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Joint Declaration on Justification: A Missouri Synod Perspective

Samuel H. Nafzger

Introduction

On Sunday October 31, 1999, at 9:30 in the morning, more than 2,700 people, including fifty Lutheran and Catholic bishops from all continents and the leaders of Germany's Russian and Greek Orthodox churches, gathered together in and outside of St. Anna's Cathedral Church in Augsburg, Germany, to witness the signing of a document titled the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

Signing this document were two representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Bishop Walter Kasper, Secretary of the Pontifical Council. Signing the Joint Declaration for the Lutheran World Federation, which represents 94% of the 62 million Lutherans in the world today, were Bishop Christian Krause, President of the LWF, Dr. Ishmael Noko, LWF General Secretary, and five LWF Vice Presidents including ELCA Bishop H. George Anderson. The document which these signatories signed states its intention in these words:

...to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations (para. 5).

This event did not go unnoticed. Lutherans and Roman Catholics gathered together in churches all over the world to "celebrate Augsburg agreement on salvation," as a headline in *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* put it. Stated the *Post*:

Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger is the Executive Director of LCMS's Commission on Theology and Church Relations. This article is an adaptation of an essay originally presented at the November 13-14, 2000 Iowa District West Pastors Conference. Dr. Nafzger is a past member of the USA National Lutheran / Roman Catholic Dialogue.

Backed by trumpets, tubas, timpani and a great pipe organ, St. Louis Catholics and Lutherans blended their voices in joyous praise of their common beliefs Sunday in a historic joint service.

More than 1,700 members of the two denominations nearly filled the St. Louis Cathedral in the Central West End.

They were celebrating a service of thanksgiving for the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Leaders of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation signed on Oct. 31 in Augsburg, Germany, the document agreeing on how Christians are saved.

The agreement of healing affects 58 million Lutheran World Federation members and the world's 1 billion Catholics.¹

The Wall Street Journal took note of the signing of this Joint Declaration in an editorial titled "By Grace Alone." It begins with these words:

Exactly 482 years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, leaders of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches met in Augsburg on Sunday to settle the dispute that formed the core of their schism and that led to the Protestant Reformation and the Thirty Years War. At issue was the concept of "justification"—whether, as Lutherans (and most Protestants) believe, man finds salvation in faith alone, or, as Catholics have long emphasized, a life of good works is an integral part of the path.

The doctrine of "works," Luther charged, had the effect of convincing bad people, abetted by the Catholic Church's then practice of selling indulgences, that they could buy their way into heaven. The Catholic Church put an end to indulgences in 1562 at the Council of Trent. But the dispute over justification, and the Catholic Church's official condemnation of Lutheran teaching, persisted until Sunday.

The joint declaration issued by the two churches was the product of 30 years of work at doctrinal reconciliation. It effectively concedes the theological debate to Luther: "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit."²

Not everyone, however, celebrated the signing of the Joint Declaration. Two hundred and forty-three eminent lecturers of theology in German Universities signed a statement critical of the Joint Declaration, rejecting the claim that Lutherans and Catholics had reached a "consensus in basic

¹*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Nov. 8, 1999.

²*Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 3, 1999.

truths.”³ Fourteen Lutheran professors including ELCA theologians Gerhard Forde, Gracia Grindal, James Kittelson, Gerhard Krodel, and James Nestigen sent a letter on December 21, 1999, to Cardinal Cassidy stating:

...we declare that neither JDDJ “in its entirety” nor the “Annex to the OCS” [the Official Common Statement] are reconcilable to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches.... The doctrinal condemnations that the Council of Trent directed against central tenets of our faith—whether as a result of misunderstanding or a correct interpretation—have no relevance before the judgment seat of God. Therefore even their “correction” would be of no spiritual consequence for us and our congregations. Their true correction regarding the relations between the churches is not to be achieved through conciling formulae. It could only be achieved through a fresh understanding that accords with the Gospel. This requires from all churches...the renunciation of all preemptive and monopolistic claims to mediate salvation in Christ. The paper that was signed on October 31, 1999 just as JDDJ itself bears no trace of such a renunciation.⁴

The office of the LCMS President A. L. Barry issued a statement on the occasion of the signing of the Joint Declaration which stated:

...the Joint Declaration is an ambiguous statement whose careful wording makes it possible for the Pope’s representatives to sign it without changing, retracting or correcting anything that has been taught by the Roman Catholic Church since the time of the Council of Trent in the 16th century.... The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its many partner churches around the world, as well as any number of Lutheran communions not part of our confessional fellowship, have not accepted the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. We consider the Joint Declaration to be a surrender of the most important truth taught in God’s Word. It represents a clear, stunning departure from the Reformation and thus is contrary to what it means to be a Lutheran Christian.⁵

³Cf. Bishop Karl Lehmann’s address “Basic Agreement Reached” on the occasion of the signing of the Joint Declaration, Oct. 30, 1999, 6.

⁴The author of this letter was sent a copy of this letter by its signatories. Four documents are frequently referred to with respect to The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ): the Official Catholic Response (OCR); the Official Common Statement (OCS); the Annex to the OCS; and a note explaining details of the Annex statement. See *Origins* 28:8 (July 16, 1998): 120-127, 130-132; 29:6 (July 24, 1999): 86-89 for an English version of these documents including the Joint Declaration itself.

⁵LCMS News Release, Oct. 18, 1999.

How can there be such diverse reactions to the Joint Declaration? In this presentation I want first of all to focus on what the Joint Declaration is and how it came to be. Then I shall offer a critique of it from the perspective of the LCMS. Finally I want to conclude with some personal observations about the Joint Declaration and its significance today.

I. The Joint Declaration

A. Historical Background

The heart, core, and center of the Christian faith is the doctrine of the Gospel, that is, the Good News that God wishes to be gracious to sinners for Christ's sake. This doctrine has perhaps nowhere been set forth more clearly and precisely than in the Lutheran Confessions contained in the *Book of Concord*. These sixteenth-century writings are everywhere characterized by a consistent emphasis on the importance and the centrality of the proclamation that God justifies sinners by grace through faith for Christ's sake. For example, the Augsburg Confession, the first and most constitutive of these confessions, boldly states: "For the chief article of the Gospel must be maintained, namely, that we obtain the grace of God through faith in Christ without our merits" (AC XXIII, 52). In the Apology to the Augsburg Confession Philip Melanchthon calls justification "the main doctrine of Christianity" (AC IV, 2), an assessment which the third article of the Formula of Concord specifically endorses, when it says:

In the words of the Apology, this article of justification by faith is "the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine," "without which no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ." In this same vein Dr. Luther declared: "Where this single article remains pure, Christendom will remain pure, in beautiful harmony, and without any schisms. But when it does not remain pure, it is impossible to repel any error or heretical spirit" (FC SD III, 6).

For Luther and the Lutheran confessors, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake is the *articulus stantis et cadentes ecclesiae*, the article on which the church stands or falls.

In the early part of the twentieth century serious disagreements among Lutherans on the doctrine of justification began to surface. Prominent theologians publicly attacked it. Albert Schweitzer, in his book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, argued the shocking thesis that the doctrine of justification by faith was by no means central in Pauline theology. He called it merely "a subsidiary crater" in comparison with "the volcanic peak" in Paul's theology, namely, the theme of being mystically "in Christ." Some twenty-five years later Leonard Hodgson declared in his 1956-1957 Gifford

Lectures that “the phrase ‘justification by faith’ has outlived its usefulness.”⁶ Views such as these helped set the stage for the 1963 assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Helsinki, Finland.

In preparation for this assembly the LWF’s Commission on Theology undertook “a thorough investigation and criticism of the doctrine of justification.”⁷ Serving on this Commission were such well-known Lutheran theologians as Ernst Kinder (Chairman), Peter Brunner, Nils Dahl, Taito Kantonen, Jacob Kumaresan, Regin Prenter, Karoly Pröhle, and Warren Quanbeck. It is also interesting to note that several representatives from the LCMS attended some of this Commission’s study meetings, e.g., Drs. Paul Bretscher, Alfred Fuerbringer, and Norman Nagel.

Significantly, it was decided early on not even to attempt to prepare “a theological treatise on the doctrine of justification for our time.”⁸ Instead, the Commission agreed to prepare a study document to be drafted by Warren Quanbeck from the ALC titled “Christ Yesterday, Today and Forever,” which provided the major resource for the discussion of the doctrine of justification at the 1963 Helsinki Assembly. Twenty official observers from the LCMS attended this assembly.

Wide-ranging and deep differences among those Lutherans gathered in Helsinki immediately became evident regarding the place of the doctrine of justification in the Scriptures, the meaning of justification, and on the relevance of the doctrine of justification for “modern man.” This spectacle of Lutherans deeply disagreeing among themselves on the doctrine on which the church stands or falls became the immediate context for the beginning of discussions on the doctrine of justification between Lutherans and Roman Catholics following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). A “Lutheran/Roman Catholic Working Group” met in August 1965 and April 1966. Both delegations were of the opinion that the traditionally disputed theological issues between Catholics and Lutherans appear in a different light because of “new insights in the natural, social and historical sciences and in biblical theology.”⁹ The report of this Working Group, known as the Malta Report, states: “Out of the question about the center of the gospel arises the question of how the two sides understand justification.”¹⁰ Despite the brevity of the Malta Report, which speaks of a growing consensus between Lutherans and Roman Catholics about justification, it also lists “the genuine points” on which Lutherans and Roman Catholics have disagreed. The time was getting right for Lutherans and Catholics to talk about the chief article of the Christian faith, the doctrine of justification.

In 1965 Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians in the United States began meeting together for formal talks under the auspices of the U.S.A. National Committee of the LWF and the U.S. Bishops’ Committee. Although

⁶*For Faith and Freedom*, 2 vols. (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1956, 1:108, 110).

⁷Dept. of Theology, Report 1957-1963, Doc. #7, 1963, 15.

⁸*The Meaning of Justification*, Rothermundt, 45.

⁹“The Gospel and the Church,” *Lutheran World* 19 (1972): 260.

¹⁰Malta Report, 263.

the LCMS was not a member of the LWF, it was invited to send two full participants to these dialogues—Drs. Arthur Carl Piepkorn and Fred Kramer from the St. Louis and Springfield seminaries, respectively. After discussing topics such as the Eucharist, ministry, papal primacy and the universal church, and teaching authority and infallibility, the seventh round of this dialogue took up the doctrine of justification. The results of this dialogue were published in the 1985 volume *Justification by Faith*. This document, together with another document prepared in Germany titled “The Condemnations of the Reformation Era—Do They Still Divide?” (1986), was of direct significance for the preparation of the Joint Declaration, to which we now turn.

It is important to note already at this time, however, that, while the LCMS was not a part of the actual preparation of the JDDJ, theologians from the LCMS were involved from the very beginning in the discussions which led up to the production of one of its two constitutive elements. And this brings us to the JDDJ itself.

B. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

The Malta Report had concluded that, while a far-reaching consensus on justification was developing between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, further treatment on this subject was still needed. The Common Statement of the U.S. Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue report *Justification by Faith* begins by noting that this “statement is a response to this need.” This report presents the following summary statement of the Dialogue’s conclusions:

We emphatically agree that the good news of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ is the source and center of all Christian life and of the existence and work of the church. In view of this agreement, we have found it helpful to keep in mind in our reflections an affirmation which both Catholics and Lutherans can wholeheartedly accept: *our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ Jesus and on the gospel whereby the good news of God’s merciful action in Christ is made known; we do not place our ultimate trust in anything other than God’s promise and saving work in Christ.* This excludes ultimate reliance on our faith, virtues, or merits, even though we acknowledge God working in these by grace alone (*sola gratia*). In brief, hope and trust for salvation are gifts of the Holy Spirit and finally rest solely on God in Christ. Agreement on this Christological affirmation does not necessarily involve full agreement between Catholics and Lutherans on justification by faith, but it does raise the question, as we shall see, whether the remaining differences on this doctrine need be church dividing.¹¹

¹¹*Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess, eds. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 16.

In 1991 the newly organized Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially stated its agreement with the understanding of justification reached in *Justification by Faith*. As a result of this action the U.S. National Committee informed the LWF that it had the intention of taking steps to prepare a declaration that the doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century on the doctrine of justification no longer apply today. It also asked the LWF for advice and cooperation regarding how to go about doing this.

The Council of the LWF considered this request at its 1993 meeting in Kristiansand, Norway. The Federation agreed to assume responsibility for this project on two conditions:

1. The question of saying that the mutual doctrinal condemnations were no longer applicable had to be restricted to the doctrine of justification; i.e., this would not apply to other points of disagreement between Lutherans and Catholics.
2. All member churches of the LWF must be given the opportunity to participate in this project.

Having agreed to undertake this project, the LWF proceeded as follows. In 1994 a group of theologians appointed by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the LWF produced a first version of the JDDJ. In January 1995 a first draft of the Declaration was sent out to the member churches of the LWF. Thirty-nine member churches representing approximately 75% of the Lutherans belonging to the LWF responded. Most expressed agreement in principle. Some were negative. The Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg carefully reviewed these responses. Its work, along with the response to this draft from the Roman Catholic Church as prepared primarily by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Ratzinger) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Cassidy),¹² formed the basis for thoroughly revising the first draft and drawing up a second proposal for a joint declaration. The task of preparing this revised draft was entrusted to a group of theologians from each side, who met in June 1996, in Würzburg, Germany.

The second draft of the Declaration was submitted to the LWF in September 1996. The Council of the LWF resolved that this draft should again be revised to a limited extent, following which a third version of the Declaration, after consultation with Rome, was forwarded to the member churches of the LWF in February, 1997, for response by May 1, 1998, along with this question: Can you affirm the results of the JDDJ when stated as follows:

The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine

¹²A number of Episcopal Conferences were also involved in this effort.

of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paras. 18-39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding basic truths.

Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration (JDDJ, paras. 40-41).

The overwhelming majority of the 128 churches belonging to the LWF at that time responded positively—only five presented a clear negative response—and on June 16, 1998, the LWF Council affirmed the Joint Declaration, thereby indicating its readiness to accept this statement.¹³

The official Roman Catholic response was ambiguous. On June 25, 1998, Cardinal Cassidy at a news conference in Rome, stated:

The ‘Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification’ represents a significant progress in mutual understanding and in coming together in dialogue of the parties concerned; it shows that there are many points of convergence between the Catholic position and the Lutheran position on a question that has been for centuries so controversial.... The Catholic Church is, however, of the opinion that we cannot yet speak of a consensus such as would eliminate every difference between Catholics and Lutherans in the understanding of justification. The Joint Declaration itself refers to certain of these differences. On some points the positions are, in fact, still divergent.¹⁴

Cardinal Cassidy elucidates:

There are 44 common declarations, covering basic truths on justification. The agreement reached on these allows us to say that a high level of consensus has been reached and further to

¹³As of June 12, 1998, 89 out of 122 member churches of the LWF had responded to the request of the General Secretary. These churches represented 95% of the Lutherans in the LWF. Eighty churches answered “yes,” five churches answered “no,” four answers were difficult to interpret. See *Lutheran World Information*, June 23, 1998, 17.

¹⁴*Response of the Catholic Church*, “Declaration.”

state that when such consensus has been reached the condemnations leveled at one another in the 16th century no longer apply to the respective partner today.

In this connection, I should perhaps point out that we cannot of course erase these condemnations from history. We can, however, now state that, in so far as a consensus on the understanding of basic truths articulated in the *Joint Declaration* has been achieved, the corresponding condemnations found in the Lutheran Confessions and in the Council of Trent no longer apply.

But, continued Cardinal Cassidy:

...this *Joint Declaration* *has limits*. It is one important step forward, but it does not pretend to resolve all the issues that Lutherans and Catholics need to face together on their pilgrimage out of separation, and toward full visible unity. The *Joint Declaration* speaks of ‘questions of varying importance which need further clarification. These include, among other topics, the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, authority in the church, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics.’¹⁵

More specifically, he goes on to note there are also continuing differences concerning the doctrine of justification itself so that, says Cassidy, “we cannot yet speak of a consensus such as to eliminate every difference between Catholics and Lutherans in the understanding of justification.” These differences include:

1. “the Lutheran understanding of the justified person as sinful... The Lutheran explanation seems still to contradict the Catholic understanding of baptism in which all that can properly be called sin is taken away. Concupiscence remains of course in the justified, but for Catholics this cannot properly be called sin.”
2. “it is difficult to see how...we can say that the Lutheran doctrine of ‘*simul justus et peccator*’ is not touched by the anathemas of the Tridentine decrees on original sin and justification.”
3. “the Lutheran understanding of justification as criterion for the life and practice of the Church.” While “for Catholics also the doctrine of justification ‘is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to

¹⁵“Presentation to the Vatican *Sola Stampa* of His Eminence Edward Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 25 June 1998,” 3.

orient all teaching and practices of our churches to Christ,' Catholics, however, see themselves as bound by *several* criteria."

4. "the Council of Trent, states that man can refuse grace, but it must also be affirmed that, with this freedom to refuse, there is also in the justified person a new capacity to adhere to the divine will, a capacity that is rightly called *cooperatio*.... Given this understanding...it is difficult to see how the term '*mere passive*' can be used by the Lutherans in this regard."

It should also be noted that the Response of the Catholic Church especially called attention to what it referred to as "the different character of the two signatories of this Joint Declaration," thereby anticipating points subsequently made in *Dominus Iesus* and the Roman Catholic doctrine of the church.¹⁶

This response with its caveats threatened to short-circuit the road toward the final signing of the Declaration altogether. German Lutheran theologian Harding Meyer, one of the Joint Declaration's original drafters, responded to Rome's response, according to *Time* magazine, by saying: "This is the worst news I've received during my whole career. This is not a basis for continuing the dialogue."¹⁷ But continue the dialogue they did. An "Official Common Statement" was prepared and signed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, thereby confirming the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in its entirety. And a year and a half later, on October 31, 1999, the formal signing of the Joint Declaration actually took place in Augsburg, as we have noted at the beginning of this essay.

II. The LCMS and the Joint Declaration

As has been pointed out above, the LCMS was not involved in the preparation nor in the signing of the Joint Declaration. But LCMS theologians were involved as full participants in the dialogue which produced *Justification by Faith*, one of the most significant pieces which preceded the drawing up of the Joint Declaration. Moreover, the LCMS has sought at every step of the way to take the Joint Declaration seriously. In this section, I want to review LCMS responses to the Joint Declaration and to its predecessor documents.

¹⁶*Dominus Iesus*: *On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Churches* was issued September 5, 2000, by the Vatican congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is published in the September 14, 2000 issue of *Origins*. This document states that "the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid episcopate and the genuine integral substance of the eucharistic mystery, are not churches in the proper sense" (para. 17).

¹⁷*Time*, July 6, 1998, 80.

A. “A Response to the U.S. Lutheran Roman Catholic Dialogue Report VII ‘Justification by Faith’”

In February 1992 the Missouri Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations adopted a response to the U.S. Lutheran Roman Catholic Dialogue Report “Justification by Faith,” which was made available to all pastors in the LCMS.¹⁸ In this response the Commission on Theology first of all commends the report for the fundamental affirmation with which its “Common Statement” begins: “Our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ Jesus and on the Gospel whereby the good news of God’s merciful action in Christ is made known.”¹⁹ “That the Lutheran and Catholic participants could join in this basic affirmation,” says the Commission, “is reason for thanksgiving and cause for hope for progress in future discussions.”

In its analysis the Commission goes on to commend this report for its “illuminating discussion” on the “contrasting concerns” and “patterns of thought” that have given rise over the years to different ways of speaking about justification by faith. This report, says the Commission,

...represents, in our judgment, a concerted effort on the part of the dialogue participants to overcome terminological hindrances that often frustrate ecumenical dialogue. The effort is clearly being made by the dialogue members to speak and listen to one another. As is often the case, participants gain new insights with the concerns of their partners in dialogue and into what informs *their* witness to biblical truth.²⁰

The Commission’s response also commends the report “for its emphasis on the importance of Biblical studies in the achievement of theological agreement,” and also for its affirmation of “a Christological center’ as a hermeneutical assumption for a proper reading of the biblical texts.”²¹

At the same time the Commission also lists three “basic concerns about the nature and content” of the agreements presented in *Justification by Faith*. The first of these concerns relates to the role of faith in justification. Although the report agrees that “we do not place our *ultimate* trust in anything other than God’s promise and saving work in Christ,” it also says that “faith is now recognized...as incomplete without trust in Christ *and* loving obedience to him” (emphases added).²² Commenting on this point, the Commission writes:

¹⁸This response was printed in the Synod’s 1992 *Convention Workbook*, 313-316.

¹⁹A Response to the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Report VII “Justification by Faith,” A report prepared by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1992, 7.

²⁰Ibid., 7-8.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 8-9.

For Lutherans committed to the biblical teaching that faith *alone* is the *means* through which one receives the justification before God earned by Christ on the cross, such formulations allow an intolerable ambiguity to stand about the nature and role of faith.²³

While Lutherans readily affirm the necessity of good works as fruits of faith, the implication that the sanctified life of the sinner must somehow “intrinsically qualify” justifying faith not only misunderstands the nature of faith, but it also calls into question the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning work on the cross.

