volume IV: Soteriology, cont.: the means by which salvation is made one's own (Word of God; Sacraments); the community of the saved (Church; the threefold difference among members; teaching of fice; government; home; Antichrist); the completion of salvation (Last Things).

Pieper does deal with all these topics, but sometimes at different points. Sometimes one of the two has a fuller, better treatment of a subject. Some of Hoenecke's discussions are not found in Pieper's *Dogmatics* at all, such as: a reply to the papist argument that the *ex opere operato* doctrine does not exclude faith at all (69-70); a detailed comparison of New Testament sacraments and the Old Testament ones (76-80); the controversy over the "heavenly material" in Baptism (83-85); why the events of Judgment Day do not rule out the bliss of the souls of departed believers (251-252); why the resurrection is the culmination of Christ's work (253-266); whether the marks of Christ's wounds will be visible when He judges the world (276-277). Pieper also does not explain how the estates of the church teaching office, civil government, and the home are in the church (181-186; 226), but he would recognize the dogmatic heritage involved, which Walther had treated in *Kirche und Amt* and discussed in *Lehre und Wehre* II (289-299), (translated by H. J. A. Bouman as "The Distinction of Estates in the Church," in *Editorials from Lehre und Wehre*, 27-38; for further explanation see Paul Schrieber, "By Virtue of My Office': Walther's Confessional View of the 'Holy Orders in the Church,'" *Concordia Journal* 27:4-16).

We can note the following differences: Pieper gives more reactions to American writers; Hoenecke mentions only Walther, Henry E. Jacobs, and Milton Valentine. Pieper (in *Chr. Dog, III*) is more open to alternative understandings of Acts 19:1-5 (288-289) and whether the world will end by annihilation or transformation (542-543), than Hoenecke in this volume (88-89, 355-356). Pieper (III, 542) finds Luther to teach transformation, while Hoenecke thinks he teaches annihilation, though the translator's footnote here takes issue with Hoenecke on this (358). Pieper is more cautious in using the opinions of the Lutheran dogmaticians with regard to the nature of the resurrection body. Hoenecke affirms that civil government has a *ius circa sacra* (325), but Pieper calls this claim Caesaropapism.

While Hoenecke staunchly defends the Real Presence, he holds that the Sacramental union begins at the point of eating or drinking (132). This view, often called receptionism, is regarded as problematic in the translator's foreword (xii) and has sometimes been attributed also to Francis Pieper. Both writers do quote the assertion of the Formula of Concord, that in the Lord's Supper the Body and Blood of Christ are administered or distributed to be eaten and drunk (Hoenecke, 134; Pieper, 366, 369), but neither makes an observation on the implication for the issue considered here. But Pieper (367-368) indicates his agreement with Gerhard that "in the distribution itself they (bread and wine) are the communion of the body and blood of Christ, as the Apostle expressly says in 1 Cor. 10:16."

This book is a century out-of-date, as every one of us knows. But the reason given (xii-xiii) for its publication at this time is that Scripturally grounded theology, together with a reiteration of the Scripture principle of theology, is valuable for every generation as it makes its own effort to cope with the current theology. No argument there.

Thomas Manteufel

HANDBOOK ON THE HISTORICAL BOOKS. By Victor P. Hamilton. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001. 557 pages. Cloth. \$32.99.

As Hamilton himself explains in the *Preface*, his book is meant to serve as a supplement to a volume such as J. Bright's *History of Israel*. However, as he says, *Handbook* does not deal only (or mainly) with the historical issues and arguments

dealt with in a book like Bright's. Rather, Hamilton synthesizes information and analysis from a variety of disciplines in an attempt "...to get at and uncover the thrust and message of these books of Scripture." In his attempt, Hamilton has succeeded admirably.

Handbook provides the reader a wealth of information and insight into the Biblical text which a busy pastor would have difficulty accessing by other means. His presentation is readable, concise, and full of material which would be most useful for those teaching Bible classes on these historical books and also for those engaging them in private study.