The Commission expresses a second concern regarding the use of justification by faith as a critical principle “to test what is authentically Christian.” The Commission affirms the use of this principle in the interpretation of what the Scriptures teach. But the use of this principle as “a device to sanction a view of the Bible and/or a method of interpreting it that reduces the authority of any part of the Scriptures as God’s inspired, authoritative Word (on all matters concerning which it speaks),” says the Commission, is “contrary to the Scriptures themselves and the Lutheran confessional writings.”²⁴

The Commission raises a final concern regarding the conclusion “that ‘justification’ must be viewed as one ‘metaphor’ among many others in the Scriptures that speak of God’s saving action in Jesus Christ.” Contending that the doctrine of justification, strictly speaking, has to do with what God has done in Christ for us, not with what He does in us, the Commission rejects as contrary to Scripture

...any understanding of the doctrine of justification that would include in God’s forensic justification of the sinner “a transformist view which emphasizes the change wrought in sinners by infused grace.”²⁵

This report fails, says the Commission, to present the role that the “doctrine of justification plays in Lutheran theology in its full radicality.”²⁶

Despite these concerns, the Commission nevertheless concludes its evaluation of this report by saying that the dialogue participants have presented evidence to substantiate their conclusion that Lutherans and Catholics “are now closer on the doctrine of justification than at any time since the collapse of their last extended official discussion of the topic at Regensburg in 1541.” At the same time, it must also be said that

Consensus on the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, the article on which the church stands

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 11.

²⁵Ibid., 13.

²⁶Ibid., 14.

or falls, is still the absolutely necessary requirement for the resolution of disagreements between Roman Catholics and Lutherans.²⁷

Convergence is not consensus, said the Commission. Further dialogue is needed.

B. LCMS 1998 Resolution 3-08A “To Express Deep Regret and Profound Disagreement with ELCA Actions.”

Since the LCMS is not a member of the LWF and therefore had no role in the actual preparation and acceptance of the Declaration on Justification, it did not prepare a formal response to it prior to its acceptance. The Synod did, however, comment on it at its 1998 Synodical Convention. In a resolution expressing “deep regret and profound disagreement” with the formal acceptance of this document by the ELCA in its 1998 convention, the Synod notes that the Joint Declaration declares that the remaining differences between Lutherans and Roman Catholics “are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnation.” But these “remaining differences,” says the Synod, as the Declaration in itself points out, have to do with such critically important issues as the Roman Catholic view that “persons ‘cooperate’ in preparing for and accepting justification,” the precise role of faith in justification, and the compatibility of the Lutheran understanding of the Christian being “at the same time righteous and sinner” and the Roman Catholic view that the inclination toward sin in the justified Christian is not really “sin in the authentic sense.”

“It is clear,” concludes the Synodical resolution, “that Roman Catholics and Lutherans have not yet resolved substantive points of disagreement over the doctrine of justification.”

C. “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective.”

The 1998 Synodical Convention, noting the issues referred to above, formally requested that its Commission on Theology prepare an evaluation of “the Lutheran/Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*” for use in discussing these issues throughout the Synod. In response to this request the President of the Synod sent out in the summer of 1999 a document titled *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective* to each of the Synod’s 6,100 congregations. Included in this booklet were the complete text of the Joint Declaration, evaluations of the Joint Declaration prepared by each of the faculties of the Synod’s two seminaries, and “A Summary and Study of the Seminary Evaluations” prepared by the CTCR.

²⁷Ibid., 15.

In this study guide the Commission rejoices over the Joint Declaration's affirmation that

...justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent His Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ Himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father....²⁸

But, pointing to the same issues as were pointed out in its review of the *Justification by Faith* report of the U.S. Lutheran/Catholic report, the Commission states:

JDDJ does not settle the major disagreement between Lutheran theology and Roman Catholic theology on justification. Lutherans teach that justification is essentially a declaration of "not guilty" and "righteous" pronounced by God on a sinner because of Christ and His work. Roman Catholics teach that justification involves an internal process in which a believer is transformed and "made" more and more righteous. The non-settlement of this issue forms the chief defect of JDDJ.²⁹

Starting out the discussion of justification on the basis of Holy Scripture, as JDDJ did, is a good starting point, states the Commission. "Further progress in ongoing dialogs can be made only through discussions normed strictly by Holy Scripture."

III. The Significance of the Joint Declaration Today

It is important to note that, as has been pointed out above, the LCMS offers its critique of the Joint Declaration not altogether from the outside. It was involved in the discussions which produced one of the chief predecessor documents on which the JDDJ was based. It should also be noted that the LCMS has consistently and repeatedly commended those involved in producing the Joint Declaration for talking about the right issue, the doctrine of justification, on which the church stands or falls. The mere fact that Lutherans and Catholics are talking to one another about this all important central issue reminds us of all that our two traditions hold in common: "Baptism, the public reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular; Absolution in private and public confession; the Sacrament of

²⁸*The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective*, 1999, 10.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

the Altar, now frequently administered under both kinds; the call or ordination to the pastoral office, prayer, the Psalms, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and many fine hymns.”³⁰

But does the signing of the Joint Declaration signal that the Reformation is over? By no means. The notion that agreement has now been reached on the central issue which ignited the Reformation is a creation chiefly of the media and of some of the Lutherans involved in this project. This is not the view of the Roman Catholic Church as expressed in official comments about the implications of the signing of the JDDJ. There are still major issues which have not been resolved such as—what is sin, the *simul justus et peccator*, the precise relationship between faith and works, i.e., “faith alone” (an expression which does not appear in the Catholic and Common sections of the Joint Declaration), and indulgences.

The signing of the JDDJ, moreover, reveals a major difference between the LCMS and its partner churches and the Lutheran churches of the LWF regarding the different stances which our respective churches take on ecumenism itself. How much agreement is necessary for church fellowship? Are there doctrinal differences which should divide Christian churches at the altar? ELCA theologian Robert Jenson is quoted in the November 2000 *Forum Letter*:

There is no middle ground. If you acknowledge that I belong to the church, you must admit me to your Supper. If you will not admit me to your Supper, you should not then talk about my nevertheless being your ‘fellow in Christ.’ In the essentially anomalous situation of a divided church, it may indeed sometimes be necessary to work with degrees of church fellowship, doing some things together and not others. But fellowship at the Supper is the minimum of fellowship in the faith; the only legitimate reason why you and I could not eat together would be that one of us was a pagan or under sentence of excommunication for notorious wickedness. Differing theories of sacramental presence will hardly suffice. The old question about whether fellowship at the Supper is a means or consequence of fellowship in the faith is an entirely perverse question; fellowship at the Supper *is* fellowship in the faith.... Having delivered myself of these ultimata, I must acknowledge that they are law and not gospel. The divisions of the church are there, and all of us are trapped. We may indeed be unable to do what we know we must do, and this may be nobody’s fault. But let us then remember that Nobody is Satan’s chief deputy, and that if our separation at the Supper is really intransigent, it is because we have fallen into his hands; and let us rationalize this not at all.”³¹

³⁰Ibid., 10.

³¹This quotation reprinted in the November 2000 issue of *Forum Letter* is taken from Robert W. Jenson’s *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1978.

Jenson's position stands in sharp contrast to the consistent position which Lutherans have taken for over four hundred years that doctrinal agreement is the necessary basis for the practice of church fellowship at the altar and in the pulpit, a position which continues to be held by The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and its partner churches around the world.³² It would appear on the basis of recent pronouncements from Rome that the position of the Roman Catholic Church on the understanding of the basis for church fellowship is closer to that of the LCMS than it is to the churches of the LWF.

At the same time, the discussion which the Joint Declaration provoked does reveal, I believe, that, as the CTCR has stated in its analysis of "Justification by Faith," Lutherans and Roman Catholics are closer today on the doctrine of justification than at any time since the Reformation. Lutherans must surely take heart when they hear Roman Catholic leaders such as Auxiliary Bishop Richard Sklba of Milwaukee say in a recent address to the Canon Law Society of America:

The apostle Paul took up that same forensic metaphor in describing human movement from sin to grace, namely the notion of *justification*. His effort was to insist that such was the work of God alone, for all people are sinners, Jew and gentile alike. Justification comes, as Paul heatedly reminded his disciples in the area of central Turkey which we call Galatia and again, more serenely it would seem, those living in Rome, not from obedience to the law but only from the death and resurrection of Christ.

Sklba continues:

As we know, this fundamental conviction was recently reconfirmed by Evangelical Lutherans and Catholics in a truly remarkable fashion at the highest level by the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification at Augsburg on Oct. 31, 1999. Given all the publicity surrounding that event, there is no need to rehearse the arguments and the finer theological debates which accompanied that agreement. There is need, however, to bring the strobe spotlight of that truth anew to every aspect of Catholic life and practice. At the very least it seems crucial to underscore the urgency of that truth for us Catholics with our closet semi-Pelagianism viruses of various types. Moreover, as persons entrusted with the administration of the law of the church (*nomikoi*),

³²See *Theology of Fellowship*, a report of the CTCR (1965), which was adopted by the LCMS in 1967 Resolution 2-13. Cf. also the CTCR's 1981 report *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship* (32) for a critique of the LWF's "Reconciled Diversity" approach to church fellowship (24-27) and a summary of the meaning of an ecclesiastical declaration of Altar and Pulpit Fellowship based on agreement in doctrine (32-38).

we need to be reminded of the law's blessing but also its limitations. Conformity with the norms of the church may be necessary for good order and social harmony, but all the obedient compliance in the world does not and cannot achieve initial salvation of itself! The citation from Ephesians [Cf. Eph. 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works so no one may boast."] ought to be engraved on the lenses of our eyeglasses so we view the entire world through its prism! It also ought to be written on the fly page of our canonical and biblical commentaries and on every major reference work within ready reach at our desk.³³

Lutherans might do likewise, considering the results of any number of recent surveys which illustrate that the official Lutheran understanding of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone does not always come through clearly in the thinking and life of the people.

Conclusion

We began this presentation on the Joint Declaration by saying that "The heart, core and center of the Christian faith is the doctrine of the Gospel, that is, the Good News that God wishes to be gracious to sinners for Christ's sake." This is *radically* good news which clashes head-on with everything in our natural, fallen state of mind. We cannot close this presentation without once again confronting this fact—and rejoicing over it.

On the basis of a number of contacts with Christianity during a short stay in South Africa during his formative years, Mahatma Ghandi presented a classical response of "the Old Adam" (which lingers in each of us) to the Scriptural doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Ghandi writes in his autobiography with reference to his attendance at a revival-type service in South Africa called the Wellington Convention:

This convention was an assemblage of devout Christians. I was delighted at their faith. I met the Rev. Murray. I saw that many were praying for me. I liked some of their hymns. They were sweet.

The Convention lasted for three days. I could understand and appreciate the devoutness of those who attended it. But I saw no reason for changing my belief—my religion. It was impossible for me to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by becoming a Christian. When I frankly said so to some of the good Christian friends, they were shocked. But there was no help for it.

³³Bishop Sklba's October 2 address is printed in the October 26, 2000 issue of *Origins*, 307-311.

My difficulties lay deeper. It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate Son of God, and that only he who believed in him would have everlasting life. If God could have sons, all of us were His sons. If Jesus was like God, or God himself, then all men were like God and could be God Himself. My reason was not ready to believe literally that Jesus by his death and by his blood redeemed the sins of the world. Metaphorically, there might be some truth to it.³⁴

Sadly, Ghandi seems to have recognized, even if he could not agree with, the radical nature of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Luther's rediscovery of the Gospel consisted in his discovery that Law and Gospel must be carefully distinguished also, *or especially*, in the doctrine of justification, namely, that justification is forensic, that it is a sentence declared by God for Christ's sake *on behalf of* sinners and not on the basis of anything *in* them. It was only when Luther came to see that God's righteousness is *imputed* to sinners through *faith alone* and that it is only on this basis that they are declared forgiven that his restless conscience found peace. The discovery of this insight caused him to feel as if he had died and gone to heaven. It was this insight which transformed Luther from being merely a theologian into the *Reformer*. Through his study of the Scriptures he had re-discovered the precious Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, that the grace of God is free only when it is received through *faith alone*. This is the central teaching of the Bible and the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.

Significantly, the Catholic and the Common Statements in the Joint Declaration never use the phrase "through faith *alone*." This is precisely why, I believe, it was possible for Pope John Paul II to issue the Jubilee Indulgence twenty days after the signing of the Joint Declaration. As Roman Catholic theologians have pointed out, Lutherans and Catholics still do not agree on the role of faith in justification. The Reformation is not over yet.

And yet—it is promising to note that the Annex to the JDDJ does use the phrase "*through faith alone*," and this gives promise to continuing the dialogue.³⁵

³⁴Quoted in *Christianity Today*, "Gandhi and Christianity," April 8, 1983, 16.

³⁵The Annex was attached to the Official Common Statement released by the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church in June 1999. The Official Common Statement says: "With reference to the Resolution on the Joint Declaration by the Council of the Lutheran World Federation of 16 June 1998 and the response to the Joint Declaration by the Catholic Church of 25 June 1998 and to the questions raised by both of them, the annexed statement (called "Annex") further substantiates the consensus reached in the Joint Declaration." The Annex states: "Justification takes place 'by grace alone' (JD 15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified 'apart from works' (Rom. 3:28, cf. JD 25)."

Mission and Church Renewal: Scanning the Asian Horizon for the Twenty-First Century

Won Yong JI

I. The Text: Mission's Identity and Its Raison d'être

("Mission" and "Church Renewal" are by no means lacking definitions. However, we will only touch on that here by way of introduction.)

Mission (*missio Dei*) from God's point of view is a mandate; from man's (generic term) point of view, it is a privilege. Mission is a divine mandate and an act of bringing the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ to people everywhere through word and deed. It is the privilege of the church collectively and of its members individually. It consists of the basis (theology), trail (history and stories), methods (approaches and activities), personnel (communicators), and resources (financial and other means). The mission calling has Biblical and Confessional (for Lutherans) motifs.¹

We must read, understand, and practice the above words in the light of the text in which we are thinking and understanding mission, and the context where we are practicing mission in actual life, with countless changes, challenges, and increasingly complex and varied relations of societal and religious nature. We must seriously rethink this new context of life, somehow meaningfully defining and relevantly reshaping our programs. The message under God's mandate is the same, but the ways of handling and communicating the task and the message cannot be. Furthermore, we ought to be realistic in facing the complex "Asian Context" with its socio-political and cultural upheavals, and especially its religious plurality. This is a highly sensitive area, involving national and cultural pride, not to mention the religious content of each historical religion in Asia.

¹We may quote Isaiah 49:6; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8; John. 3:16; Matthew 11:28, and other passages. SD XI: 28 "...promissio evangelii sit universalism..." Apol. VII and VIII (The Church): 1-22. AC XXVIII. See also Luther's Catechisms: Second and Third Petitions. Cf. "A Lutheran Understanding of Mission: Biblical and Confessional," by Won Yong JI, *Concordia Journal* 22:2 (April 1996):141-153.

Dr. Won Yong JI is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO. This article was originally presented at an international seminar on "Mission in the Asian Context for the Third Millennium," sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation and the Lutheran Churches in Asia at Sabah Theological Seminary at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, October 25-30, 2000. It has been previously published in the May 2001 issue of Missio Apostolica.

Our consideration of mission inevitably calls for the attention of the church. If mission is the primary task—the *raison d'être*—of the church, rethinking mission ought to mean a reassessing of the church.

The church has two dimensions in one integral entity. One aspect is “divine,” as the “Body of Christ”; the other is human, as a structuralized and functional human organization which has all the characteristics of any human institution, both positive and negative. These aspects, divine and human, are integrated, but one inevitably affects the other. This makes our task of “church renewal” complex and complicated indeed. However, we cannot and should not avoid or ignore it.

Church history relates to us the history of “church renewal movements,” including those headed by: Joachim of Fioris (ca. 1130-ca. 1202); John Wycliffe (1320-1384); Martin Luther (1483-1546); John Calvin (1509-1564); Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556); John Wesley (1703-1791); Alexander Campbell (1788-1866); Jonathan Edwards, the Elder (1703-1758); Henry M. Muehlenberg (1711-1787); and C. F. W. Walther (1811-1887), to mention only a few.

These individuals were interested in the renewal and reawakening of the church in its spiritual and theological life. While having such concern, they expressed in their own way their respective understanding of the church and its mission.

We as Lutherans are naturally interested in what Martin Luther has done from a mission perspective.²

1. Luther was an enlightened missionary in his time, the very end of the Middle Ages, which was a time of considerable contentment and apathy. When the “church” thought for men and answered for them, Luther stimulated his generation to think, to be puzzled and perplexed, and to ask profound questions (cf. his spiritual struggle and *Anfechtungen*).
2. Luther was a fearless missionary to the church—the medieval Roman church, which he had loved and respected (see his “Babylonian Captivity of the Church”).

²Since the time of Gustav Adolf Warneck (1834-1910), the question of whether or not Luther was mission-minded, having interest in proclaiming the Gospel among non-Christians, has been tossed around, pro and con. Warneck took a somewhat negative view, while his fellow German, Werner Elert (1885-1954), took issue with Warneck in *The Structure of Lutheranism (Morphologie des Lutheratums)*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 385-402, disapproving Warneck’s views. Since the time of Elert numerous articles and essays have been written, disputing Warneck’s original views and commenting on Luther’s idea of mission, e.g., by James Scherer, E. W. Bunkowske, et al. Karl Holl has also insisted in letting Luther speak for himself, rather than listening to what others in subsequent generations have said, which has definitely revolutionized our understanding of the Reformer, including his view on and attitude toward Christian mission. Professor Elert in the aforementioned writing gave many helpful names and references on the issue. See also: *Luther Digest* 7 (1999): 63, published by the Luther Academy in USA.

3. Luther was a thoughtful missionary to his own German people by providing, in German, the Holy Scriptures, catechisms, and many other pertinent materials (cf. his Small Catechism, the Second and Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, supporting the "home missions").
4. Luther was a courageous missionary to the world (cf. his commentary on Colossians 1:23, Mark 16:15, and other passages. Also see his Large Catechism, the Second and the Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, supporting "overseas missions").
5. Luther was an insightful missionary to the conceited human nature of the "Renaissance-man" = the rational man; the homo sapiens = the wisdom/knowledge-inspired man of the Graeco-Roman world (cf. "De servo Arbitrio").

We are also aware of the fact that the "first missionary hymn of Protestantism" was written in 1524 by Martin Luther: "May God Embrace Us with His Grace."³

II. The Context: Mission's Operational Field

A. Mission Context: At the Juncture of Natural Science and Social Science

Indeed, the real problem of modern life is the rabbit's speed of natural science and the turtle's pace of social science. Frequently it is so difficult even to assess the amount of change taking place in many areas of natural science, for example, in the areas of communication, computer/Internet field, cyberization of reality, the revolutionizing of human consciousness, and ventures in industry, to mention just a few—overwhelming and startling!

On the other hand, we observe the deterioration in human relationships, including those of the family, society, nations, and among individuals. We may know a part of the mystery of the universe, the shapes of moon and some stars, traveling to space, communicating messages through the Internet and satellites; but we often do not know how to

³This hymn is documented in WA 35:418f.; SL 10:144f.; LW 35:232-234; Lutheran Worship #288, verse one reads as follows:

May God embrace us with his grace,
Our blessings from his fountains,
And by the brightness of his face
Guide toward celestial mountains,
So that his saving acts we see
Wherein his love takes pleasure.
Let Jesus' healing power be
Revealed in richest measure,
Converting ev'ry nation (emphasis added).

communicate with our own family members or neighbors, or how to get along with fellow human beings. In such conflicting situations, we are now to advance our “mission” work. We are often truly overwhelmed and perplexed by various mass media, such as “home page” ministries, audiovisual presentations, etc., in the cyber world.

How we discern all these complex phenomena in life, meaningfully readjust ourselves, and communicate the Gospel message are the real issues. We are bombarded by a flood of information and knowledge, as well as increasing pressure to try new models of work.

B. Assessing the Balance of IQ, EQ, and CQ

We have known for a long time that IQ (the cognitive domain) is important. In more recent times, educators, psychologists and counselors are telling us that EQ (emotion quotient, the affective domain) is of even more value than IQ. In our increasingly “globalized” context of life, we encounter another new area of concern, namely, CQ (culture quotient, the cultural domain: my own coined term). This CQ refers to the ability and capability of adjusting oneself in situations involving racial, ethnic, socio-political, ideological, cultural and religious pluralities in our surroundings. We are living in a “global village.” The “wide world” is no longer faraway lands. We have amazing transportation and communication networks, such as fax, e-mail, and other telecommunications. The entire world is physically within a one-day span; all communications are within a minute’s distance. No Asian land is the exception. Again under such circumstances, we are trying to conduct *missio Dei*. Indeed, we are forced to rethink, reassess, reshape our work, and find new way(s) of handling the issues in life and mission work. True, there ought to be a proper “balance” in our thinking and action, that is, balance between these different domains of the human mind. We have heard much about the first two areas, so vital for life and work. How can we then raise or increase CQ? That is a topic to which we may have to give much time to explore.

C. Cross Section of the Rational (*chih*) Domain and Emotive (*ch’ing*) Domain

We have been hearing that the West stresses reason and logic, whereas the East emphasizes “feeling” and “relationships.” Head vs heart, so to speak. Not infrequently, we may hear that Westerners are rational, whereas Easterners are often more emotional. This observation may intend to say that the former puts emphasis on “head” and the latter on “heart.” Ideally speaking, the cool (not cold!) head and warm (not hot!) heart should work harmoniously, preferably with the active limb! At any rate, this is another aspect of the context in which we are trying to proclaim the Good News. Most of the lands in Asia where we came from have received Christianity

from the West with their distinct culture, social ethos and spiritualities, and lingual variations. Obviously, their traditions and world views are inevitably reflected in their teaching and interpreting of the Biblical message. Unavoidable! Here we may introduce some noble concepts in Eastern thought which may illuminate us with new insights. Edifying and thought-provoking ideas are found in the Chinese Confucian Classics, for example: the concepts of *jen*, *te*, *Dao*, *ui*, *ye*, *Tien*, *Ch'i*, etc., especially mentioned in *Analects*, *Book of Mean*, and *Book of Mencius*, and partly in other books.⁴

D. Increasing Religious Encounters

The inevitable religious encounters among the historical religions in Asia, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity (not to mention the primal religions) are the most difficult issue and concern in Asia today.⁵ The most difficult subject Christian traditions are confronting is how to respond to these religions. Such encounters may easily become confrontations at various levels. Some instances, as we know, may lead to physical conflict and wars. In fact, many military conflicts and wars, local or worldwide, are frequently caused by religion.

There has always been the exclusive evangelization-scheme, the inclusive dialogue posture, and the syncretistic “middle” position, all of which have some persuasive arguments for their distinctive claims. In any case, in mission work there is the claim of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ; that is, Christ is the only Savior for all mankind (Acts 4:12). Without this premise, the Christian mission loses its life and its core task of Christian witness to salvation in Christ. How we explain it reasonably to the other options—inclusive, dialogical, syncretistic—remains an unresolvable mystery. One may also show Biblical statement related to the so-called natural and revealed ways of salvation by quoting Biblical passages like Romans 1:18ff. What is needed is a total and sincere commitment to Jesus Christ with an open attitude.

Christian mission inevitably confronts, theologically and practically, the question of religious encounters, especially in Asia where Christians are in the minority and where most of the leading world religions had their birth and have a majority of adherents and influence. World religions’

⁴The following resources will prove to be profitable reading: *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study of Jen and Agape*, by Hsin-Chung Yao (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 1996), 263 pages. Prof Hyun Sub Um of Luther Theological University made a comprehensive study on “Ch’i or Ki” in *Theology and Faith* 11: 103-173 (in Korean).

⁵I would like to call attention to the special issue of *Missiology* (an international review), 28:1 (January 2000), on “the New Millennium and the Emerging Religious Encounters.” Also cf: “The Inevitable Encounter with Natural Worldviews,” by Won Yong Ji, in *Let Christ Be Christ*, ed. by Daniel N. Harmelink (Huntington Beach, CA: Tentatio Press, 1999), 141-152.

influence and aggressive nature may increase in the future. Therefore, we should think about church renewal also from this perspective.

Religion brings out the best and the worst in human nature. It can be most forceful in motivating human beings for daring self-sacrifice or renouncing one's own mundane life for the will of the transcendent (God) and the life yonder (martyrdom). On the other hand, religion can lead to deeply destructive, violent, and intolerant behavior in the name of the divine supernatural being. Under its influence, people also gladly and willingly give up their lives for something greater than their own earthly life. For this reason, there have been countless savage acts and wars in history in the name of religious loyalty.

Given the advances of natural science in general and the terrifying weapons of all sorts, something must be done soon to curb such religiously motivated destructive forces and to direct the positive role of religion in this confused global village. Who can do that, even in part? The United Nations (UN) is a possible choice, though even the UN itself seemingly has many limitations. Many see the UN as being in opposition to Christian principles.

I propose that this pan-Asian Seminar on the Church and Mission ask the General Secretariat of Lutheran World Federation to communicate this concern to the UN to initiate a new "Religion Law," which strongly prohibits any open public condemnation and denunciation of obviously malicious intention.

This proposal is based upon the fundamental right of religious freedom together with the codes of human rights and health concerns, the pursuit for world peace, etc., which the UN has been, until now, advocating and promoting. Religious encounters will be a vitally important and crucial issue in this new millennium, consequently affecting world peace and human survival. Healthy religion provides a healthy way of life in this world, ethically sound, spiritually fulfilling, socially contributing, personally satisfying, as well as giving a hopeful perspective on the life hereafter. Does the Lutheran church meet such a need of the people, a living and dynamic religion, as Luther said? Religion, even more than science, is the vital topic of concern in the new millennium. Culture conflict, more than ideological tension, will be the top issue of the twenty-first century.

E. Cyber Culture and the Real World

The world is rapidly changing. So is Asia. New ideas, new concepts, new developments, new ventures, and even new language and strange new ways of doing things appear to be everywhere. One area is the unreal, but more vivid, "cyber world" or cyber culture. One's dreams and imaginations can be put on a graphic level, easily confusing it with the real world. Another effect of the cyber culture is to make things relative and only seemingly real. In the minds of the immature, it may easily mean

fantasy and idealism, which certainly can affect one's understanding and interpretation of the real world. Will this new development be a factor in the comprehension of the Christian message, which claims to be absolute truth? This cyber culture is yet another new context in which we are trying to proclaim the Gospel. What can we do about it?

III. The Task: Renewal of the Church

Why renewal? Renewal, as in the Reformation in the sixteenth century, is called for because there is something to be renewed, reformed, re-examined in the real nature and tasks of the church. We hope that this Seminar on Mission in Asia will be a "wake-up call" as well as a new starting point in the beginning of the twenty-first century for the Lutheran churches in Asia and our generous partner churches in the West. This section of my address somewhat reflects the situation of Korean Protestantism today, both the positive and negative. Wise discretion is needed.

A. Renewal Elements Within the Church

Church renewal should begin from within, the base level of church life. The following points may be mentioned:

1. We need the integrity of theology and ethic: the sound theological principle (doctrine) and the ethical/moral practice in life, traditionally called, respectively, justification and sanctification, faith and good works, theory and practice. One may know how to say many fine religious words but not know how to put them into practice. Christianity, as understood by Lutherans, is not a religion of ethics, but it is an ethical religion. Therefore, any form of ethical or moral failure certainly hurts the credibility of the Christian message.
2. "Churchgoers" and "Christ-people" (Christians) are not the same. There may be many churchgoers, but not all of them seem to be Christians, the imitators of Christ, even from the secular standard of honesty and sincerity.
3. There is indeed the one, holy, universal, and apostolic church, the Body of Christ. On the other hand, there is the organizational, institutional, hierarchical, financial, and political church, which has the same characteristics of any other non-religious organization. These two aspects of the church are somehow interrelated or intermingled in this world. Consequently, the worldly nature of the organization is visible, even in the Lutheran church.
4. "Leader" and "leadership" have the same etymology, but they do not necessarily relate in practice. There are many leaders without leadership. That is a problem. If "leader" is understood as the canvas,

then “leadership” is the art work (painting) on it. The basic ingredients of leadership in the new millennium are, as mentioned earlier, the IQ, EQ, and CQ. Christian leadership requires one more: the SQ (spiritual quotient: the faith active in Christian love).

5. “Authority” and “authoritarianism” also have the same word root, but not the same meaning. Pastors, missionaries, and theologians ought to have, without question, both spiritual and professional authority, but when the same people exercise authoritarianism, they eventually disqualify and nullify their authority itself.

Church renewal must start from these basic areas where all Christians, pastors, and church administrators are personally involved. Without their attitudinal and practical renewal, no church renewal can ever be realistically expected.

B. Spiritual Renewal of the Church

In my observation, spiritual renewal is the crucial issue in the Lutheran churches in the West and in the East. Is there a distinctly Lutheran spirituality? Often one hears theologians’ formulated statements and important categories, such as the Word and Sacraments ministry, liturgy, Law and Gospel, etc. Do the ordinary people grasp their profound meaning and practice, and spiritual content? Do the Lutherans have spiritual *kam-kyuk* (equivalent words: inexpressible joy and excitement)? How much is true when we hear certain negative remarks, such as, Lutheranism is stereotyped, has no feeling, no spiritually uplifting experience, no warm-hearted communion, etc.? Lutherans seem to be good at emphasizing spiritual edification and growth of their own members, but are not as active and effective in the endeavor of evangelizing non-Christians and unbelievers. This trend is somewhat reflected in Lutheran mission overseas. Lutherans are cautious and consequently slow. This can be a positive virtue, but at the same time signifies the lack of initiative and creativity. They seem ill-equipped to comprehend the spiritual ethos of our time, especially the younger generations. One may compare and contrast the performances of the Lutherans and other evangelical churches and charismatic groups.

C. “Church Growth” and “Mega-Church” Trends and Critique

The church growth movement and similar trends appear to be based upon a modern ecclesial capitalism, both in theory and practice. One of the consequences is the impressive “mega-church” practice, the tendency to focus more on what the people want than on what they really need, religiously and spiritually speaking. Numerical growth is the prioritized goal. Without question, we find in it a certain significance. Church membership should grow; thus more people become Christ-people.

Protestant Christendom in Korea, mostly the Reformed and revivalistically and charismatically oriented, is a classic example of the increased number of churchgoers and mega-churches. Recently many Christians and missionaries in the world have given their positive appraisal, of the churches in Korea for their phenomenal growth and the evangelistic zeal and enthusiasm as demonstrated by their sending out many missionaries to the world. This is definitely one side of the story.

Nowadays, voices of self-criticism and critical assessment of the Protestant churches in Korea are increasingly expressed from within, by serious-minded pastors, theologians, and church people themselves. Jong-Nam Cho, the former president of Seoul Theological University expressed his view in an open lecture at the ninth International Theological Conference on the Holy Spirit in May 18, 2000, in Seoul, under the title “The Renewal of the Korean Church and the Direction of the Spirit Movement”.⁶

Until now, the churches in Korea have achieved numerical growth with absence of internal renewal...added many nominal Christians. The church must be renewed. As we have learned in history, a church without “renewal” has produced the corruption within.... We say that the Korean Church is great in number, but the Korean society is ever more corrupt with participation of churchgoers. This shows that the spiritual competency of the church affecting society has been minimal. Aren't we hearing nowadays that the church itself is corrupt? There is something seriously wrong....

The former president of the Lutheran Church in Korea, Hae Chul Kim, has aired his view of the mega-church trend and expressed his opinion about closer Christian fellowship-oriented, smaller congregations.⁷

The above scholars, among many others, are by no means against evangelism, mission, or growth of the church as such. On the contrary! They are against the wrong trend of increasing merely in number and quantity at the expense of or while ignoring what the Christian church, the Body of Christ, ought to be. A serious hearing is necessary!

D. One Thing That Is Needful

Lutherans by their nature, and the Lutheran church in its expression of its spirituality and practice of evangelism, are more geared toward the

⁶Prof. Cho is a leading Wesleyan theologian in Korea. He gave this lengthy expository lecture in Korea on the situation of the Protestant churches in light of the renewal movement of John Wesley. His opinion is a distinctly representative view.

⁷Hae Chul Kim, “Pastoral Ministry in Korea: Present Situation and Future Prospects,” (in Korean) *Theology and Faith* XI: 75-101, Luther Theological University/Seminary, Korea. Cf. “Problems and Solutions Found in the Current Protestantism in Korea” (in Korean), by Won Yong JI at the Pastoral Leaders’ Seminar, Yonsei University Lecture, May 22, 2000.

spiritual edification and growth of their own denomination and stressing the importance of education, but not showing as much interest in the conversion of the non-Christians. The Lutheran message from its pulpits, hymns, and the ways of communicating is usually “theological.” The language in its use and meaning is historically Lutheran and generally understandable to themselves. On the other hand, the Lutheran message is frequently hard for outsiders to grasp meaningfully. In general, the Lutheran message is doctrinally undisputable(!), historically sound and correct, and didactic in character. However, it is not so suitable for evangelism, for calling for conversion. These comments are by no means intended to be negative toward Lutherans. Inevitably, we may think of some alternatives. To do this important task, we have to be more cooperative with good teamwork. How can we Lutherans be more active in mission?

IV. The Lutheran Vision and Perspective

Lutherans seem to have lost “direction” (*Konturverlust*) in the midst of the wild wind of today’s entertainment culture, in the jungle of information and the explosion of knowledge. They sit comfortably, contented to recite their noble heritage and history, often with intellectual articulation and development of doctrines. In these they have made a distinct contribution to the Christian church and its theology. They are proud of that. Now, the time, not the Truth, has changed and is rapidly changing at an amazing speed in all areas. Our generation urges us to appeal not only to the head, but also to heart and limb (will, action). It asks for a total approach to life and religion. The younger generation today, for example, the new music with fast rhythm, television, video tapes, movies, the internet and computers, etc., are indispensable items. How does the church cope with all of this? Another area of concern is religion in the public square. In fact, the Lutheran World Federation was intensely and seriously talking about and discussing, already in the 1960s and 1970s, Proclamation and Development, Humanization and Evangelization, Mission and Social Action. On the level of concepts, there was indigenization, internationalization, contextualization, and globalization of mission. Further, the significant idea of *Communio* was introduced. I personally was involved for a decade in the deliberation. Since then, have we made any noticeable advancement and improvement in the past three decades?

With this background in mind, what are our Lutheran visions, dreams, and aspirations?

1. Our starting point should be a realistic *Selbstbesinnung* on our time and its needs, focusing not so much on wants but more on needs, spiritual and religious. We must emerge from the comfortable nest of tradition and intellectual fortress and encounter the real world of the new millennium. We must know who we

really are!

2. As frequently said, Lutherans have a rich heritage, e.g., of church, ministry, liturgy, doctrines and history, and other important aspects of the Lutheran communion. But we are seriously lacking in reaching out to the real world, not a Lutheran cyber world, to make a contribution to the lonely hearts and to bring the Gospel message to confused, bored lives. To do this task we ought to discern both the positive and negative roles of the amazing communication networks of our ever-advancing computer/Internet culture. They can do great wonders as well as tragic damage to human life. We naturally look for a good use of these scientific discoveries for the divinely mandated mission.
3. Theological contributions and the Reformation heritage are priorities for the Lutheran church. Will that contribution continue in this new millennium? There are some doubtful signs here and there. First of all, Lutherans in the land of Martin Luther itself, as well as in other lands in Europe and North America, from which many missionaries were dispatched to Asia, and leading thinkers and theologians had their birthplace, seem to be declining in their spiritual vitality and vision. The picture on other continents, limited to the influence of Lutherans, is not any brighter. The constant question is: What is wrong? Where is the “leakage” of strength and vitality? Why are the other churches in Africa and some parts of Asia, not necessarily Lutherans, increasing and appearing to be active? Is there hope and a future for Lutheranism? My reaction is more positive than negative. Indeed, “renewal” concerns us. We must stop being too retrospective and too timid for future perspective. We must translate theology and doctrines into ethic (life), uplifting both essence and existence. And we must try to meet all human needs, those of head, heart, and limb. Doctrines are important, and theological discourses and debates can be interesting and thought-provoking, but excessive debates and discourses can bore and repel people’s interest. There ought to be life, meaningful and relevant.

V. Closing Remark: Luther and Lutherans; Luther’s Thought and Lutheranism

In closing, as a life-long student of Luther’s thought, Lutheranism in history, and dogmatics, I would like to pose some questions for reflection:

1. Are Luther’s thought (theology) and contemporary Lutheranism the same?
2. Are Luther’s understanding of the church, ministry, and mission, and our view the same?

3. Are Luther's views of church renewal (reform) and mission renewal the same as ours?
4. We say that Lutherans are the heirs of Luther. Is that truly or nominally so?

We are searching for ways of church and mission renewals, where the Lutheran future lies. Church renewal means mission renewal, and vice versa. By no means, should we confuse the ideal and real or the cyber world and the real world.

Permit me to quote a few meaningful passages, reminding us that our forefathers were indeed mission-minded:

1. "Let Jesus' healing power be revealed in richest measure, converting ev'ry nation" (M. Luther).
2. ...promissio evangelii sit universalis (SD XI:28. Also the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer in Luther's Large Catechism)
3. "If we as a church no longer witness to this Gospel of salvation by grace, we would be of no use in the world; no longer the salt of the earth, we would be fit only for the dunghill" (F. Pieper).

The Lutheran church by nature is Biblical, confessional, liturgical, ecumenical,⁸ and missional. Let's think about it!

Be strongly aware of the need for mission, have genuine love for mission, realizing that we are in Asia, living in Y2K onward!

⁸Being "ecumenical" in the sense that the Lutheran church is not sectarian, sectional, parochial, denominational in a narrow sense. It transcends race, tribe, class, and nation; the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction for the Uninitiated

James A. Meek

The “New Perspective on Paul” has prompted a major reevaluation of a long-held scholarly consensus on the main outlines of Pauline theology and, with it, a reevaluation of first-century Judaism and Paul’s treatment of it. Much of this discussion arises from the publication in 1977 of E. P. Sanders’ influential *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.¹ In it, Sanders not only challenges a widely held scholarly consensus, but the foundation of the faith of the Reformation. Predictably, his work has been subjected to considerable evaluation, elaboration, and criticism. The purpose of this paper is to summarize views of several key figures² in this discussion and to indicate something of what may be at stake.

Reevaluation of Paul and of Palestinian Judaism: E. P. Sanders

Sanders begins by surveying the understanding of Judaism in New Testament scholarship. The view of Weber, who understood Judaism as a legalistic religion, has been repeated (if modified in detail) by influential scholars such as Bousset, Billerbeck, and Bultmann. These scholars held that in Judaism “one’s fate is determined by weighing fulfillments of the law against transgressions” and that there is therefore “uncertainty of salvation mixed with the self-righteous feeling of accomplishment.”³ This view has not been unopposed, particularly by scholars such as Moore, Montefiore, and Sandmel:

The general Christian view of Judaism, or of some part of it, as a religion of legalistic works-righteousness goes on.... One of the intentions of the present chapter, to put the matter clearly, is to destroy that view...by showing that the Weber/Bousset/Billerbeck view, as it applies to Tannaitic literature, is based on a massive perversion and misunderstanding of the material.⁴

¹E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977).

²Many important figures could be added. The omission of any participant in this discussion in no way reflects on the author’s estimate of their importance, but only on the author’s desire to make the views of several key contributors accessible to others.

³Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 54.

⁴Ibid., 59.

Dr. James A. Meek is Assistant Professor of Bible and Associate Dean for Academics at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO. Dr. Meek presents one evaluation of the “new perspective on Paul”; the next article by Dr. A. Andrew Das gives another view.

Most comparisons of Paul and Judaism have been comparisons of “reduced essences” or of “individual motifs.”⁵ Sanders finds these “inadequate” and proposes instead “to compare an entire religion, parts and all, with an entire religion, parts and all,” that is a “pattern of religion.”⁶

A pattern of religion, defined positively, is the description of how a religion is perceived by its adherents to *function*. “Perceived to function” has the sense not of what an adherent does on a day-to-day basis, but of *how getting in and staying in are understood*: the way in which a religion is understood to admit and retain members is considered to be the way it “functions.”⁷

To discover the “pattern of religion” found in first-century Palestinian Judaism, Sanders examines not only the early Rabbinic (Tannaitic) literature, but also the Dead Sea Scrolls, and a selection of the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical writings (Ben Sirach, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, the Psalms of Solomon, and 4 Ezra).

Sanders concedes that the Tannaitic literature pays a great deal of attention to the commandments of God, including such questions as their proper application, on whom each commandment is laid, and when each commandment should be regarded as fulfilled. This, however, does not constitute Judaism as a legalistic religion. Looking more closely Sanders finds that underneath the disagreement concerning the details of obeying these commands is “agreement on a vast number of principles.”⁸ In addition, he seeks to “ask what religious motives drove the Rabbis to such a detailed and minute investigation of the biblical commandments.”⁹

Sanders finds that “the bulk of the halakic material deals with the elaboration and definition of Israel’s obligation to God under the covenant.”¹⁰ Sanders does not find frequent mention of the covenant in the halakic materials, nor does he think that it is necessary for him to do so. It is sufficient that he finds the covenant presupposed throughout. As he says of the more narrow question of God’s role in the covenant, “it is assumed so thoroughly that it need not be mentioned.”¹¹ “It is the fundamental nature of the covenant conception which largely accounts for the relative scarcity of appearances of the term ‘covenant’ in Rabbinic literature.”¹²

Thus the starting place is God’s election of Israel and His covenant with Israel. In some places the literature ascribes this election entirely to

⁵Ibid., 12.

⁶Ibid., 16.

⁷Ibid., 17.

⁸Ibid., 81.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 82.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 421.

God's mercy, while in others, there seems to be some merit (actual or foreseen) in Israel that prompts the election. There is finally "no clear answer" to the question of why Israel was elect.¹³ In any case, "grace and merit did not seem to [the Rabbis] to be in contradiction."¹⁴ It is clear, however, that the election and covenant (the means of "getting in") precede the giving of the commandments (the means of "staying in"). Israel does not obey the commandments in order to obtain salvation. Salvation is the substance of the election and covenant. God's fulfillment of the covenant is not dependent on fulfilling the commandments.¹⁵ However, for individual Israelites, "God made the condition for remaining in the covenant the free intent to obey the commandments...."¹⁶ This, then, is what Sanders calls "covenantal nomism."

Briefly put, covenantal nomism is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression.¹⁷

Obedience to the commandments is therefore required, or at least, the *intent* to obey. Despite the exhaustive enumeration of the commandments and the details of their observance, Judaism did not conceive of the Law as a burden, but as a blessing.¹⁸ God rewards obedience and punishes disobedience, both in this life and in the life to come, but God's mercy prevents the application of a precise *quid pro quo*.

The Rabbis never said that God is merciful in such a way as to remove the necessity of obeying him, but they did think that God was merciful toward those who basically intended to obey, even though their performance might have been a long way from perfect.¹⁹

Sanders can find no evidence that the Tannaitic literature supports the notion of "weighing" acts of obedience and transgression.²⁰ Salvation belongs to all those who are in the covenant. It is only the worst sinners, those who sin with the intention of denying God or "cast off the yoke," who exclude themselves from the world to come.²¹ All others are saved by their

¹³Ibid., 99.

¹⁴Ibid., 100.

¹⁵Ibid., 95.

¹⁶Ibid., 93.

¹⁷Ibid., 75.

¹⁸Ibid., 110.

¹⁹Ibid., 125. Cp. "No rabbi took the position that obedience must be perfect." (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983], 28).

²⁰Ibid., 138-147.