Handbook covers all the so-called historical books (according to the order found in most English Bibles) from Joshua through Esther. Each chapter follows the same structure: (1) Introductory remarks about the author and the book, including an outline of its contents (2) In-depth discussion of the sections of the book as laid out in the initial outline (3) An extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter for the reader who wants additional information about the topics that are discussed.

Many features make Hamilton's book stand out from others of this type, but a couple in particular are worth further mention. First, Hamilton is very sensitive to the **rhetorical features** of the text, and his use of rhetorical criticism yields many valuable insights. Thus, for example, the reader will find illuminating discussions about the structure of larger sections of a given book. For example, in the chapter on 1 Samuel he discusses the significance of the placement of poems near the beginning and end of 1 and 2 Samuel (213ff.). His discussion not only points out the feature as a formal characteristic but explains its theological significance as well. Examples of this kind are multiplied throughout the book.

His concern for the rhetoric of the text also leads him to note a multitude of parallels and allusions to other texts which range from similarities in words and phrasing to similarities in characters, events, themes, etc. Thus, he discusses the relationship between the books of Joshua and Judges (104ff.), the men, Elijah and Moses (426ff.), and "recurring events" such as David's reaction to the announcement of someone's death (303ff.). This kind of comparative study extends to extra-Biblical sources as well. Even small details are given careful consideration. For example, he discusses the function of the definite article used with "Baal" throughout 1 Kings 18 (432). This is a real strength of the book for by studying his material, the reader will become aware of the patterns that re-occur and get a deeper appreciation of the unity of the whole. In addition, Hamilton does not shy away from a discussion of some of the more difficult problems in the narrative. Often, his rhetorical analysis yields possible (and fresh) solutions to the problems (his discussion of 1 Sam. 17, for example).

Furthermore, the value of **Handbook** is also found in the second feature of Hamilton's book already mentioned above; that is, his observations on the **rhetoric** of the text lead him to discussions of the text's **theological significance**. The rhetorical features aren't discussed simply for their own sake but for the theological insights that they yield. A good example is his discussion on the "cities of refuge," which he ends by quoting the first verse of the hymn "How Firm a Foundation" to conclude his remarks with a reference to Jesus as **our refuge** (72). (See also his discussion of the eschatology of Chronicles on pages 486ff. for another example of the connection he makes between rhetorical features and theology.)

Much more could be said. Hamilton also discusses textual problems, word studies, and careful reviews of the scholarship on traditionally intractable problems (i.e., the nature of the conquest as portrayed in Joshua). All of it is written in a clear

and engaging style and is accompanied by a myriad of charts and tables illustrating his observations. Again, this book is highly recommended for anyone wishing some guidance on this portion of the Old Testament.

Tim Saleska

HOLINESS BY GRACE: *Delighting in the Joy That Is Our Strength*. By Bryan Chapell. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001. 288 pages. Cloth. \$19.99.

Many of us who preach know the problem. How do you proclaim salvation by God's grace through Christ minus any input on our part without at the same time conveying the false impression that our good works are unimportant in God's eyes? Or, conversely, how do you preach the significance of good works in our everyday lives without at the same time conveying the false impression that they somehow contribute to our salvation? The solution the preacher often attempts is to tack onto his sermon, whether its goal is a salvific or a behavioral one, a series of correctives designed to maintain orthodoxy and balance—with the too frequent outcome that his sermon goal dies the death of a thousand qualifications. In the interest of effective communication, the preacher soon discovers that he cannot say everything all the time. Even the author of *Holiness by Grace*, a book dedicated to solving this dilemma, admits (to his credit), "This side of heaven, we will never logically resolve the tension between human responsibility and divine provision in sanctification" (236).

Still, Dr. Chapell's book will definitely help the preacher cope with the tension. The book is a gem. For 288 pages the author discusses the doctrines of salvation and good works in a balanced, orthodox, and highly effective manner.

The title, *Holiness by Grace*, encapsulates the author's thesis. Holiness—whether it's the holiness of Christ God credits us with for our salvation or the holiness of our everyday good works—both are entirely the gift of God's grace. We get to heaven by God's grace through Christ. We do good works by God's grace through Christ. He does it all.