²¹Ibid., 134.

intent to obey and by atonement through sacrifice,²² suffering,²³ death,²⁴ and repentance (the “cure for non-obedience is repentance”²⁵). Repentance, however, “is not a ‘status-achieving’ activity by which one initially courts and wins the mercy of God. It is a ‘status-maintaining’ or ‘status-restoring’ attitude which indicates that one intends to remain in the covenant.”²⁶

Sanders has drawn particular attention for his treatment of texts which speak of the perceived remoteness of God and of the believer’s sense of unworthiness. Sanders argues that these passages do not support the view that first-century Judaism was a legalistic religion in which adherents were chronically uncertain of their final destiny. A “change of tone” in such texts is hardly “surprising.”

When someone is debating about the definition of a commandment, he naturally talks as if religion is under his control. But when, in prayer, he feels himself before his God, he is impressed by his own worthlessness and recognizes his reliance on grace.²⁷

Sanders’ conclusions regarding the Tannaitic literature are confirmed by his examination of the Dead Sea scrolls, as well as of selections from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The overall portrayal of the “pattern of religion” in these materials is essentially the same, a “covenantal nomism” in which Israel owes its irrevocable election to the grace of God. By means of this gracious covenant, all Israel (except those who deliberately cast off the yoke of the covenant) will be saved. Works are necessary, not as means by which one obtains a relationship with God or earns one’s salvation, but as the means by which one maintains his position in the covenant community. Works, therefore, are not the means of “getting in,” but of “staying in.”

Sanders’ Reevaluation of Paul

With his portrayal of first-century Judaism in hand, Sanders turns to examine the apostle Paul. Again he seeks to discern the “pattern of religion,” how “getting in” and “staying in” are understood. Sanders takes as his sources the seven letters whose authenticity is unquestioned in contemporary scholarship: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. The “speeches in Acts which are attributed to Paul cannot be used as a source for his thought.”²⁸ In practice, Sanders’ canon is even more severely circumscribed: Romans,

²²Ibid., 157-159.

²³Ibid., 168.

²⁴Ibid., 172.

²⁵Ibid., 112.

²⁶Ibid., 178.

²⁷Ibid., 224.

²⁸Ibid., 432.

Galatians, and, to a lesser extent, Philippians, carry the weight of the argument. While less than one-quarter of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* was devoted to Paul, we now have as well Sanders' further elaboration of Paul's position in *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*.²⁹

Sanders begins by looking for the center of Paul's theology. Following Schweitzer, Sanders argues that the center of Paul's theology is not righteousness by faith.³⁰ Among other concerns, this doctrine does not provide any clear connection to such clearly Pauline emphases as ethics, the Sacraments, the gift of the Spirit, and participation "in Christ."³¹ Instead,

There appear to me to be two readily identifiable and primary convictions which governed Paul's Christian life: (1) that Jesus Christ is Lord, that in him God has provided for the salvation of all who believe (in the general sense of "be converted"), and that he will soon return to bring all things to an end; (2) that he, Paul, was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles.³²

It has commonly been believed that Paul's starting point was the plight of sinners before a holy God. In Romans, for example, Paul seemingly begins with the plight of humankind in sin and moves from that plight to an understanding of the solution God has provided.³³ Texts such as Romans 7 are alleged to demonstrate that on some level Paul had been dissatisfied with his life as a practicing Jew.³⁴ Sanders argues for a different reading of the structure of Romans and appeals to Philippians 3 to demonstrate that Paul did not, prior to his experience on the Damascus Road, understand himself to be in a plight from which he needed salvation.

The point is made explicitly in Gal. 2:21: if righteousness could come through the law, Christ died in vain.... If his death was *necessary* for man's salvation, it follows that salvation cannot come in any other way and consequently that all were, prior to the death and resurrection, in need of a saviour. There is no reason to believe that Paul felt the need of a universal saviour prior to his conviction that Jesus was such.³⁵

Put another way, Paul did not preach about men, but about God. It is true that, in the press of explaining the implications of his gospel, he comes closer to working out what can be called an "anthropology" than any other New Testament author, but that is *only the*

²⁹E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*.

³⁰Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 439.

³¹*Ibid.*, 492.

³²*Ibid.*, 442.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*, 443.

³⁵*Ibid.*

implication of his theology, Christology, and soteriology. It is not worked out for its own sake, for man's plight does not seem to be primarily what Paul preached about.³⁶

Paul's central theme, then, is not the death of Christ which atones for sin, but the *resurrection* of Christ in which believers participate by faith.³⁷ (Sanders grants that Paul understood the death of Christ to be expiatory, but sees this as part of the common tradition Paul shared with the earliest Christian preaching. "Men's transgressions do have to be accounted for; God must overlook them or Christ must die to expiate them; but they do not *constitute* the problem"³⁸ for which Paul's soteriology provides the solution.) Rather the theme of participation in Christ entails the hope of a full salvation in the future³⁹ and the present possession of the Spirit⁴⁰ by virtue of being part of Christ's body, expressed by the characteristic Pauline formula "in Christ."⁴¹ This, then, "is the theme, above all, to which Paul appeals both in parenthesis and polemic,"⁴² providing the link between soteriology and ethics that Sanders finds wanting in the traditional forensic doctrine of justification. To be sure, Paul uses the forensic language of "justification" (or as Sanders sometimes prefers, "to be righteoused"), but this is merely one set of terms (alongside the participationist terminology) that describe the "*transfer* to being Christian."⁴³ In fact, "Paul's 'juristic' language is sometimes pressed into the service of 'participationist categories,' but never vice versa."⁴⁴ It is the "participationist categories... [which] no doubt...tell us what Paul really thought."⁴⁵ "The dominant conception here is the transfer from one *lordship* to another."⁴⁶ Sin, in this way of thinking, is not conceived primarily as guilt, but more as a power from which believers must be set free.⁴⁷ It is not guilt which condemns, but participation in unions "which are not compatible with union with Christ."⁴⁸

What, then, of the Law, which figures so prominently in Judaism? Paul never appeals to the coming of the Messiah as a reason that the Law is no longer valid (as W. D. Davies has suggested).⁴⁹ Nor does Paul reason (as Bultmann and many others) that human beings are inherently unable

³⁶Ibid., 446.

³⁷Ibid., 446, 465.

³⁸Ibid., 500.

³⁹Ibid., 448-450.

⁴⁰Ibid., 450.

⁴¹Ibid., 453-463.

⁴²Ibid., 456.

⁴³Ibid., 463-472.

⁴⁴Ibid., 503.

⁴⁵Ibid., 507.

⁴⁶Ibid., 497.

⁴⁷Ibid., 453.

⁴⁸Ibid., 503.

⁴⁹Ibid., 480.

to keep the Law⁵⁰ and/or that even the attempt to pursue righteousness by Law is itself sin, because it necessarily leads to boasting of human accomplishment before God.⁵¹ Paul's argument does not derive from an analysis of the human condition at all. Even Romans 1-3 does not, in Sanders' view, describe what is wrong with humankind, but only demonstrates the need of a Savior.⁵² The only "defect" in the Law is this: "If the death and resurrection of Christ provide salvation, and receiving the Spirit is the guarantee of salvation, *all other means are excluded by definition.*"⁵³ This then leads to Sanders' oft-cited assertion that "this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity."⁵⁴ Or, more broadly, "the point is that *any true religious goal*, in Paul's view, can only come through Christ."⁵⁵ Paul's calling as apostle to the Gentiles plays a key role: "It is the Gentile question and the exclusivism of Paul's soteriology which dethrone the law...."⁵⁶

Sanders expounds his view perhaps more simply under four heads in *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*. First, "the law is not an entrance requirement."⁵⁷ The question in Galatians 3 (and other texts) is "the condition on which Gentiles enter the kingdom of God."⁵⁸ Paul's opponents were contending that "the Gentile converts could enter the people of God only on condition that they were circumcised and accepted the law."⁵⁹ Paul's reply, and Sanders', is that entrance to the people of God is "not by works of the law." There is thus a formal similarity here between Paul and Palestinian Judaism: neither understood obedience to the Law as the means by which one could establish a relationship with God. (Of course, the similarity is merely formal since for Judaism, entrance was by election to the covenant, whereas for Paul entrance is by participation in Christ through faith.) The works of the Law cannot "righteous" because one can only be "righteoused," i.e., participate in Christ, by faith.

Second, if the Law is not an entrance requirement, what then is its purpose? Sanders finds that Paul makes several "attempts" at this question and that his answers are not entirely "harmonious" or "satisfactory."⁶⁰ There are, however, common threads in these divergent attempts: first, that God always intended to save in another way (i.e., by faith rather than works); and, second, that through the Law, God puts all humanity under the Law and sin.⁶¹

⁵⁰Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 23.

⁵¹Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 481-482.

⁵²Ibid., 501.

⁵³Ibid., 484.

⁵⁴Ibid., 552.

⁵⁵Ibid., 505.

⁵⁶Ibid., 497.

⁵⁷*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 17-48.

⁵⁸Ibid., 18.

⁵⁹Ibid., 18.

⁶⁰Ibid., 81, 86.

⁶¹Ibid., 81.

Third, Sanders contends that, even though Christians are not under the Law, Paul expects the Law to be fulfilled by them.⁶² Here Sanders' distinction between "getting in" and "staying in" comes into his discussion of Paul. As in Judaism, while the Law is not the means of "getting in," it is the expectation for those who would "stay in." Paul is, in Sanders' view, inconsistent in his application of the Law to Christians. "Paul did not work out a full halakic system, rulings seem to be ad hoc, and many of them may have come as a surprise to his converts...."⁶³ "Paul...never makes a theoretical distinction with regard to what aspects of the law are binding...."⁶⁴ Yet Paul wound up "deleting circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws from 'the whole law' and 'the commandments of God.'"⁶⁵

Finally (and much more briefly), although he elsewhere rejects a redemptive-historical explanation for Paul's view of the Law,⁶⁶ Sanders recognizes that there is a certain redemptive-historical development in Paul.

He thus knows about two righteousnesses. The difference between them is not the distinction between merit and grace, but between two dispensations. There is a righteousness which comes by law, but it is now worth nothing because of a different dispensation. *Real* righteousness (the righteousness of, or from God) is through Christ. It is this concrete fact of *Heilsgeschichte* which makes the other righteousness wrong, not the abstract superiority of grace to merit.⁶⁷

It is clear from the subsequent discussion that Sanders' influence has been considerable, both in shaping perceptions of Palestinian Judaism and of Paul. Thankfully, we are not left to come to terms with Sanders on our own. Many have responded to his work and we will now turn attention to several of his respondents.

Response to Sanders' Judaism:

Jacob Neusner

Jacob Neusner has offered a substantial and vigorous critique of Sanders' use of the Jewish literature. Although Neusner professes considerable respect for Sanders' goals (particularly his "apologia for ancient Judaism in the face of centuries-old Christian hostility"⁶⁸) and for many of

⁶²Ibid., 93.

⁶³Ibid., 95.

⁶⁴Ibid., 96.

⁶⁵Ibid., 103.

⁶⁶Ibid., 503.

⁶⁷Ibid., 140.

⁶⁸Jacob Neusner, *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: A Systematic Reply to Professor E. P. Sanders* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), x. (Hereafter *Judaic Law*).

his insights, he vigorously challenges Sanders' approach to working with the Tannaitic literature and characterizes Sanders' work in terms such as "worthless," "ignorant," "profoundly flawed," and "intellectually rather vulgar."⁶⁹

First, Neusner charges that Sanders ignores very difficult problems involved in interpreting the texts. The Mishnah and Talmud date from one to five centuries after the period Sanders wishes to describe. While it may be assumed that these documents reflect in some way the concerns and issues faced by those who recorded them in their present form, it is not immediately evident that they accurately represent Judaism of the first century. Attribution of a saying or story to a first-century rabbi is no guarantee that this particular rabbi actually said or did what was attributed to him, nor can we safely assume that we know enough of that situation to be certain what the rabbi meant to say or do and how we are to interpret it. As Neusner notes, "Sanders therefore works on rabbinical documents in ways in which he would not imagine dealing with New Testament ones."⁷⁰ Neusner's own view is that "in historical study what we cannot show, we cannot know."⁷¹ Neusner clearly does not believe that Sanders has adequately demonstrated that his "Palestinian Judaism" actually represents the Judaism of first-century Palestine.

Nor is it clear that there is a single "Judaism" of the first century. Neusner charges that Sanders is insensitive to the diversity of Judaism over both time and space. Approaching the question sociologically, Neusner finds that there is not one "Judaism," but only "Judaisms."⁷² The assumption of a single, uniform "Judaism" "in fact fabricates a single, palpable social entity where, in antiquity and today, none existed or now exists.... Jews lived all over the world; they did not have a single language in common, and by the criteria of economics, on the one side, or politics on the second, or shared culture on the third, nothing bound them together."⁷³ Thus, "if documents came to closure over a period of half a millennium, as they did, how can we treat them all as essentially homogenous and representative of a single 'Judaism'—and forthwith assign the provenance of that 'Judaism' to the first century?"⁷⁴ Further, while it may be possible to identify factors that various "Judaisms" held in common, this "lowest common denominator"

⁶⁹Jacob Neusner, "E. P. Sanders *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*," in Jacob Neusner, *Ancient Judaism: Debates and Disputes*, Brown Judaic studies, no. 64, 1994. (Hereafter, "Sanders")

⁷⁰"Sanders," 200. Neusner summarizes the concerns raised by Philip S. Alexander against the conventional treatment of Judaic sources by New Testament scholars ("Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 74 [1983] 237-246): (1) the state of the texts; (2) the interpretation of the texts; (3) dating of the texts; (4) accuracy of attributions in the texts; (5) literary and form-critical concerns; (6) anachronism; (7) parallelomania.

⁷¹Neusner, *Judaic Law*, 265.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 51.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁴"Sanders," 200.

is of little interest: "For what each Judaic system had in common with others proves, as we shall see, systematically inert, hardly active, let alone definitive, in setting forth what to any given Judaism proved its critical point...what was a given to all systems gave life and power to none of them."⁷⁵

In addition to these important methodological concerns, Neusner finds Sanders' actual interpretation of the texts themselves to be wanting. The categories Sanders uses to describe Judaism are not categories offered by the texts themselves. Sanders has tried so hard to identify the common concerns that he supposes must underlie the extant documents, that he appears to ignore what these documents themselves actually treat as important. Neusner, for example, argues that the Mishnah is silent on the covenant and election, not because these are so thoroughly assumed that they need not be mentioned, but because it wishes instead to speak of other things.⁷⁶ The argument from silence is always a dangerous one.

But Sanders, according to Neusner, has "a rich capacity to make up distinctions and definitions as he goes along, then to impose these distinctions and definitions upon sources that, on the face of it, scarcely sustain them."⁷⁷ As a result, Sanders has, as much as his traditional opponents, imported categories foreign to the Jewish materials, rather than letting his understanding of Judaism develop organically from those materials.⁷⁸

Neusner also differs with Sanders on the interpretation of many particular texts in the literature. Sanders "time and again reads out of context and or simply does not understand at all...."⁷⁹ "He constantly alludes to passages that he does not present and analyze, and he imputes to said passages positions and opinions that are not obvious to others who have read the same passages; we are left only with his claims."⁸⁰

Finally, Neusner points out a striking omission from Sanders' documentary study of Palestinian Judaism: the Old Testament.

I do not understand why Sanders does not begin his work of description with an account of the Old Testament legacy available to all the groups under discussion as well as with an account of how, in his view, each group receives and reshapes that legacy.... It seems to me natural to give the Old Testament a central place in the description of any system resting upon an antecedent corpus of such authority as the Mosaic revelation and the prophetic writings.⁸¹

⁷⁵Neusner, *Judaic Law*, 53.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 235-236.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 250.

⁷⁸"Sanders," 195.

⁷⁹Neusner, *Judaic Law*, 270.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 268, note 16.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 238.

Even if one makes some allowance for the emphatic tone of Neusner's critique, there remain serious questions about Sanders' treatment of the sources and the construction of first-century Palestinian Judaism that he derives from them. These questions must be satisfactorily answered before Sanders' reconstruction of the Palestinian Judaism of Paul's day can be taken as established.

Response to Sanders' Paul

James D. G. Dunn

In a number of important articles,⁸² James Dunn has responded to issues raised by Sanders' work. Dunn greatly appreciates Sanders' characterization of first-century Palestinian Judaism as "covenantal nomism." Freed from the assumption that Paul was combating a legalistic understanding of Jewish religion,

Sanders has given us an unrivalled opportunity to look at Paul afresh, to shift our perspective back from the sixteenth century to the first century, to do what all true exegetes want to do—that is, to see Paul properly within his own context, to hear Paul in terms of his own time, to let Paul be himself.⁸³

What Sanders has failed to do, however, is to capitalize on his own great achievement:

Instead of trying to explore how far Paul's theology could be explicated in relation to Judaism's "covenantal nomism," he remained more impressed by the *difference* between Paul's pattern of religious thought and that of first-century Judaism.⁸⁴

But this presentation of Paul is only a little better than the one rejected. There remains something very odd in Paul's attitude to his ancestral faith. The Lutheran Paul has been replaced by an idiosyncratic Paul who in arbitrary and irrational manner turns his face against the glory and greatness of Judaism's covenant theology and abandons Judaism simply because it is not Christianity.⁸⁵

⁸²Dunn's essential articles on this subject have been collected in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990). See also his reply to questions raised by C. E. B. Cranfield in "Yet Once More—The Works of the Law: A Response," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992): 99-117.

⁸³Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 186.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 186.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 187.

What Sanders has missed, according to Dunn, is “the significance of the little phrase ‘works of the law’.”⁸⁶ Dunn argues that this phrase does not refer to all that the Law requires, but to “particular observances of the law like circumcision and the food laws”⁸⁷ and the sabbath. “We know that just these observances were widely regarded as characteristically and distinctively Jewish,”⁸⁸ both by Jews and non-Jews alike.

These identity markers identified Jewishness because they were seen by the Jews themselves as fundamental observances of the covenant. They functioned as badges of covenant membership. A member of the covenant people was, by definition, one who observed these practices in particular.⁸⁹

Given this axiomatic tie-up between these particular regulations of the law and covenant membership, it is no exaggeration to say that for the typical Jew of the first century AD, particularly the Palestinian Jew, *it would be virtually impossible to conceive of participation in God’s covenant, and so in God’s covenant righteousness, apart from these observances, these works of the law.*⁹⁰

These “identity markers” point up “the social function of the law.”⁹¹ (Although in earlier articles Dunn seemed to say that “works of the law” referred only to these identity markers, he has more recently denied that these ritual observances are meant to the exclusion of the rest of the Law. Rather, these “become fundamental in the sense of epitomizing or crystallizing the distinctiveness of the group which espouses them,”⁹² like believers’ baptism for Baptists, or speaking in tongues for Pentecostals.)

The dispute in Galatians was a dispute over these identity markers, the boundaries that define the covenant people,⁹³ a dispute that finally persuaded Paul that justification by faith and covenantal nomism were mutually exclusive.

“Works of law,” “works of the law” are nowhere understood, either by his Jewish interlocutors or by Paul himself, as works which *earn* God’s favour, as merit-amassing observances. Rather they are seen as *badges*: they are simply what membership of the

⁸⁶Ibid., 201.

⁸⁷Ibid., 191.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., 192.

⁹⁰Ibid., 193.

⁹¹Ibid., 216-219.

⁹²Cranfield, “Yet Once More,” 101.

⁹³From a survey of usage of Ἰουδαϊζεῖν (Gal. 2:14) outside the New Testament, Dunn concludes that the term refers to the range of possible degrees of assimilation to Jewish customs,” up to, and sometimes including, circumcision (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 149).

covenant people involves, what mark out the Jews as God's people; given by God for precisely that reason, they serve to demonstrate covenant status. They are the proper response to God's covenant grace, the minimal commitment for members of God's people. In other words, Paul has in view precisely what Sanders calls "covenantal nomism." And what he denies is that justification depends on "covenantal nomism," that God's grace extends only to those who wear the badge of the covenant.⁹⁴

While Sanders' work has called into question whether Jews would have seen covenantal nomism and justification by faith as antithetical, Dunn argues that the evidence of Galatians makes it clear that other Jewish Christians had not perceived any conflict between them.⁹⁵ Paul's distinctive contribution is that he recognized this antithesis.

Paul's point is precisely that these two *are* alternatives—justification by works of law and justification by faith in Jesus are antithetical opposites. To say that God's favourable action towards anyone is dependent in any degree on works of the law is to *contradict* the claim that God's favour depends on faith, faith in Jesus Christ.⁹⁶

This antithesis is not an antithesis between faith and works generally, nor even between faith and ritual. "What he is concerned to exclude is the *racial* not the *ritual* expression of faith; it is *nationalism* which he denies not *activism*."⁹⁷ Thus Paul excludes (Rom. 3:27ff.) "boasting in Israel's special relationship with God through election, the boasting in the law as the mark of God's favour, in circumcision as the badge of belonging to God," not "boasting in self-achievement or boasting at one's good deeds."⁹⁸

Dunn finds the genesis of this conviction in Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus. The heart of that experience was his call to preach to the Gentiles, which meant a redefinition of the covenant people to include the Gentiles.⁹⁹ Contrary to the Reformation tradition, Dunn finds "the leading edge of Paul's theological thinking was the conviction that God's purpose embraced Gentile as well as Jew, not the question of how a guilty man might find a gracious God."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴Ibid., 194.

⁹⁵Ibid., 99. "Given that in Jewish self-understanding covenantal nomism is *not* antithetical to faith, then at this point the only change which the new movement calls for is that the traditional Jewish faith be more precisely defined as faith in Jesus Messiah" (ibid., 196).

⁹⁶Ibid., 194.

⁹⁷Ibid., 198.

⁹⁸Ibid., 200-201, 238.

⁹⁹Ibid., 99.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 232.

According to Dunn, Paul's argument in Galatians 3:10ff. is that:

Christ in his death had put himself under the curse and outside the covenant blessing (cf. Deut. 11:26; 30:19-20)—that is put himself in the place of a Gentile. Yet God vindicated him! Therefore, God is *for* the Gentiles; and consequently the law could no longer serve as a boundary dividing Jew from Gentile. In short, Christ in his death had effectively abolished this disqualification, by himself being disqualified.¹⁰¹

The conclusion, then, is that God accepts Gentiles, as Gentiles, without adoption of the distinctively Jewish identity markers. While this is unsurprising, the implication of this line of reasoning is startling: it seems that Christ died, not to save us from our sins, but merely to clarify a misunderstanding about the intent of the Law and the boundaries of the covenant people.

The curse of the law here has to do primarily with that attitude which confines the covenant promise to Jews as Jews: it falls on those who live within the law in such a way as to exclude the Gentile as Gentile from the promise.... The curse which was removed by Christ's death therefore was the curse which had previously prevented that blessing from reaching the Gentiles, the curse of a wrong understanding of the law. It was a curse which fell primarily on the Jew (3.10; 4.5), but Gentiles were affected by it so long as that misunderstanding of the covenant and the law remained dominant. It was that curse which Jesus had brought deliverance from by his death.¹⁰²

Dunn's observation that "this may seem at first a surprisingly narrow understanding of the redemptive effect of Christ's death" will be seen as something of an understatement to those whose understanding is still shaped by the faith commitments of the Reformation.

In Dunn's view, it is Sanders' failure to perceive the true meaning of "the works of the law," that prevents Sanders from achieving a more satisfactory reading of Paul. For one thing, Sanders would have been "able to give a more adequate account of Paul's more positive attitude to the law" in other contexts. In addition,

... he would not have had to press so hard the distinction between "getting in" (not by doing the law) and "staying in" (by keeping the law), a distinction which seems very odd precisely at Galatians 2:16, where the issue at Antioch was the day-to-day conduct of

¹⁰¹Ibid., 230.

¹⁰²Ibid., 229.

those who had already believed (2.14), and Paul's concern regarding the Galatians is over their ending rather than their beginning.¹⁰³

As always, James Dunn writes with care and immense learning. However, his understanding of the "works of the law" as limited to (or at least focused on) the ceremonial "identity markers" has failed to persuade the majority of other scholars. More seriously, perhaps, his minimizing of the fundamental significance of the death of Christ as only serving to correct a Jewish misunderstanding of the law is profoundly troubling.

Robert H. Gundry

Following the publication of *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, Robert H. Gundry prepared a penetrating review of Sanders' methods, exegesis and conclusions.¹⁰⁴ Gundry expresses appreciation for Sanders' discussion of the primary Jewish material and secondary literature, his concern to account for the whole of these materials, his goal of comparing whole patterns of religion (although Gundry notes that Sanders has not in fact compared patterns of religion but only soteriologies, i.e., "getting in and staying in"),¹⁰⁵ and Sanders' effort to do full justice to evidence of the way in which Palestinian Judaism was actually lived.^{106,107}

The heart of Gundry's argument is that Sanders has failed to pay sufficient attention to evidence for a real disparity between theology and practice in Judaism. "If we exclude the NT and analyze the Jewish literature only *formally*," then we may, says Gundry, find substantial agreement between Paul and Palestinian Judaism.

But if we treat the literatures (Pauline and Palestinian Jewish) *materially*—i.e., if we weigh their emphases—quite a different impression may be gained, an impression of Palestinian Judaism as centered on works-righteousness and of Paul's theology as centered on grace.¹⁰⁸

Gundry, therefore, first questions Sanders' portrait of Palestinian Judaism.

Weighing the materials of Palestinian Judaism shows a preponderance of emphasis on obedience to the law as the way of staying in. The covenant, based on God's elective grace, may be

¹⁰³Ibid., 202.

¹⁰⁴Robert H. Gundry, "Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Biblica* 66 (1985): 1-38.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁷Gundry also notes, however, that Sanders has excluded from a number of potentially relevant materials from consideration: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, the Pastorals, and passages about Paul in Acts; the targums, Pseudo-Philo [and, for that matter, Josephus] among the Jewish materials.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 5-6.

presupposed; but it has not prominence (as Sanders admits). Rather, the law is searched, pulled, stretched, and applied. The rabbis start building a fence around it in order that people may not even come close to breaking it.¹⁰⁹

Gundry finds additional evidence for this preoccupation with the Law in Josephus's description of the Jewish sects (curiously omitted by Sanders) and in the attitude toward the Law at Qumran.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the writings of Paul himself must be considered as evidence.

Are we to prefer Paul's interpretation [of Palestinian Judaism] or Sanders'? Paul was closer. He had been a zealous proponent of Palestinian Judaism. His statements not only comment on others in Palestinian Judaism, but also reflect on the nature of his own participation in it (Gal 1, 13-14). To be sure, he converted to Christianity; but conversion does not necessarily blind a person to past realities; so we are not at liberty to say Paul misconstrued his own experience of Judaism.¹¹¹

Even the names applied to the people of God by Palestinian Judaism ("the pious," "the righteous") bring out this preoccupation.¹¹²

Paul's approach is quite different from this preoccupation with legal issues. "Though obedience is integral and important to Paul's theology, alongside Palestinian Jewish absorption in legal questions his comments on obedience look proportionally slight."¹¹³ Paul exhorts more than he expounds or interprets the Law, and he treats the moral aspects of the Old Testament law "as matters of universal obligation."¹¹⁴ When Paul opposes faith and Law, it is not only in regard to "getting in," but also (especially in Galatians) in regard to "staying in."¹¹⁵ When Paul insists on good works, he "makes good works evidential of having received grace through faith, not instrumental in keeping grace through good works."¹¹⁶

...whatever else Paul's phrase "from faith to faith" may mean in Rom 1, 17, it surely means that salvation continues as well as starts on the principle of faith alone, which, as Paul makes clear, excludes works.... for Paul good works are only (but not unimportantly) a sign of staying in, faith being the necessary and sufficient condition of staying in as well as getting in.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 6-7.

¹¹¹Ibid., 36.

¹¹²Ibid. Cf. in Paul "the believers," "the called," "the saints."

¹¹³Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 35.

It is in this light that Paul can speak of judgment according to works.¹¹⁸ Paul does not (*contra* Sanders) reject Judaism simply because it is not Christianity, but because “the Judaizers’ teaching [is] a *corruption* of grace and faith.”¹¹⁹

Faith and Law, then, are mutually exclusive. Although Gundry agrees with Sanders that there is a salvation-historical reason for this opposition, he argues that this cannot be the whole story. If God always intended salvation to be by faith in Christ for all people, why has faith only recently come (Gal. 3:23ff.)? How is it that not only Abraham was justified by faith prior to the Law, but David was justified by faith (Rom. 4:1ff. and Ps. 32) *during* the period of the Mosaic Law?¹²⁰

Rather, faith and Law are first of all opposed because of “the self-righteousness to which unbelievers who try to keep the law succumb.”¹²¹ In Philippians 3, Paul not only boasts of his status as a Jew, but also of his personal accomplishments within the Jewish system¹²² (one might also add Galatians 1:14 in which Paul speaks of his advancing in Judaism beyond his peers). Likewise in Romans 9:30-10:13, Gundry argues, “Paul sets faith against attempted performance of the law for righteousness, not only against unbelief.”¹²³

We conclude, then, that Paul is not criticizing the Jews’ unbelief in Christ *instead* of their attempt to perform the law, but that he is criticizing their unbelief *as caused by* an attempt to perform the law. That attempt leads to self-righteousness, but not because of any fault in the law or in obedience as such. Rather, boasting corrupts Spirit-less obedience to the law. Such obedience ends in man-made religion (if it does not already arise out of man-made religion).¹²⁴

The second reason that faith and the Law are opposed is human inability to keep the Law. It does not matter, Gundry believes, whether Paul’s own thought process moved from solution to plight or the reverse (or whether, as Gundry suspects, both occurred to him at the same time¹²⁵), Paul “includes Jews with Gentiles as lawbreakers in order to undermine legalistic dependence on the law and thereby support justification by faith.”¹²⁶ Paul believes that law-keeping must be perfect to be successful before God (Gal.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 34-35.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 12.

¹²⁰Ibid., 12-15.

¹²¹Ibid., 13.

¹²²Ibid., 13-14.

¹²³Ibid., 19.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid., 28.

¹²⁶Ibid., 21.

3:10) and in that light all indeed “fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).¹²⁷ The expression “works of the law” show that it is clearly performance, not merely acceptance of the Law, that is in view.¹²⁸ “Thus non-performance lies on the main track, not on a spur, of his argument; and his argument is not that eternal life *could* not come *even though* a person perfectly obeyed the law, but that eternal life *does* not come *because* a person obeys the law only imperfectly.”¹²⁹ It is for this reason that, despite his emphasis on obedience to the Law, Paul does not follow the rabbis in building a fence around the Law. “Paul’s failure to follow the rabbinic pattern reveals a world of difference between him and the rabbis: they show much more confidence in human nature than he does. He is far less sanguine.”¹³⁰

Finally, faith and obedience are opposed because the Law actually increases sin, as Sanders himself admits.¹³¹ But it is not only the bondage to sin that is increased, but the guilt of sin as well.¹³² Paul, therefore, uses both participatory language *and* judicial language to express the Gospel, and presses each kind of language into the service of the other.¹³³ And it is likewise for this reason that Paul (in distinction from Palestinian Judaism) says so little about repentance or any supposed atoning value of good works.

Paul so deeply felt the falling short of God’s glory through sin that he did not think trying to keep the law, *let alone repenting to receive forgiveness for failures to keep it*, adequate. The more the law abets sin’s lordship because of human weakness, the less adequate is repentance to take care of guilt; *for repentance implies a change of behavior*.¹³⁴

Gundry acknowledges that Sanders’ work prevents us from viewing Judaism as offering salvation by a surplus accounting of good works over sins. Nonetheless,

it is not too much to say that in Paul’s presentation of Palestinian Judaism, good works constitute a righteousness necessary at least to activate God’s grace for the forgiveness of sins. Paul will have none of this synergism. For him, salvation is wholly *by grace through faith*.¹³⁵

¹²⁷Ibid., 23.

¹²⁸Ibid., 24.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., 35.

¹³¹Ibid., 27. See the reference to Sanders supplied in Gundry’s note 74.

¹³²Ibid., 29.

¹³³Ibid., 30.

¹³⁴Ibid., 34.

¹³⁵Ibid., 19.

Stephen Westerholm

Stephen Westerholm has provided a substantial guide to the discussion about Paul and the Law in his book *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*.¹³⁶ In the first portion of his work, Westerholm summarizes the contributions of thirteen key parties to the discussion, from Luther through Wrede and Schweitzer to Sanders and other contemporary scholars. In the second part, he offers his own contribution to the discussion by addressing four key issues.

First, Westerholm tackles the meaning of “law,” concluding that the term refers to the Sinaitic legislation,¹³⁷ which consists of commandments to be done.¹³⁸ This “doing” is thus opposed to grace and to faith as the means by which one becomes an heir of Abraham (Gal. 3).¹³⁹ As Paul uses the term “law,” it does not refer to a perversion of this legislation into legalism, but to the Sinaitic legislation itself.¹⁴⁰ Finally, despite arguments that have been advanced to the contrary, “when Paul uses *nomos* to mean the sum of obligations imposed upon Israel at Mount Sinai, with the accompanying sanctions, such usage is a precise equivalent of what Deuteronomistic and later Old Testament literature meant by *torah*.”¹⁴¹

Next, Westerholm examines justification by faith. Westerholm concedes to Sanders and Dunn that it “is misleading to represent Judaism as a religion of ‘works-salvation.’”¹⁴² At the same time, “observance of the law may be regarded as Israel’s path to life; moreover, as a rule Judaism has not despaired of human capacity to render at least the token obedience which God requires of his people.”¹⁴³ At the same time, Paul’s testimony is that “human sin has rendered the righteousness of the law inoperable as a means to life.”¹⁴⁴ Because people cannot (or at least, do not) obey the Law satisfactorily, salvation must be by grace alone, i.e., through faith alone. Because salvation is only by grace, through faith in Christ alone, there is no place for human boasting. (It is not that the fundamental sin of the Jews is “boasting,” nor that the Law necessarily leads to the arrogance of misplaced human confidence.¹⁴⁵)

Westerholm must then turn to the question of the place of the Law in God’s “scheme.” The divine origin of the Law was not (in Galatians or elsewhere) in question for Paul.¹⁴⁶ Sin existed prior to the coming of the

¹³⁶Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 106-107.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 107-108.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 111-112.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 130-135.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 178.

Law. What the Law did, was: (1) “transform” sin into violations of explicit commands (subject to stated sanctions);¹⁴⁷ (2) increase the number and sinfulness of sins by introducing the additional temptation of violating an express command;¹⁴⁸ (3) bring an awareness of sin.¹⁴⁹ Although this seems difficult, Westerholm is unable to avoid the conclusion that (as Paul understands it) God must have intended this unhappy outcome from the beginning.¹⁵⁰ In addition, while “strictly speaking only Jews are subject to the (Mosaic) law...the plight of Gentiles as defined by Paul is at least analogous to that of the Jews ‘under the law,’ and Paul at times disregards the distinction.”¹⁵¹ Strictly speaking, the Law belonged to the old age.¹⁵²

Finally, Westerholm turns to the question of the abiding relevance of the Law for Christians. Sanders argued that the Law, while it was not the means of “getting in” to the covenant, is the means of “staying in” and should thus be fulfilled.¹⁵³ Westerholm takes the opposite view: Christians have been set free from the Law, period. Indeed, it had to be so: “since the Sinaitic covenant proved unable to convey life, Christians had to be delivered from both its demands and its sanctions to serve God under a new covenant.”¹⁵⁴ Neither Paul’s descriptions of the ethical behavior expected of Christians in terms that correspond to the moral Law, nor his statements that Christians “fulfill” the Law, provide a basis for any abiding validity of the Law. Instead, “the mark of Christian ethics is life in the Spirit, an ethic which Paul explicitly contrasts with obligation to the law.”¹⁵⁵

Thomas R. Schreiner

In a recent study titled, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law*,¹⁵⁶ Thomas Schreiner has presented a substantial argument for a more traditional understanding of Paul and the Law.

Schreiner begins by addressing the question of why it is that the Law cannot save. Starting with Galatians 3:10, Schreiner shows that the fundamental problem is human inability to keep the Law.¹⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 27:26 (contra Sanders) is introduced into Paul’s argument to make the case that the Law requires perfect obedience (“to do all the things written in the book of the law”).¹⁵⁸ Paul is not here blazing new ground. “That the

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 182-185.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 185-186.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 186-189.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 192.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 176.

¹⁵²Ibid., 195-196.

¹⁵³Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, chapter 3.

¹⁵⁴Westerholm, 199.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 45.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 46.

central problem was failure to keep the law is supported by the Old Testament¹⁵⁹ as numerous texts make clear.¹⁶⁰ Other texts in Galatians, Romans, and Philippians 3 are brought in to support Schreiner's thesis:

Paul says righteousness cannot be obtained by works of law or through the law. This is so because perfect obedience is required for right-standing with God, and such obedience is impossible. Old Testament sacrifices no longer atone; only Christ's death on the cross provides forgiveness.¹⁶¹

Sanders is correct that there has been a redemptive-historical transition, but he is wrong to limit the change to redemptive history: "the argument from redemptive history is wedded to the reality of human inability."¹⁶² The "works of the law" are not simply ritual identity markers (see Rom. 2:17-29),¹⁶³ nor does the phrase refer only to a legalistic attitude.¹⁶⁴

What then was the purpose of the Law? Schreiner is in substantial agreement here with Gundry and Westerholm: the Law provokes sin and increases the power of sin.¹⁶⁵ Paul is not, however, inconsistent in his statements about the Law, nor does he contradict the Old Testament.

The assertion that the law provokes sin refers to the function of the law in the unregenerate. "*When we were in the flesh* the passions of sin were aroused through the law in our members, and bore fruit for death" (Rom. 7:5). Paul does not argue that the only role of the law is to produce death. The argument is that when unregenerate people are confronted with the law, the law does not quench sin but inflames it.... The letter of the law kills when it functions apart from the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁶

By arguing in this way, Schreiner is preparing to make his case that Christians have an abiding obligation to keep the Law (the third use of the Law). In addition to those texts in which Paul presents the commandment to love as fulfilling the Law (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:8-10), texts such as Romans

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 47.

¹⁶⁰Schreiner notes in particular Deuteronomy 27-30; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 31:16-22; 32; Joshua 23:14-16; 2 Kings 17:7-23; Isaiah 42:24; Jeremiah 11; and Daniel 9 in addition to the "new covenant" texts in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:26-27. Additional support from other Old Testament texts, as well as from the Dead Sea Scrolls and other literature of the Second Temple Period may be found in Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989).

¹⁶¹Ibid., 71.

¹⁶²Ibid., 63.

¹⁶³Ibid., 55.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 58.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 73.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 86.

8:4; 2:26; and 1 Corinthians 7:19 support Schreiner's argument that Paul expects Christians to obey the Law.¹⁶⁷ By inductive examination of a considerable number of Pauline texts, Schreiner attempts to establish the traditional distinction between moral, civil, and ceremonial aspects of the Old Testament Law.

One cannot respond with a simple "yes" or "no" as to whether the law remains in force. Paul argues that the Mosaic covenant has ended in one sense. The promises to Abraham have begun to be fulfilled with the coming of Christ.... Sacrifices, circumcision, and food laws are not observed literally; they point to deeper realities that have found their fulfillment in Christ.... The moral absolutes of the Mosaic law, however, are also fulfilled in Christ. The fulfillment of these commands, however, does not necessitate a change in the content of the commands. What is new is that the gift of the Holy Spirit now provides the power to obey what the law enjoins.... Paul takes laws related to Israel as a theocracy and applies them spiritually to the life of the church.¹⁶⁸

While Sanders argued that Palestinian Judaism was not legalistic, Schreiner attempts to show that Paul was in fact arguing against legalism. In doing so, he attempts to reframe the debate put forward by Sanders.

When I say Paul opposed legalism it does not follow that there was no emphasis on God's grace in Judaism. Sanders rightly disputes the caricature that Judaism had no theology of grace and was consumed with earning merit. My thesis is that Paul detected legalism in Judaism because its soteriology was synergistic.¹⁶⁹

In addition, Schreiner argues that to vindicate Paul one need not demonstrate that every Jew was legalistic, but only that "some Jews lived in a legalistic manner, and that some of them became the opponents of Paul (and Jesus!)."¹⁷⁰ In fact, Schreiner finds this quite likely.

Legalism also may exist in practice, even if grace is trumpeted in theory. Religionists may easily proclaim the primacy of grace and actually live as if the determining factor was human effort. The history of the Christian church amply demonstrates that a theology of grace does not preclude legalism in practice.... My colleague, Robert H. Stein has remarked that, if Judaism were not legalistic at all, it would be the only religion in history that escaped the human propensity for works-righteousness.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 149-156.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 178.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 94.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 115.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

In fact, Schreiner believes that even the evidence Sanders has presented indicates the presence of legalism within Tannaitic Judaism.¹⁷² To say so is not anti-Semitic. Paul portrays not only the Jews, but all mankind, as under condemnation for sinful self-justification. In doing so, he condemns his own past, but Paul stands as one in the company of both the Old Testament prophets and Jesus Himself.¹⁷³ What Paul apparently encountered, then, and opposed, was not a legalism that denied grace, but a synergism that built on it.

Finally, did Paul teach justification by works? Schreiner believes that, in Romans 2, Paul is speaking of the obedience of believers, whose hearts have been circumcised by the Spirit of God (Rom. 2:29; cf. Deut. 30:6; 10:16; Jer. 4:4). As a result,

...even though Paul asserts that no one can attain salvation by good works, he also insists that no one can be saved without them, and that they are necessary to obtain an eschatological inheritance.... The works that are necessary for salvation, therefore, *do not constitute an earning of salvation but are evidence of a salvation already given.*¹⁷⁴

Key Questions

Judaism

Different readings of Palestinian Judaism arise from differences in method. While Sanders has built his portrait of Palestinian Judaism on the basis of perceived underlying assumptions, both Neusner and Gundry (from different perspectives) have argued that we must attend more to what the materials actually say and the concerns that they evidence. There are questions of dating and interpretation of the various materials. We must balance the expressions of theology with perceptions of how the religion was actually experienced by its adherents. Finally, there is a question of sources, particularly what role the Old Testament and even Paul himself should play in our understanding of Palestinian Judaism.

Although Sanders has not yet carried the day with his interpretation of Paul, his study of Judaism has been somewhat more persuasive. There is substantial agreement that Judaism can no longer be seen as offering salvation to those whose good deeds barely outnumber their sins. Sanders has successfully made the case that God's grace plays a significant role in the theology of Palestinian Judaism. As a result, the Judaism that lies behind the New Testament must have in it something like Sanders'

¹⁷²Ibid., 115-118.

¹⁷³Ibid., 120.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 203.

covenantal nomism. At the same time, there have been significant challenges to Sanders' work, particularly on the question of the degree to which obedience and even self-righteousness may have overshadowed the role of grace, if not in theory, at least in practice. Westerholm, Gundry, and Schreiner have made a convincing case that, despite Sanders' efforts to demonstrate the contrary, Palestinian Judaism inclined toward syncretism between grace and good works, which (combined with a more optimistic assessment of human ability) necessarily led in the end to legalistic self-righteousness.