Over and over the author sounds this theme of grace. To paraphrase Shakespeare, 'How does God love thee?/Let Chapell count the ways.' Some examples of the grace refrain: "Our union with Christ rather than any merit of our own is the basis of our sanctification as well as our justification" (13). "Even...faith is not a work of merit but is a gift of God's grace" (41). "Repentance is not real if we have no intention of correcting our ways, but the correction is not a condition of our forgiveness" (83). "Grace does not preclude holiness, but makes it possible. Holiness springs from the fountain of grace" (112-113). "Lasting service comes when we serve God *from* his acceptance, not *for* his acceptance" (193). "Our works are made worthy...by virtue of the mercy in *him* [God], rather than on the basis of the merit in *them*" (221). "All that we require for growing in godliness, our God provides.... We strive in the strength that he generates, reach for him with the love that he instills, and trust him with the faith that he provides" (234-235).

Do these citations (and many others from Chapell's book) tell the Lutheran preacher anymore than he already knows? Yes—and no. In our continuous struggle to find words that are both orthodox and effective for communicating *sola gratia* in the arenas of salvation and sanctification, we preachers acquire a few proven formulas early in our ministry. Though these formulas have at one time been successful and have provided us with a feeling of security, to settle for them is deadly to our preaching effectiveness as well as to our own growth in Christian

understanding. However orthodox and effective these formulas are initially, they eventually become clichés that no longer penetrate the ears of our hearers and even dull our own appreciation of God's Good News. It is my conviction that we don't really know *sola gratia* in all its richness until we are able to "count the ways," until we are able to express the ultimately inexpressible truth of God's love in Christ in a large variety of creative and orthodox formulations. Effective preaching is the art of continually pouring the old wine of God's grace into new wineskins. Bryan Chapell's book will help us get started.

We can especially profit from Chapell's accent on grace in the area of Christian behavior. Most of us succeed in keeping God's grace through Jesus front and center when we preach sermons with "faith/salvation goals." But it is when we preach "life goal" sermons that we too often minimize grace. It is when we hope to improve the church attendance statistics or to make the budget or to sponsor some congregational or community project that we tend to moralize, that is, scold, exhort, or whip up the troops and overlook God's help in Jesus as the power for attaining our objective.

Another possible danger in our appropriate emphasis on salvation by God's grace through Jesus "without any merit or worthiness in us" is to reduce good works to a minority status in our theology. Here again Dr. Chapell's application of *sola gratia* primarily to the area of sanctification can be helpful. The author emphasizes that God very much wants good works in our everyday lives and that the power of His grace is as available for that outcome as it is for our salvation. This emphasis protects the doctrine of good works from second class citizenship in our preaching. No longer will "sanctification," as a colleague recently put it, "be a dirty word in Lutheran proclamation." Rather the word will call to mind God's grace in Jesus as readily as do the words "faith" and "salvation," and the doctrine of good works will be something we'll preach about without fear or apology.

In addition to all this, it is refreshing to hear the grace theme from a voice outside our Lutheran circles—in this instance from the president of a Reformed seminary. It means that the doctrine of the invisible church is alive and well! In an age rampant with relativism and pluralism and rife with work-righteous self-help suggestions that pass for religion, and with the Church too eager to accommodate herself to the false and anemic creeds adhered to, it is downright thrilling to find voices in other quarters of that church presenting the Good News of God's love in Jesus Christ "in truth and purity" as well as in ways that are creative and effective.

Francis C. Rossow

CONFESSION AND MISSION, WORD AND SACRAMENT: *The Ecclesial Theology of Wilhelm Löhe*. By David C Ratke. St. Louis: Concordia, 2001. 234 pages. Paper. \$18.89.