Paul

There is considerably greater disagreement about the new perspective on Paul. We may note the following.

What is the center of Paul's theology? Traditional Protestant exegesis has seen this primarily in forensic or judicial terms. Sanders understands Paul primarily in participationist terms. Gundry finds both categories present in Paul's thought.

What is the genesis of Paul's theology? Many interpreters have believed texts like Romans 7 indicate that Paul was deeply troubled about his inability to keep the Law prior to his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus (rather like Luther before his breakthrough). More recently, Sanders, Dunn, and others have argued that Paul's encounter with the risen Christ and commission as apostle to the Gentiles is the true genesis of Paul's theology, and that Paul's statements about the Law and the human condition arise from reflection on this experience (reasoning from solution to plight).

What are the "works of the Law" by which one cannot be saved? Sanders puts the emphasis on "Law" and contends that Paul essentially argues that one cannot be saved by being Jewish.¹⁷⁵ Dunn sees the term as (primarily) limited to "identity markers" of circumcision, food laws, and the sabbath. Others (e.g., Westerholm, Gundry) argue that the "works of the Law" refers to the actual performance of the duties that the Law requires, particularly the moral demands of the Law.

What is the fundamental issue between Paul and Palestinian Judaism? Sanders has famously argued that what Paul finds wrong in Judaism is that it is not Christianity. Dunn sees the issue as a racial, as opposed to a universal, definition of the people of God. Gundry, Westerholm, and Schreiner argue that human inability to keep the Law of God and the self-righteousness that necessarily comes from the attempt to do so (apart from Christ and the Spirit) create a fundamental cleavage between works (or synergism) and grace alone through faith alone.

What was the purpose of the Law in God's design? Sanders finds Paul inconsistent on this, but concluded that Paul's main point is that God gave

¹⁷⁵Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 46.

the Law to put all under sin. Westerholm, Schreiner, and Gundry conclude that the coming of the Law served to increase awareness of sin, to increase the bondage to sin, and actually to provoke sin.

Are believers responsible to obey the Law (i.e., the third use of the Law)? Sanders argues that as in Judaism, believers are expected to obey the Law to “stay in” the covenant. Since the essence of the works of the Law for Dunn are the ritual “identity markers,” there is no question of believers keeping these things. Westerholm argues that when Paul says Christians are free from the Law, they are completely free of it, once and for all, and consequently are under no obligation to it. Gundry and Schreiner maintain that, for Paul, Christians have an abiding obligation to obey the Law (in its moral aspects).

Finally, is Paul inconsistent? Sanders argues that Paul is a “coherent” thinker, but that because he was in essence developing his theology as he went along, many of his statements about the Law are inconsistent. Dunn, Gundry, Westerholm, and Schreiner each in their own way attempt to make the case that Paul is not inconsistent.¹⁷⁶

What Is at Stake?

The new perspective on Paul has raised many important questions. Of these, three primary concerns in particular stand out.

The first is the proper interpretation of Judaism (or, as Neusner would have it, Judaisms) of the first century. It is imperative for New Testament scholars to treat the textual materials and the faith of Judaism with sensitivity and respect. The Christian faith is not well-served by careless and erroneous characterizations of Jewish faith and practice.

The second is the reliability of Paul. If Paul presents an unreliable portrait of Palestinian Judaism, or if his own statements are almost hopelessly inconsistent, he becomes a questionable guide in other matters in which we cannot so readily verify his claims. Certainly the greatest challenge on this point is felt by those who hold that Paul, as the rest of the New Testament, is the fully authoritative and reliable basis for their faith. Other believers, however, must surely be given pause if Paul is shown to be in error or confusion on such fundamental matters.

The final question is the greatest question of all: what is the nature of the plight of man and the corresponding solution provided by God? The questions raised by the new perspective on Paul go to the heart of the New Testament diagnosis of the human condition and to the meaning and power

¹⁷⁶Cf. the wise observation of Moises Silva: “I would hold to the axiom that formal contradictions (i.e., apparent discrepancies) by *any* writer should be interpreted, whenever possible, as materially consistent—especially if they involve a fundamental question, such as the law is for Paul.” (“Is the Law Against the Promises?” in *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*, William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey, eds. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1990], 155-156.)

of the salvation brought by Christ. What is our plight before God? Is it guilt? Slavery to sin? Both? And how is it that we “get in” to the salvation offered in the Gospel? And how do we “stay in?” By works? By grace plus works (i.e., by synergism)? Or by grace alone? These questions not only shaped the Reformation (from whose debates Sanders has sought so valiantly to free us), but the confrontation between Augustine and Pelagius, many of the awakenings and revivals in the history of the church, and, it would appear, the New Testament itself. We may be grateful that the new perspective on Paul has brought them back to our attention. Our souls should not rest until we are, scholars and believers alike, clear on their answer.

Beyond Covenantal Nomism: Paul, Judiasm, and Perfect Obedience

A. Andrew Das

I. A New Trajectory From Sanders

In his 1977 *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, E. P. Sanders identified a common pattern in the documents which he examined of Second Temple and tannaitic Judaism. The Jewish people observed the Mosaic Law in response to a gracious God who had elected Israel for a covenant relationship and who had mercifully provided for transgression of that Law. Sanders labeled this pattern “covenantal nomism.” He surmised that no one was expected to obey the Law perfectly in order to enjoy a right relationship with God. Paul exuded a confidence in Philippians 3:3-11 that he was an exemplary Law-observant individual. As a former Pharisee, he clearly suffered no anxiety or pangs of conscience.

So what then was Paul’s difficulty with the Law? In the wake of Sanders’ work, James D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright, and others have championed the “new perspective” on Paul and the Law and have rightly highlighted the intensely ethnic dimension to the apostle’s reasoning. The apostle to the Gentiles’ difficulty with the Law revolved around its differentiation of humanity into Jew and non-Jew. The Gentiles would have to convert to Judaism and be circumcised in order to enter into a relationship with God. Paul recognized that God had never intended the Gentiles to be excluded from the chosen people. The old walls of ethnic hostility and division had been torn down as all people, whether Jew or Gentile, were incorporated into a new humanity identified solely by faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The “new perspective” interpreters, on the basis of Sanders’ analysis of Judaism, have rejected the traditional premise that Paul’s problem with the Law was simply that no one could satisfactorily do it.

Scholars have not generally recognized that one can accept the bulk of Sanders’ analysis of Judaism without accepting the “new perspective” premise regarding perfect obedience. The “new perspective” trajectory from Sanders is not in itself a necessary one. Pauline interpreters have overlooked Sanders’ own struggle with the “demand” of the Law in its

Dr. A. Andrew Das is Assistant Professor in New Testament at Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL. Dr. Das received his M.Div. degree from Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN. A version of this paper was delivered at the 2001 Exegetical Symposium at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. This article is a Lutheran response to Dr. James A Meek’s article on “the new perspective on Paul.”

regulations and strictures on the one hand and the “grace” of the covenantal framework on the other. Quite often, his analysis appears deliberately skewed to emphasize God’s grace and mercy. Sanders minimized the Law’s strict demand as one side of a tension between the embedded nomism and the gracious covenantal framework. In at least three of the bodies of intertestamental literature Sanders analyzed, the Law actually enjoined perfect obedience of its commands. If it is true that the Jews often saw the Law as requiring strict, perfect obedience, then the key premise in the “new perspective on Paul” would be wrong. An incorrect premise would explain why scholars so frequently experience difficulty explaining why Paul’s issue with the Law revolved quite often around satisfying the Law’s demands. A few representative passages, then, will underscore that the apostle’s “plight” with the Law was not just a matter of ethnic exclusion but also its demand for rigorous obedience.

How could the apostle claim difficulty with doing the Law in the face of Judaism’s own gracious framework and provision for failure? Paul, however, has radically redefined that gracious framework of election, covenant, and atonement in favor of a reconstructed framework of grace centering on the person of Christ. The transition into a new framework of grace has affected the embedded nomism. Paul’s problem with the Law, then, was not just with its division of humanity and Jewish ethnic pride and presumption. The time is ripe for a “newer perspective” on Paul and the Law.

II. Sanders’ Tension in Intertestamental Literature Sharpened

Sanders analyzed *Jubilees* and the Qumran literature in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. He reviewed Philo in an article which was published prior to the book. These intertestamental works are more directly relevant to the interpretation of Paul than the tannaitic literature which originated after the catastrophe of the Temple’s destruction in 70 A.D. At that point in time a radical reorganization of the Jewish leadership and Jewish thought took place. *Jubilees*, the Qumran literature, and Philo all showcase the gracious dimension of Sanders’ covenantal nomism. Yet in spite of an overarching gracious orientation, all three bodies of literature also affirm that God’s holy Law was to be obeyed rigorously and perfectly.

A. Jubilees

According to *Jubilees*, all Israel was God’s elect people (1:17-18, 25, 28; 16:17-18; 19:18; 22:11-12). Israel enjoyed a special covenantal relationship with God that was bequeathed from the patriarchs (6:17-19). The author praised God’s gracious provision of repentance (1:22-23; 23:26; 41:23-27) and the sacrificial system (6:14; 50:10-11; 34:18-19) for failure to obey the Law. Since God’s elect could be “righteous” even when not perfectly obedient,

it would be easy to conclude that the Law did not demand strict obedience. From the point of view of the author of *Jubilees*, however, the Mosaic Law *did* enjoin perfect obedience. The people's sins were never ignored but always addressed through a process of atonement and repentance. Perfection of conduct nevertheless remained the ideal. "All of his commands and his ordinances and all of his law" are to be carefully observed "without turning aside to the right or left" (23:16). In 5:19: "[God] did not show partiality, except Noah alone...because his heart was righteous in all of his ways just as it was commanded concerning him. And he did not transgress anything which was ordained for him." Noah, while the recipient of God's mercy (10:3), did "just as it was commanded" and was "righteous in all of his ways." "He did not transgress." Jacob was also "a perfect man" (27:17). Leah "was perfect and upright in all her ways," and Joseph "walked uprightly" (36:23; 40:8). While God granted mercy to the elect, the requirement of right conduct "in all things" (21:23) is still upheld and admonished through these exemplary models. While Israel enjoyed an elect status, the Law must still be obeyed (1:23-24; 20:7). God told Abram in 15:3 to "be pleasing before me and be perfect." Abraham was then praised in 23:10 since he "was *perfect in all of his actions* with the Lord and was pleasing through righteousness all of the days of his life." The author looked forward to the day when Israel would be *perfectly* obedient (1:22-24; 5:12; 50:5). Sanders conceded on the basis of these passages: "Perfect obedience is specified...."¹ He added: "As we have now come to expect, the emphasis on God's mercy is coupled with a strict demand to be obedient."² While God offered provision for sin and failure, the ideal remained strict and perfect obedience of the Law.

Sanders preferred to resolve the logical tension between God's mercy toward the elect and the rigorous demands of the Law in favor of mercy since *Jubilees* could speak of sinners as those who were righteous by means of God's own provision for sin.³ Sanders: "Righteousness as perfect or nearly perfect obedience is not, however, the 'soteriology' of the author."⁴ While it is true that perfect or nearly perfect righteousness was not the soteriology of the author, the Law itself demanded just such an obedience. The problem with Sanders' position is that he often downgraded the strict demand of the Law as a reaction to those who had described Judaism as a legalistic religion. As much as the author of *Jubilees* identified the Law as an ethnic identity/boundary marker and as much as he spoke of God's mercy toward an elect and often sinful people (unlike the strict judgment of the Gentiles—5:12-18; 23:31), the author maintained that God intended the Law to be obeyed *without transgression!*

¹E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 381.

²Ibid., 383.

³Ibid., 380-383.

⁴Ibid., 382. Sanders (379) argues that in fact *Jubilees* is not so strict since it affirms repentance and God's mercy. This confuses the legal demand itself and the larger framework of Judaism inclusive of God's election and mercy.

B. The Qumran Literature

The Qumran community admonished its members to be perfect in their obedience of the Law.⁵ The demand of the Law was strict and absolute (1QS 1:13-17; 5:1, 8, 20-22; CD 2:15; 15:12-14; 16:6b-8; 20:2, 5, 7). According to 1QS 3:9-11, the individual must “steady his steps in order to walk with perfection on all the paths of God, conforming to all he has decreed concerning the regular times of his commands and not turn aside, either left or right, nor infringe even one of his words.” Sanders rightly stressed the availability of a system of atonement for sin at Qumran (particularly right conduct). The men of the Qumran community upheld repentance as a means of rectifying the situation caused by sin before God. However, far from mitigating the strict requirement of the Qumran *halakah* to be perfect in deed, the system of atonement confirmed it. Each sin had to be atoned for in some way so that the individual could be restored to “perfect righteousness.” Any sin rendered a transgressor impure and out of favor before God as well as before the community until that sin had been properly rectified. For example, CD 10:2-3 says: “No-one who has consciously transgressed anything of a precept is to be believed as a witness against his fellow, until he has been purified to return.”

Even with these provisions for sin, Qumran members still expressed an intense self-awareness of sin in their hymnic material.⁶ Far from finding perfect obedience a matter of due course, they struggled individually with living in a fully righteous manner before God. The author of 1QH 12 (=4):29-33 lamented falling short of the “perfect path” required by God. Community members looked forward to the eschaton when they would be “cleansed” of this tendency toward sin (1QS 3:21-23; 4:18-22; 11:14-15; 1QH 14 [=6]:8-10; 7 [=15]:15-17).⁷ Sanders underscored that a status of “perfect righteousness” flowed out of God’s gracious relations with the elect community, e.g., 1QH 12 (=4):37; 15 (=7):30; 19 (=11):29-32.⁸ The requirement for legal perfection was always set within a context of gratuity. The reward was always the result of God’s *mercy* while punishment was always *deserved*.⁹ Obedience was always the elect people’s response to God’s grace.¹⁰ While God was indeed merciful, 1QS 4:6-8 is unmistakably clear, contra Sanders, that God would reward those who were obedient in their works: “And the visitation of those who walk in it [the counsels of the spirit] will be for healing, plentiful peace in a long life, fruitful offspring with all everlasting blessings,

⁵For example, 1QH 9 (=1):36: perfection of way.

⁶Ibid., 273-284.

⁷Ibid., 279-280, 283-284, 291.

⁸Sanders himself points out the dilemma between the requirement of perfect obedience and the failure to live up to the standard (288-290). He attempts to resolve the dilemma by arguing that the failure to live up to God’s standard refers to man’s condition *before God*. Perfection must come by means of God’s grace and pardon.

⁹Ibid., 293.

¹⁰Ibid., 295-296.

eternal enjoyment with endless life, and a crown of glory with majestic raiment in eternal light.” While God was a God of compassion and mercy, he still “pays man his wages” (1QS 10:17-18). 4QPs^f 8:4-5 says: “[Man is examined] according to his path each one is rewar[ded according to his deeds].” 1QM 11:14: “...you shall carry out justice by your truthful judgment on every son of man.” 1QpHab 8:1-3 says: “Its interpretation concerns all observing the Law in the House of Judah, whom God will free from punishment on account of their deeds and of their loyalty to the Teacher of Righteousness.” Alongside those texts which speak of God’s mercy and forgiveness of sin (even at the judgment), there are passages which adhere to a strict judgment according to the standard of works.¹¹ Sanders resolved the tension by subordinating the passages which speak of all people being judged according to their works to those passages where God judged the wicked according to works while judging the elect with mercy and grace, e.g., 1QH 13 (=5):6; 14 (=6):9; 17 (=9):34.¹² While many Qumran passages affirm a judgment according to mercy for the elect, such passages do not exhaust all the evidence. The covenanters could also affirm that God would judge all people, even those of the community, on the basis of what they had earned by their works. The two motifs must be allowed to remain in tension.¹³

¹¹Ibid., 291-294, while even citing these passages.

¹²Ibid., 294. Note that these references fall *outside* the *halakah* in the context of the hymnic material.

¹³As Sanders himself admits with respect to the strict demand of the *halakah*: “...from the point of view of the *halakah*, one is required to walk perfectly. From the point of view of the individual in prayer or devotional moments, he is unable to walk perfectly and must be given the perfection of way by God’s grace” (288). Unfortunately, Sanders is not consistent on this point. Elsewhere he writes:

The various provisions for the punishment of transgression show with striking clarity the way in which the religion functioned. Commandments were given which a man was to obey. Perfect obedience was the aim, and, within the tightly ordered community structure, was not considered a totally impossible goal. Infractions were punished, and the acceptance of the punishment, together with the perseverance in obedience, led to full restoration of fellowship (286).

On the one hand, perfect obedience was *not* “totally impossible,” and, on the other hand, the individual is “unable to walk perfectly.” Sanders tries to resolve the contradiction by distinguishing between behavior monitored *within the community* where perfect obedience is possible as opposed to strict obedience before God where such perfection is not possible. The problem, though, is that the Qumran material itself does not make such a neat distinction. The two motifs are simply not so easily harmonized. Perfect obedience was required by the *halakah*, and such obedience entailed *all* the Law and not just what was monitored. Yet the devotional material shows the struggles individuals had with that requirement and the need to rely upon God’s grace and mercy available to members of the community; see 1QH 12 (=4):37; 15 (=7):18-19; 1QS 10: 11; 11:2-3, 12-15; Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11* (JSNTSup, 57; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 25. New Testament scholars have been led by Sanders’ discussion to assert that perfect obedience of the Law is, in fact, possible. While, according to the Qumran materials, perfect obedience is required by the *halakah*, it is not necessarily so possible.

C. Philo

In *Praemiis* 79-83 (especially 79 and 82, citing Deut. 30:10) Philo said that it was not enough to hear or profess the precepts of God's Law; one must actually do them. Individuals would be weighed in the scales (e.g., *Congr.* 164; *Quis Her.* 46). In *Quod Deus* 162 one must not deviate to the right or to the left from the path God has prepared for humanity in the Law (*Abr.* 269; *Post.* 101-102; cf *Leg. All.* 3:165; the "middle road" of *Mig.* 146). Philo praised Abraham (*Abr.* 192) since "he had not neglected any of God's commands." One's "whole life" should be one of "happy obedience to law" (*Abr.* 5-6).¹⁴

At the same time, God "ever prefers forgiveness to punishment" (*Praem.* 166). God granted to the Jews several means by which they could rectify the situation created by sin and violation of God's Law. Philo affirmed atoning sacrifice (*Spec. Leg.* 1:235-241; 1:188-190; 1:235-239). Only God could be sinless (*Fug.* 157; *Virt.* 177; *Leg. All.* 3:106.211).¹⁵ The possibility of repentance flowed out of God's recognition of the human tendency to sin (*Fug.* 99, 105).¹⁶ It was as if one were ill, with repentance being the only hope for a return to health (*Fug.* 160; *Abr.* 26; *Spec. Leg.* 1:236-253). Sincere repentance blotted out the effects of sin as if the sin had never occurred (*Abr.* 19; *Spec. Leg.* 1:187-188; *Quaest. in Gn.* 1:84; *Mut.* 124; *Som.* 1:91).¹⁷ God bestowed rewards and blessings "in honor of their victory" (*Virt.* 175). Those who repented, though, still bore the scars of their misdeeds (*Spec. Leg.* 1:103).

While Philo affirmed Israel's special status as recipients of God's mercy and affirmed repentance as a means to remedy the situation caused by sin, he nevertheless commended those whose conduct was perfect. Those who remained sinless and unblemished were superior to those who must repent and so be healed of their illness (*Abr.* 26; *Virt.* 176). Abraham achieved perfect obedience of the Law (*Mig.* 127-130; *Abr.* 275-276; *Quis Her.* 6-9).¹⁸

¹⁴I take the law of nature to be coordinate with the revealed, Mosaic Law. See especially *Mos.* 2:52, Naomi Cohen, "The Jewish Dimension of Philo's Judaism," *JJS* 38 (1987): 169-170, and John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 172.

¹⁵David Winston, "Philo's Doctrine of Repentance," *The School of Moses: Studies in Philo and Hellenistic Religion*, ed. John Peter Kenney (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 32; Jon Nelson Bailey, "Metanoia in the Writings of Philo Judaeus," *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 140-141.

¹⁶Winston, "Philo's Doctrine of Repentance," 32. Note how contrary this assumption is to the prevailing trend in Pauline scholarship to think that perfect obedience of the Law is attainable.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 34; Bailey, "Metanoia," 140. On the necessity of sincerity, see *Fug.* 160.

¹⁸The passage from "Who is the Heir?" is representative both as an admonition to strive toward perfect obedience as well as an expression of Abraham's attainment of that goal:

When, then, is it that the servant speaks frankly to his master? Surely it is when his heart tells him that he has not wronged his owner, but that his words

Noah was “perfect” in virtue (*Quod Deus* 117, 122, 140; *Abr.* 34, 47). Interestingly, Philo immediately qualified the attribute of perfection for Noah (*Abr.* 36-39). Noah only attained a perfection relative to his generation; he was “not good absolutely” (οὐ καθάπαξ). Philo then compared Noah’s “perfection” with other sages who possessed an “unchallenged” and “unperverted” virtue. Noah therefore won the “second prize.” Although Noah was to be praised for his achievement, Philo clearly commended the “first prize” of an unqualified virtue to his readers. Moses, for instance, fell into that highest category. The Lawgiver exemplified the attainment of the highest place of all (*Mos.* 1:162; 2:1, 8-11; *Leg. All.* 3:134, 140; *Ebr.* 94; *Sac.* 8). Philo commended Moses as a model of the perfection toward which his readers were to strive (*Mos.* 1:158-159). Obviously perfect obedience and sinlessness remained the ideal for Philo.

Philo maintained that the Jews, as an elect people, were to strive to live as virtuously and as perfectly as possible, as difficult as this might be. Even Enoch and Enosh were not able to live perfectly and without sin. On the other hand, God, a merciful God, recognized humanity’s difficulty with sin and offered abundant grace and mercy to the repentant. While the balance certainly weighed heavily toward mercy and forgiveness of sin in Philo, the Law still enjoined a perfect obedience toward which all people should strive.¹⁹

D. Clarifying a Crucial Distinction

While upholding the Law as a marker of Jewish ethnic identity, Jubilees commended Noah, Abraham and others for their perfect obedience of the Law. Philo too spoke of certain “perfect” individuals. Similarly, the language of “perfect righteousness” at Qumran had a prescriptive force. Perfection was the standard by which the community members were to try to live. Whether by perfect exemplary models or by claiming that God demanded strict obedience, these documents evince a struggle with the Law’s strict demand. In the words of Eleazar to his torturer, Antiochus, in 4 Maccabees

and deeds are all [πάντα] for that owner’s benefit. And so when else should the slave of God open his mouth freely to Him Who is the ruler and master both of himself and of the All, *save when he is pure from sin* and the judgements of his conscious are loyal to his master.... The loyalty of Abraham’s service and ministry is shewn by the concluding words of the oracle addressed to Abraham’s son, “I will give to thee and thy seed all this land, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in thy seed, because Abraham thy father hearkened to My voice and kept My injunctions, My commands, My ordinances and My statutes” (Gen. 26: 3-5). It is the highest praise which can be given to a servant that *he neglects none* [μηδενός] *of his master’s commands...* [emphasis mine].

¹⁹For a more detailed discussion of Philo, *Jubilees*, and the Qumran material, see chapter 1 of A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001). This chapter also treats the *tannaim* at length. Chapter 2 then extends the analysis into the apocalyptic literature of the first century.

5:20-21: "The transgression of the Law, be it in small things or in great, is equally heinous; for in either case equally the Law is despised."²⁰

Certainly the virtually ubiquitous broader perspective was that the Jews were a special people who had been favored by God and who had been granted a system to remedy the situation caused by transgression of God's Law. Nevertheless, Sanders minimized the fact that perfect conduct always remained the ideal. A distinction must be made between the Law considered inclusive of its gracious framework where one may fall short of perfect obedience, and the Law considered from the vantage point of its legislation where the demand is absolute. The distinction is critical. One of the shortcomings of Sanders' analysis is that he does not consistently distinguish between the gracious system as a whole and the embedded legal demand. He wrote in his discussion of the *tannaim* at one point: "Human perfection was not considered realistically achievable by the Rabbis nor was it required."²¹ The rabbis "consistently passed up opportunities to require legal perfection."²² Sanders was wrong to claim that the *halakah* never required perfect obedience. As he rightly urged elsewhere: "In their [the Rabbis'] view, God had given all the commandments, and they were all to be obeyed alike. It would be presumptuous of man to determine that some should be neglected."²³ In fact, "...the biblical commandments, while not necessarily more difficult to fulfill than the laws of some other societies, are nevertheless difficult or even impossible fully to obey."²⁴ "Although the term 'righteous' is primarily applied to those who obey the Torah, the Rabbis knew full well that even the righteous did not obey God's law perfectly."²⁵ The apparent contradiction in Sanders' analysis was resolved by keeping the strict demand of the Law conceptually distinct from the larger framework of God's mercy and election of Israel. The rabbis could therefore speak of how rare it was for anyone to obey God's Law perfectly, that is, the Law's requirements considered in themselves. Yet perfect righteousness and blamelessness were quite achievable when inclusive of God's forgiveness, sacrifice, and atonement. This was not the same, though, as actually accomplishing all that the Law required. While affirming with Sanders the importance of God's election and merciful regard toward the Jewish people, the Jews did maintain that the Law enjoins perfect obedience—contrary to the claims of "new perspective" Pauline scholars. These interpreters may well have erred by dismissing in advance the likelihood that Paul also considered perfect obedience of the Law's strictures difficult, if not impossible.

²⁰The rabbis did at times speak of the necessity of perfect obedience, e.g., M. Abot 3:16; Charles L. Quarles, "The Soteriology of R. Akiba and E. P. Sanders' Paul and Palestinian Judaism", *NTS* 42 (1996): 190.

²¹Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 137.

²²*Ibid.*, 138.

²³*Ibid.*, 112.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 115.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 203.

III. Paul and Perfect Obedience

All the gains of the “new perspective” in incorporating the ethnic dimension of Paul’s argument are not necessarily incompatible with the possibility that the apostle also understood the Law to require strict obedience and was not optimistic about humanity’s ability to meet its standards.²⁶ By adopting a privileged Jewish ethnic identity through observance of circumcision, Sabbath, and the food laws, one would simply be obliging oneself to follow Moses’ Law in its entirety. Since Paul’s Jewish contemporaries maintained that God’s Law should be rigorously obeyed by its recipients, the possibility cannot be rejected in advance that strict obedience of the Law played a role in Paul’s thinking as well. In passages such as Galatians 3:10, Romans 2, and Romans 7, the problem with the Law appears to be the difficult or impossible demand it places upon its adherents. These passages have proven problematic for “new perspective” interpreters but are understandable in light of Jewish struggles with the Law’s strict demand.

A. Perfect Obedience: Galatians 3:10

Galatians 3:10 forms an enthymeme, a logical argument where one of the premises is missing because the premise should have been obvious to the original readers.²⁷ The stated premise is: “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in this book of the law.” Paul concludes: “All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.” The omitted premise necessary to complete the syllogism is: “All who rely on the works of the law do not observe and obey all the things written in this book of the law.” People simply are not capable of doing all that the Law requires and thus fall under its curse.

“New perspective” interpreters have offered several explanations of this problematic passage’s apparent reference to perfect obedience. N. T. Wright and James M. Scott thought that Galatians 3:10 addressed Israel’s corporate fate and said nothing about individual disobedience of the Law.²⁸

²⁶For a recent study exploring the ethnic dimension to Paul’s thinking, see Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

²⁷Aristotle writes: “For if any of these [premises of an enthymeme] is well known, there is no need to mention it, for the hearer can add it himself” (*Rhetoric* 1.2.13 [13 57a], translation from the Loeb Classical Library). In *Rhetoric* 2.22.3 (1395b), “nor should [an enthymeme] include all the steps of the argument...it is simply a waste of words, because it states much that is obvious.” See also *Rhetoric* 3.18.2, 4 (1419a); Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.8,1-4; Quintilian, 5, 14, 24; 5, 10, 3; *The “Progymnasmata” of Theon*, III, 104-109 (trans. James R. Butts; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1986), 198-201.

²⁸N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 147; James M. Scott, “For as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are Under a Curse’ (Galatians 3. 10),” *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (JSNTSup, 83; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 214 n. 89.

In response, however, the fate of the nation as a corporate whole cannot be abstracted from the conduct of its individual members. The sin of individual Israelites accrued to Israel as a whole. In Galatians 3:10 Paul cited Deuteronomy 27, a chapter which does not address the corporate fate of Israel only. Deuteronomy 27:26 is the twelfth in a series of curses (27:15-26). Two of the twelve curses are explicitly identified as sins committed “in secret” (vv. 15, 24).²⁹ Four more curses involve sexual sins that would also be committed privately (vv. 20-24). Likewise, no one would move a boundary marker in public (v. 17). A blind man would never be able to testify that he had been led astray (v. 18).³⁰ Bellefontaine explained that when the Levites pronounced the curse and the community responded in affirmation during the ceremony envisioned in Deuteronomy 27, the community was guaranteeing that sins committed by individuals in secret would not bring about God’s vengeance on the community as a whole (e.g., Achan in Joshua 7). God would curse the guilty criminal with the community no longer liable.³¹ Deuteronomy 27:26 is situated in the context of a section concerned with the retributive divine curse that falls upon individual law-breakers for secret sins. Likewise Deuteronomy 29-30 shifts easily back and forth between individual and corporate accountability. While Wright and Scott have corrected the tendency to ignore the corporate dimension, the fate of corporate Israel must not be abstracted from the deeds of its individual members. The exile of Israel testified to the conduct of individual Israelites under the Law. Paul’s own discussion alternates between corporate responsibility and individual accountability later on in Galatians 5:25-6:10.

James D. G. Dunn offered yet another alternative to the reconstructed syllogism offered above. Like Wright and Scott, Dunn did not think that Paul was claiming in Galatians 3:10 that the Mosaic Law must be perfectly obeyed. On the contrary, Paul uses the technical term “works of the Law” which, according to Dunn, referred to those works required by the Law which distinguish the Jews from Gentiles. These works included circumcision, Sabbath observance, and the food laws.³² Under pressure from his critics, Dunn modified his position: the phrase “works of the Law” referred to all that the Law requires, but the primary focus of the expression was still on those laws that acted as national and ethnic boundary markers.³³

²⁹Elizabeth Bellefontaine, “The Curses of Deuteronomy 27: Their Relationship to the Prohibitives,” *A Song of Power and the Power of Song*, ed. Duane L. Christensen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 260.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 262.

³¹*Ibid.*, 267; see also Albrecht Alt, “The Origins of Israelite Law,” *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 115.

³²James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, (WBC 38A; Dallas 1988), lxxi-lxxii, 186-187, 190-194.

³³See, for examples Dunn’s article, “Paul and Justification by Faith,” in *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 96-97.

Either way, Paul had in mind, from Dunn's standpoint, particularly those aspects of the Law that served as signs of Jewish ethnic identity. Galatians 3:10 could be paraphrased: "those who rely on their Jewish ethnic identity are under a curse." In Dunn's paradigm Galatians 3:10 pronounced guilty those relying on their ethnic heritage since they denied uncircumcised Gentiles a place in God's plan in Christ. By insisting on the "works of the Law," such individuals were guilty of nationalistically excluding the Gentiles from God's people.³⁴

Pauline scholarship is indebted to Dunn for underscoring how Paul considers the Law to be the unique possession of the Jews (e.g., Rom. 2:12). Romans 3:28-29 certainly associates "works of the Law" with Jewish ethnic identity. Acceptance of Dunn's alternative that the Law was the unique and special possession of the Jewish people does not rule out that this Law must also be obeyed strictly and in its entirety. Dunn pointed to Galatians 2:16 as an instance of "works of the Law" referring to Jewish ethnic identity, but Paul continues in Galatians 2:21: "for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing." Paul's statement in 2:21 parallels his claim a few verses earlier that no one is justified by the "works of the Law." Likewise verse 19: "For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God." Paul's elaboration in the ensuing verses seems to have more to do with the Law as a whole than with a focus on only a part of the Law.³⁵ Paul's point is that the Law as such cannot justify. A better approach would begin not with the boundary marking features of the Law but with the Law in its entirety: obedience to the Law requires obedience of all that it commands. This obedience would certainly include those aspects of the Law which distinguish the Jews from the Gentiles. An acceptance of what the Law requires of new converts in circumcision or food laws would signal a willingness to obey the whole Law. Thus Paul could move very naturally from a review of his critique of Peter at Antioch to a discussion of the Law itself. Paul saw no point in forcing the Gentiles to live like Jews under the Law since the Law did not offer a right relationship with God (vv. 15-16).

Paul claims in Galatians 3:10 that everyone who relies on "the works of the Law" is under a curse. Another clue that Paul's phrase "works of the Law" cannot be limited just to those aspects of the Law that distinguish the Jews as an ethnic people from the Gentiles comes from Paul's citation of Deuteronomy 27:26, a verse situated in a portion of Deuteronomy (chaps.

³⁴James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 172; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 231.

³⁵Against Dunn's view that the Jews misunderstood the Law in overly ethnic terms, Räisänen objects on the basis of Galatians 3: "And it is altogether impossible to read chapter 3 as an attack on just a particular attitude to the law. Why should the death of Christ have been necessary to liberate men from an attitude of theirs?" ("Galatians 2:16 and Paul's Break with Judaism," in *Jesus, Paul and Torah: Collected Essays*, trans. David E. Orton [JSNTSup, 43; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992], 122).

27-30) that condemns all sorts of legal violations—illicit sexual relations, misleading the blind, changing borders, following other gods, even withholding justice from widows and orphans. The summary verses in Deuteronomy 27:26; 28:1, 15, 58, 61; 30:10 consistently emphasize obedience of all that God commands in the Law. The language is comprehensive; the Law is an organic whole that must all be obeyed. Deuteronomy's focus is never limited just to those laws that distinguish Israel from other nations. Even in the verses that immediately precede Deuteronomy 27:26, the commands often involve sins committed individually in secret (27:15-26). In fact, the prohibitions of Deuteronomy 27 usually correspond with similar prohibitions elsewhere.³⁶ Deuteronomy 27:15-26 has simply extended the threatened curses to situations where the sin takes place in private. Since Deuteronomy 27:26 concludes a section hardly concerned with prohibitions that distinguish Israel as an ethnic people, it is difficult to see why Paul's citation of Deuteronomy 27:26 in connection with "works of the Law" in Galatians 3:10 should be limited only to those features of the Law that function as boundary markers for the people of Israel.

The Qumran manuscript 4QMMT offers a rare independent witness in Hebrew to Paul's phrase "works of the Law" (מעשי חִוּדָה). The Qumran phrase refers to all that the Law requires. Whenever an individual chose to depart from the community's understanding of God's Law on a particular point, that member had apostasized. From the community's perspective, to neglect any aspect of the Law would bring about the curses of Deuteronomy 27-30 and the need for separation (as Dunn himself showed). In other words, the "works of the Law" refers primarily to what the Law requires in general and in its entirety. Only secondarily does it focus on particular boundary-defining strictures. Dunn reversed the rightful emphases. Because the focus is primarily upon the Law as a whole, the particular laws referred to by the phrase can vary from one conflict situation to another. By esteeming and obeying those laws the community showed itself devoted to the entirety of God's counsel.³⁷

³⁶For instance, compare verse 16 with Exodus 20:12; 21:17; Leviticus 19:3 and 20:9. Compare verse 17 with Deuteronomy 19:14; verse 18 with Leviticus 19:14; and verse 19 with Exodus 22:20-23; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 1:17; 10:18-19; 24:17-18. See Bellefontaine's discussion for the remaining curses ("The Curses of Deuteronomy 27," 256-268), as well as Gerhard Wallis, "Der Vollbürgereid in Deuteronomium 27, 15-26," *HUCA* 45 (1974): 50-51.

³⁷4QMMT's heading indicates that it addresses "some of the works of the Law." "Works of the Law" must therefore go beyond those aspects in dispute within the document to include the entirety of the Law; Ben Witherington, III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 176-177. Joseph A. Fitzmyer has likewise noted the "broad outlook" of this document. Nothing suggests the restriction of the phrase to only certain boundary-marking aspects of the Law ("Paul's Jewish Background and the Deeds of the Law," in *According to Paul: Studies in the Theology of the Apostle* [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1993], 23). Fitzmyer repeatedly emphasizes throughout his article that "works of the Law" at Qumran must be taken as those works that the Law requires in a general sense (19-24).

The Community Rule at Qumran confirms this interpretation of 4QMMT. The Community Rule called members to “return to the law of Moses according to all that he commanded” (1QS 5:8). In 1QS 5:21 individuals were examined upon entry into the community with respect to their “works of the law” whether they had been careful “to walk according to all these precepts” (see also 1QS 6:18). The precepts included the “avoidance of anger, impatience, hatred, insulting elders, blasphemy, malice, foolish talk, and nakedness” (1QS 5:25-26; 6:24-7:18). Circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and the food laws were therefore only the starting point. The Qumran parallels further suggest that Paul had more than just the ethnic or boundary-marking components of the Law in mind in Galatians 3:10, which is best taken as a reference to the necessity of perfectly obeying the Law.³⁸

B. The Challenge of Law Observance: Romans 2 and 7

Recent scholarship has become polarized on whether Paul’s problem with the Law was the inability of people to obey its demands or its exclusion of the Gentiles—whether by a misunderstanding or ethnic pride. “New perspective” and more traditional interpreters do not always recognize that it is a both/and relationship. The Law functions both to distinguish the Jewish people and to place a burden of obedience upon them. The apostle sees absolutely nothing wrong in a Jewish ethnic identity in Romans 2 provided one actually does all that the Law requires. It is not enough just to obey those aspects of the Law that distinguish a person as Jewish. Paul’s rhetorical charges against the Jews in Romans 2:17-29 assume the difficulty even for Jews of doing all that the Law required. He makes that assumption explicit in Romans 7.³⁹

Romans 7 laments human inability to do what the Mosaic Law requires of its adherents. While the Law is indeed “spiritual” (7:14) and “good” (7:16; see also vv. 22 and 25), the power of sin turns out to be far stronger than the desire to do what the Law commands.⁴⁰ People under the Law find themselves in the “wretched” position of being unable to do good; they do what they hate instead (7:15) because of the tyranny and power of sin (7:14, 17, 20, 24). Three times Paul cycles through an admission that the “I” is unable to accomplish what the Law demands (7:15-16, 18-20, 21-23). Paul finds one commandment epitomizing the futile struggle to obey the Law: “Do not covet.” Of all the commandments the prohibition against coveting exposes the problem of a sinful heart. The battle against sin

³⁸For a critique of other attempts to explain this text in a “new perspective” paradigm (including Sanders’ own approach), see chapter 6 of Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

³⁹For a detailed exposition of Romans 1 and 2, see chapter 7 of Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

⁴⁰On sin as an enslaving power, see 3:9; 5:14, 17, 32; 6:18; Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967), 16.

penetrates to the inner core of human existence, that is, to secret, sinful desires and motives that stand in the way of obedience of God's holy Law.⁴¹

Michael Winger has drawn attention to Paul's use in Romans 7 of ἐντολή.⁴² Paul may have had in mind the command οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις ("Do not covet") in Romans 7:7. A second possibility is that Paul was referring to νόμος from the point of view of all of its commands.⁴³ In either case, Paul's choice of ἐντολή in the midst of his discussion of νόμος places the emphasis squarely on the Law's command. The varied terminology that Paul uses to express the same point makes it clear that doing the Law is the key issue. He repeatedly uses three distinct synonyms eleven times in verses 15-21: πράσσω (vv. 15, 19), ποιέω (vv. 15, 16, 19, 20, 21), and κατεργάζομαι (vv. 15, 17, 18, 20).⁴⁴ The "problem" or "plight" of the Law according to Romans 7:14-25 is that those who know what the Law demands are unable to "do" it. Paul turns in Romans 8:3-4 to the work of Christ as the solution to fleshly humanity's inability (τὸ ἀδύνατον) to do what God requires in the Law. Through Christ the Law's "righteous decree" (τὸ δικάϊωμα τοῦ νόμου) is fulfilled in believers.⁴⁵

⁴¹"Do not covet" in Romans 7:7 is the most private and interior of the commandments. Philippians 3 says little or nothing about the possibility of an internal struggle with sin and desire and remains at the level only of a public, observable blamelessness. The only distinguishing characteristic of the tenth commandment from the others is its unique focus on interiority (J. A. Ziesler, "The Role of the Tenth Commandment in Romans 7," *JSNT* 33 (1988): 47-48). Whereas most Jews would have no problem keeping the other commandments (murder, adultery, robbery, the Sabbath), it is the command not to covet that exposes the extreme difficulty of keeping the Mosaic Law (Ziesler, "The Role," 48). As Ziesler himself points out, Paul "almost certainly generalizes from it [the command not to covet]" ("The Just Requirement of the Law [Romans 8.4]," *AusBR* 35 [1987]: 80). This point is developed at greater length by Douglas. J. Moo, "Israel and Paul in Romans 7:7-12," *NTS* 32 (1986): 123, and J. G. Strelan, "A Note on the Old Testament Background of Romans 7:7," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 15 (1981): 23-25. Philo calls desire the fountain of iniquity from which all sinful actions flows (*Decal.* 142-153, 173); for this reason God prohibited coveting. 4 Maccabees 2:5-6 (in their context) claim that if one can control and limit sinful desires through reason, then one will be able to obey the Law in other ways as well. The tenth commandment could therefore epitomize the entirety of the Law (even as in Rom. 7).

⁴²*By What Law?: The Meaning of Νόμος in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS, 128; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 166-167.

⁴³Paul is certainly not using the word as a synonym for νόμος. Why would Paul vary his terminology for the Mosaic Law here and nowhere else?

⁴⁴This creates a powerful rhetorical effect; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 202. John M. Espy's distinctions between the three terms seem overly subtle ("Paul's 'Robust Conscience' Re-Examined," *NTS* 31 [1985]: 184-185 n. 62).