In *Confession and Mission, Word and Sacrament*, David Ratke argues that in many ways Wilhelm Löhe can be seen as a theological father to the contemporary movement called "evangelical catholicism." In the conclusion of each of his five main chapters—on church, ministry, worship, mission, and inner mission (chaps. 2-6)—Ratke draws connections between Löhe's theology and recent theological emphases. In the concluding chapter, Ratke then focuses on this relationship under the three themes of Order, Catholicity, and Ecumenism. He writes, "Löhe's theology, I argue, reveals a marked similarity to the so-called 'evangelical-catholic' movement which in recent years has come to some prominence in North America" (207).

Although Löhe is known for approaching theology, especially the Lutheran Confessions, as historically occasioned and thereby permitting harmonization with dogmatic development, Ratke, ironically, does not treat Löhe's theology within its historical context—even after establishing this context in a very helpful biographical sketch. Still, he does seem to follow the spirit of Löhe with his approach to contemporary harmonization.

The casual reader, especially those who are sympathetic to Pastor Löhe or evangelical catholicism, will find a very readable and accessible account in Ratke's book. At the top of the list of Ratke's contributions must be that it adds an extended treatment of Löhe in English to a woefully short list. In drawing the contours of Löhe's theological thinking, Ratke usually offers the reader entry into the writings of Löhe himself with citations that reflect a significant breadth of Löhe's *Collected Works*. Given the breadth of Ratke's treatment, and the understandably consequent lack in developing the historical context, readers looking for a scholarly treatment of Löhe's theology will not only find much to chew on but also have their appetite whetted for much more. For example, although Ratke rightly notes the place of the American debate between Walther of the LCMS and Grabau of Buffalo in Löhe's own thinking on the pastoral office, he does not develop this context. Readers expecting a thoughtful treatment on this significant controversy involving Löhe in American Lutheranism may be disappointed to find Walther's view of the *Amt* caricatured as "proceeding from the congregation," Grabau's as "from the episcopacy," and Löhe's as "from Christ himself" (91). Also, in asserting that the "idea of order (*Ordnung*) represents a strong undercurrent in Löhe's theology," Ratke declares, "In the midst of a chaotic and turbulent time, Löhe seeks order" (209). Nevertheless, he never develops the impact of these "turbulent times" on Löhe's theology—though he does note Walter Conser's treatment of the similar conservative movements also taking place in England and the United States at that time.

Perhaps the leitmotif of Löhe's theology which Ratke very helpfully develops and which underlies its connection with evangelical catholicism is what Ratke calls Löhe's "abiding principle": to make "the invisible church as visible as possible" (27). Conceding the classic distinction between the church hidden to the world from the visible church which also contains hypocrites, Löhe still prefers to conflate them by denying that hypocrites are truly members of the visible church—permitting him then to deny salvation to any who are not members of the visible church (46-47, but cf. Luther's comfort to those unjustly excommunicated by Rome). Therefore, in developing the relationship of pastoral office to congregation, Löhe does not begin like Walther and the Confessions with the emphasis on true believers known only to God; rather, he develops his ecclesiology on the basis of political theory which requires both democratic and aristocratic elements (57). On the other hand, Löhe's abiding principle also prompted his concern both for the catholicity expressed in the shared liturgy and for the need to spread the Gospel and train disciples in the Christian faith and life. This conviction was also tied to a strong adherence to the Lutheran Confessions, including the Formula of Concord, in light of which he could claim that the reformation "is complete in doctrine, but it is incomplete in the consequences of doctrine" (27). For Löhe, this meant that since Rome had "publicly apostatized" at Trent, the "ancient and old church, now distinct from Babel and Rome, exists in the communion of the so-called Lutherans" (*Three Books About the Church*, 152; cf. 208-214). Löhe likewise rejected the union in the Bavarian state church of the Lutherans and Reformed (28). Ratke refers to the constant influence of the Reformed theologian Christian Kraft's "Awakening Theology" and the pietism of his youth, which perhaps led Löhe, like the Waldenses and Wycliffites,

to focus on achieving a visibly pure assembly: “confession without discipline has not accomplished what it ought” (28, cf. 31-32).

In ***Confession and Mission, Word and Sacrament***, Ratke may not answer all the questions of Wilhelm Löhe’s “Ecclesial Theology,” but it certainly gives the reader access to the right questions.

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