⁴⁵E. P. Sanders (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 74) admits that in Romans 7 "humans are depicted as unable to fulfill it [the Law] because of sin and the flesh." He adds (74-75): "Its 'fault,' rather, is that it does not bear within itself the power to enable people to observe it." Sanders is then quick to qualify his comments on Romans 7. He says with respect to Pauline material outside of Romans 7: "it is worth observing that in none of these passages does Paul argue that the law is too hard to be fulfilled adequately" (Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 78). Romans 7 is therefore the exception where Paul does say that people are unable to accomplish the Law. The problem is that

Absolutely nothing in Romans 7 indicates that Paul's problem with the Law is that it leads to national righteousness or ethnic pride.⁴⁶ On the contrary, possession of the Law is good as long as one can translate possession of the Law into the concrete action which the Law demands. Winger explained that ἐντολή was never used in a way that would clearly demarcate Jews from Gentiles.⁴⁷ Paul sees the Law as setting forth a demand which must be successfully accomplished by the individual. Sin renders successful accomplishment of the Law impossible.⁴⁸

C. "Blameless" Obedience: Philippians 3:3-11

Philippians 3:3-11 proves difficult for the thesis that Paul thought people were unable to accomplish what the Law required. Paul called his own observance of the Law "blameless." E. P. Sanders' analysis of Judaism can be credited with providing the necessary background to evaluate Paul's claim of "blamelessness." A recurrent motif in Sanders' analysis of Judaism was the consistent recognition that human beings fall short of God's will. With respect to the tannaim, Sanders wrote: "Although the term 'righteous' is primarily applied to those who obey the Torah, the Rabbis knew full well that even the righteous did not obey God's law perfectly."⁴⁹ The Biblical commandments "are nevertheless difficult or even impossible fully to obey."⁵⁰ "Human perfection was not considered realistically achievable by the Rabbis."⁵¹ The Sipra on Leviticus related the incident in the Hebrew Scriptures of Nadab and Abihu as an example of human imperfection. Nadab and Abihu were killed by fire for an unholy offering of fire before the Lord, and yet they were not exposed or humiliated in death.⁵² The Sipra commented: "how much the more so [will God show pity to] other righteous persons" (emphasis mine). Abihu and Nadab were considered among the

other passages confirm what Paul says in Romans 7. Apart from Galatians 3:10, the necessity of doing the Law has been a motif in Romans 2-4 and these chapters pave the way for the critique in Romans 7. What seems obvious to Sanders in Romans 7 need not be a contradiction of what Paul says elsewhere. Paul will continue his critique in Romans 9-11; see Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, chapter 10. There is nothing "extreme" about Paul's "presentation of human inability" here; contra Sanders (*Paul, the Law*, 78).

⁴⁶James D. G. Dunn inexplicably thinks that Paul's problem with the Law in Romans 7 must be understood in terms of the sin of "national righteousness," "national self-righteous judgment on others," or the "unself-critical presumption of God's favor" (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 352). The eschatological Spirit has liberated humanity "from that too narrowing understanding of the law's role" in terms of "pride in national identity" (387). Where does Paul address a mistaken understanding of the Law in Romans 7?

⁴⁷Michael Winger, *By What Law?: The Meaning of Νόμος in the Letters of Paul*, (SBLDS, 128; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 166-167.

⁴⁸For a more detailed discussion of Romans 7 as well as the evidence that νόμος should be taken as referring to the Mosaic Law throughout Paul's discussion, see chapter 9 of Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

⁴⁹Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 203.

⁵⁰Ibid., 115; see also p. 137.

⁵¹Ibid., 137.

⁵²Sifra Shernini Mekhilta deMiluim 22-27 (on Lev. 10:1-5).

righteous even though their sin warranted punishment by death. “Righteousness” for a Jew never meant that one had been sinless and had perfectly done all that God commanded in the Law. The “righteous” were those who attempted to obey the Law in its entirety and sought atonement for their sin or failure.⁵³ The ultimate criterion was faithfulness to the covenant relationship. As Sanders summarized the views of the Qumran sect: “...from the point of view of the *halakah*, one is required to walk perfectly. From the point of view of the individual in prayer or devotional moments, he is unable to walk perfectly and must be given perfection of way by God’s grace.”⁵⁴

The “righteous” were typically sinners who availed themselves of God’s mercy and election even while falling short of the perfect measure toward which they were striving. Biblical figures are often characterized as “blameless” even when the Biblical text admits their sins (2 Chron. 15:17 [cf. 2 Chron. 16’s catalog of sins]; Luke 1:6, 18-20). Paul could admonish his own audience to be “blameless” (Phil. 2:15; see also 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23; and 1 Cor. 1:8). With respect to Philippians 3, Paul’s boast as a Jew included not only his Jewish identity but also his zeal for and accomplishment of the Law. The Law always involved the demand for rigorous obedience alongside its ethnic particularity.⁵⁵

Paul reflected the same tension in his writings: he could call himself blameless with respect to the righteousness of the Law and yet still affirm that all people are sinners.⁵⁶ What Sanders had to say on this matter is more accurate and cannot be stressed enough: “It would be hazardous to

⁵³As Sanders puts it: “...the *righteous* are those who obey the Torah and atone for transgression” (emphasis?) (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 204). Or with George Foot Moore: “Righteousness, in the conception of it which Judaism got from the Scriptures, had no suggestion of sinless perfection. Nor are the sins of the righteous all venial; the gravest moral lapses may befall them, as they did David. What distinguishes the righteous man who has fallen into sin is his repentance...” (*Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927], I, 494-495).

⁵⁴Thus Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 305-312. He concludes from the data (311-312) “On the one hand, there is the sense of human inadequacy before God...: no one can be righteous or perfect before God; no one, on his own, has ‘righteous deeds.’ On the other hand, there is the consciousness of being elect; thus some are righteous (*tsaddiq, yitsdaq*), but only by the grace of God.”

⁵⁵Blamelessness with respect to the Law ought to be distinguished from perfect obedience. Perfect obedience is unerring success in doing all that God commands in the Law.

⁵⁶4 Ezra 7:68-69 expresses a skepticism about human ability to refrain from sin: “For all who have been born are entangled in iniquities, and are full of sins and burdened with transgressions. And if after death we were not to come into judgment, perhaps it would have been better for us.” In 4 Ezra 9:36: “For we who have received the law and sinned will perish, as well as our hearts that received it.” R. Gainaliel could despair over the necessity of perfect obedience, while R. Akiba consoled him on the basis of a more merciful judgment based on a majority of deeds; see Quarles, “Soteriology.” Elsewhere, the rabbis generally considered a variety of means effective for the atoning of sin. Gainaliel’s despair in M. Aboth is therefore unusual. Most rabbis were confident that “all Israelites” have a share in the world to come. Gainaliel is valuable as an example of the requirement for “perfection of way” within the system as a whole.

suppose that Paul must have held one position as his true view, while using the other only for the sake of argument. He could quite easily have held both, without ever playing them off against each other so that he became aware that they are mutually exclusive.⁵⁷ R. Eliezer (Sanhedrin 101a) could assert that “there is none that is righteous” while on another occasion be surprised that he had committed a sin for which he had to suffer.⁵⁸ The key lies in the fact that Paul described his prior status as “blameless.” He never said that he was without sin as a Pharisee. To assume that being “blameless” was the same as being sinless and innocent of any violation of the Mosaic Law would be an error. The “new perspective” interpretation of Paul and the Law has been wrong to cite Philippians 3 as proof that Paul did not have a problem with perfect obedience of the Law.⁵⁹

IV. The Gracious Framework of Judaism and Paul

Considering the much more optimistic outlook on living in accordance with the Law among the Jews of his day, how is it possible for Paul to see doing the Law as problematic? E. P. Sanders demonstrated that the Law’s demands were always embedded within the gracious framework of God’s election and covenant, which Sanders called “covenantal nomism.” Whenever one failed in the performance of the Law’s demands, one could avail oneself of the sacrificial system, atonement, repentance, and thereby God’s mercy. Sanders himself admitted, however, that Paul was no “covenantal nomist”;

Paul’s ‘pattern of religion’ cannot be described as ‘covenantal nomism,’ and therefore Paul presents an essentially different type of religiousness from any found in Palestinian Jewish literature.... Paul in fact explicitly denies that the Jewish covenant can be effective for salvation, thus consciously denying the basis of Judaism.⁶⁰

It is unfortunate that Sander’s conclusion was not based on a detailed comparison of Paul and Judaism with respect to the categories he deemed central to first-century Judaism, i.e., election, covenant, and sacrifice. Sanders proceeded on the assumption that Paul’s categories of thought were simply different from those of Judaism. Yet how do these crucial elements in Jewish thought fare in Paul the former Pharisee? If Paul had abandoned a system of Judaism that can be described as “covenantal nomism,” what happened to the key aspects of that system in his thought?

Paul was not entirely comfortable with the notion of covenant. As

⁵⁷Sanders, *Paul, the Law, 24*.

⁵⁸The rabbis could be surprised that they had sinned to the point that they merited suffering or death (*Mek. Nezikin* 18 [to Exodus 22, 22 (23)]; *Sanh.* 101a [on R. Eliezer]).

⁵⁹On Philippians 3 see chapter 9 of Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

⁶⁰Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 543, 551 (emphasis his).

Galatians 3:15-17 make clear, the concept of “covenant” had become too closely associated with the Mosaic Law among Paul’s contemporaries. Paul, in a radical move, divorced the Mosaic Law from the only covenant of value, the Abrahamic covenant.⁶¹ In Galatians 4:21-31 the apostle places the Mosaic covenant alongside slavery and bondage.⁶² Likewise in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul speaks of the old Mosaic covenant as a covenant of the letter and death. The Mosaic covenant no longer functioned as a gracious framework for the Law.⁶³

Paul granted the election of the Jewish people. He looked to a day when “all Israel” would be saved. Nevertheless, the extensive critique of the “two covenant” or Sonderweg theory in Romans 11 has shown that the saving benefits of Israel’s election must be realized through the faith in Christ that Paul speaks of in Romans 10:9-10. There will be no separate path to salvation for the Jews apart from their own Messiah (9:5). Paul’s subsequent emphatic fourfold use of “all” (πᾶς) in 10:11-13 will permit no other interpretation.⁶⁴ Further, if faith in Christ is the decisive element in God’s electing activity, the apostle’s calling Gentile Christians God’s “elect” (Rom. 8:28-35) becomes comprehensible.⁶⁵ The election of Israel no longer offered any saving benefit apart from faith in Christ.⁶⁶

One looks in vain for atoning sacrifice in Paul. Perhaps Paul’s reference to the ἱλαστήριον in Romans 3:25 may be a reference to atoning sacrifice. On the other hand, a reference to the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant has been disputed. Many scholars now believe that ἱλαστήριον could be more accurately translated in general terms as a “propitiation” or

⁶¹Paul’s deliberate use of the plural διαθήκαι in Romans 9:4 is probably a nod to the Abrahamic covenant.

⁶²For a more detailed discussion of Galatians 3:15-17 and 4:21-31, see chapter 3 of Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

⁶³For a detailed exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3, see Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, chapter 3.

⁶⁴Reider Hvalvik, “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11.25-27,” *JSNT* 38 (1990): 87-107; Dieter Sänger, “Rettung der Heiden und Erwählung Israels: Einige vorläufige Erwägungen zu Römer 11,25-27,” *K.D.* 32 [1986]: 99-119; Erich Gräßer, “Zwei Heilswege? Zum theologischen Verhältnis von Israel und Kirche,” in *Kontinuität und Einheit: Für Franz Mußner*, hrsg. Paul-Gerhard Müller and Wemer Stenger (Freiburg: Herder, 1981), 411-429; E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9-11* (SBLDS, 109; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 176-205; Heikki Räisänen, “Paul, God, and Israel: Romans 9-11 in Recent Research,” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essay in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Peder Borgen, Ernest S. Frericks, and Richard Horsley (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 189-192; Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul’s View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, (NTS, 61; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 123-132; Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, chapter 4.

⁶⁵Paul regularly calls his Gentile Christian readers the “elect,” a title previously used for ethnic Israel.

⁶⁶For a fairly detailed discussion of Israel’s election in both Romans and Galatians in light of these letters’ respective situations, please see A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, forthcoming).

“expiation.”⁶⁷ Should one maintain the reference to the mercy seat, then Paul has reinterpreted the premiere means of atonement in Judaism in terms of Christ. As Peter Stuhlmacher concluded: “The cultic celebration of the Day of Atonement is abolished and superseded by virtue of this act of God, because the atonement granted definitively by God in Christ once and for all renders superfluous further cultic atonement ritual.”⁶⁸ In effect, the gracious covenantal framework of Judaism has been reconceptualized in favor of a new framework of grace in the work of Christ.⁶⁹

V. Conclusion

Sanders wrongly minimized the belief in Judaism that God intended for the Law to be obeyed strictly and in its entirety. Judaism maintained a balance between the need for strict obedience of the Law and the possibility of atonement and forgiveness for God’s elect. But if the gracious framework of Judaism is denied salvific efficacy in Paul, it becomes comprehensible why he has a problem with doing the Law. The Law’s rigorous demands have come to the fore in the apostle’s thinking and emerged as problematic. These demands have become problematical *in a Pauline logic where the only gracious framework was in Christ*. Paul’s solution to sin resided strictly in the work of Jesus Christ.

Paul discovered that the Law was not God’s provision for sin (Gal. 2:21; 3:21). If the sacrifices and atonement of the Law were of no avail in and of themselves, then the Law was reduced to the realm of human achievement and doing. God acted *in Christ* to save. If the Jewish Law were no longer the basis for God’s justifying activity, then the Law could no longer serve to exclude the Gentiles from God’s plan. With the denial of the gracious framework of covenantal nomism, the Law no longer acted as a sign of Jewish privilege; it entailed an enslaving obligation. It entailed “works” (Rom. 4:4-5).

⁶⁷My own preference is “propitiation” but not because of 1:18-3:20. “Propitiation” functions better in this context as a demonstration of “the righteousness of God.” For a more extensive discussion why *ἰλαστήριον* should not be understood as the “mercy seat,” as well as for a more extensive discussion of atoning sacrifice in Paul, see chapter 5 of Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

⁶⁸“Recent Exegesis on Romans 3:24-26,” *Reconciliation, Law & Righteousness* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 104.

⁶⁹This is precisely the logic of Romans 3. After the denial of any saving privileges based on ethnic identity in Romans 2, Paul asks whether there is any advantage in being a Jew at the beginning of Romans 3. He answers “Much in every way.” For the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, and these are oracles that testify to their salvation in the Messiah Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). At just the point where the covenantal nomist of Romans 2 would have faulted Paul for denying God’s mercy and atonement in the equation, Paul presents Christ.

Homiletical Helps on LW Series C —Epistles

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost Colossians 1:21-28 August 5, 2001

Preliminary considerations: The Old Testament reading for the day (Gen. 18:1-14) is the Lord's visit to Abraham a year before the birth of Isaac. Sarah is preparing the meal for the honored guests when she overhears the prediction of her pregnancy. She laughs. Sarah is gently rebuked. The Gospel lesson (Luke 10:38-42) is the visit of Jesus to Mary and Martha. Martha is preparing the meal for the honored guest while Mary listens to Jesus' teaching. Martha is gently rebuked. In both of these situations women who are engaged in the ordinary tasks of life, one at the command of her husband and the other at her own choosing, find themselves being pulled out of the mundane and into the mysterious. For Sarah it is the mystery of a miracle pregnancy, while for Martha it is the mystery of greater learning at the feet of Jesus.

These two accounts form parentheses around the text from Colossians. Though the epistle is part of a *lectio continuo*, Colossians 1:21-28 also describes individuals, in this case the gentile believers in Colosse, who have been pulled out of the ordinary and mundane to find themselves part of an incredible mystery, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The connecting link from all three readings to the hearers is the shared mystery of receiving God's love and mercy.

Textual exposition: The pivotal term in the text is ἀποκατήλλαξεν in verse 22. The action is done by God, and the verb is an aorist. The animosity and alienation have been removed. The root word ἀποκατάλλασσω means to transfer from one condition to a very different condition. When used with relationships it describes restoration and reconciliation. God has done this for the Colossians, with the result that by remaining in the faith they will be presented holy and blameless in the sight of God.

Verse 24 challenges the casual reader who must wonder what Paul means by filling up in his flesh "what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions" (τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Commentators immediately recognize that this cannot be Paul's act of completing the atoning work of Christ on the Cross. The atonement is complete. This could be Paul's reference to his own commission, as the Lord described it to Ananias in Acts 9:16 with the words "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Or it could be a reference to what is given to believers who are privileged to suffer for the name of Christ. Lenski calls this "the leftover parts of the afflictions of Christ" (Lenski, R. C. H., *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1937], 73.). These leftovers consist of the hatred of the world toward Christ that are now turned against His followers. One finds this sense in 1 Corinthians 1:5, "For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives...."

The pericope divides cleanly into two parts, verses 21-23 and 24-28. The first provides the background of God's saving work through Jesus Christ which has

reconciled the Colossians to God, and encourages their persistence in faith. *Nûv* marks the division as Paul now describes his role as a servant of Christ, and his great joy in revealing the mystery of Christ for both Jews and Gentiles.

Theological confession: Colossians provides too many points of doctrine from which to choose. If it wasn't for the assistance given by the text itself, we might have a difficult time deciding which of the many truths to emphasize. Here is a partial listing of significant teachings touched upon by Paul; original sin (alienated), actual sin (wicked works), atonement (reconciled in the body of his flesh), justification (present you holy), sanctification (continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast), the church (for the sake of His body which is the church), inclusive Gospel (make known among the Gentiles), heaven (hope of glory), and the ministry (admonishing and teaching).

The attention of the readers of the epistle is drawn to the mystery (*τοῦ μυστηρίου*), however, and this is where the focus of the sermon is most naturally placed. Two complementary views on the nature of this mystery are possible (Carson, H. M. *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 17). First, there is the mystery that the Gentiles are also invited to share in the hope provided through the Jew, Jesus Christ. Second, the use of "mystery" by Paul could very well be an intentional contrast of the glory that is in the believer with the false knowledge of the many mystery cults that thrived in the Colossian context. For the purpose of this sermon, the emphasis will be placed on the mystery of God's love in Christ that brings the hope of glory.

Evangelical proclamation: The text functions as strong Gospel for the Colossians in their time of threat from false teachings. It begins with a brief reminder of where they were before coming to saving faith in Jesus, and uses relationship language of alienation. The Gospel is presented immediately as reconciliation through Jesus Christ. As Paul describes himself enduring afflictions for Christ, the hearers learn how circumstances that formerly would have been thought to be punishment or judgment (Law) are now a source of joy that confirms God's love for them through Christ (Gospel).

Hearer interpretation: The hearers are confronted with many mysteries in their lives, but none are as filled with awe and consequence as the mystery of their own salvation. The mundane and persistent problems of daily living can lead Christians to wonder how they ever got into the difficulties in which they find themselves. The good news for the hearers begins with realizing that our root question is not, "How did I get into this mess?" but "How did I get into this glory?" The answer that is found is similar to the experiences of Sarah and Martha, who were pulled out of their mundane tasks into the center of God's gracious acts for salvation.

"How Did I Get Into This Glory?"

- I. The mystery of glory is solved in Jesus Christ.
 - A. Once we were enemies of God.
 - B. Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God.
- II. The mystery of glory continues.
 - A. Jesus Christ is in us.
 - B. Our trials are endured as joys.
 - C. We proclaim the hope of glory.

John Oberdeck

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
Colossians 2:6-15
August 12, 2001

Preliminary considerations: The theme of the other lessons for the day appears to be the nature and purpose of dialog with God. The quality of persistence in prayer is modeled by Abraham, in his self-effacing manner, as he coaxes the Lord to lower the ante on the fate of Sodom (Gen. 18:20-32). In Luke 11:1-13 Jesus reinforces this model by the behavior of the friend at midnight, wherein persistence again is rewarded. In order that we might be sure that God's response is certain, Jesus uses a figure of speech known as an *a fortiori* in which the likelihood of a lesser point magnifies the certainty of a greater point. If we can manage, fallen as we are, to give good gifts, how much more is God able to respond to our needs?

This characteristic of God may be the bridge that connects the Colossians' text to Genesis and Luke. Paul begins the pericope with encouragement to persevere, to be rooted and built up in Jesus and in the faith, in spite of the threat of false teaching. Nevertheless, from verse 9 onward Paul describes in powerful language God's response to our greatest need, to be brought out from the death of our sins into the life of God's grace. The persistence now being modeled is not from the human side, but from the divine, as God makes the first move and then tenaciously holds on with His Holy Spirit.

Context: Paul is writing to the Colossians in response to difficulties of which he's been made aware through communication from Epaphras, the evangelist who founded the congregation (1:7-8). The false teachings making inroads were multiple in nature. The *Concordia Study Bible* notes six elements contained in the heresy: ceremonialism, asceticism, angel worship, deprecation of Christ, secret knowledge, and reliance on human wisdom and tradition. (*Concordia Study Bible* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1986], 1825.) Franzmann narrows it to three categories of error under the heading "self-redemption of the Gnostic type." There is a "theosophic" emphasis on hidden, occult knowledge, followed by a misplaced emphasis on ritual, particularly circumcision, as essential to true worship. Third is an ascetic drive demanding physical rigors. The danger for the faith of these young Christians is summarized: "The new teaching called into question and obscured the unique greatness of the Christ and the complete sufficiency of his atonement" (Martin Franzmann, *The Word of the Lord Grows* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1961], 123-124).

Textual exposition: Verse 8: ὁ συλαγωγῶν means to lead astray or victimize. There is the real possibility of the Colossians falling, so that the warnings given by Paul are by no means rhetorical. στοιχειῖον, translated "basic principles," has been understood in two ways. It can refer to the "elementary forms of religion, Jewish and Gentile, which have been superseded by the new revelation in Christ" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], 776). Or it could refer to "basic principles" that are the "unseen hosts of evil which were, in the false teaching, linked with the physical elements" (H. M. Carson, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon*. Tyndale Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960], 63). Their potential threat to the Colossians is the point in the text. They, along with the "deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition," are active in pulling the Colossians from their trust in Jesus Christ.

The πλήρωμα in verse 9 is the sum, the total, the fullness of something. It includes all which goes into the substance and form of the subject. The "fullness of

the deity” means all of which God is. BAG translates it “In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (807). The Christological impact of this verse, coupled with the words of 1:19, tell us that Paul wants the Colossians to be absolutely sure that nothing can be gained from the deceptive philosophies. In verse 10 Paul tells the believers that they have “fullness” that is in Christ. How does this happen? In verse 13 Paul describes the power of Jesus Christ. συζωοποιέω is aorist active, “made alive together with.” When we are in Christ, then what is His becomes ours. His being made alive again is our being made alive again. The theological confession made in these verses leads the preacher to focus on the fullness of Christ whose deity enables Him to bring us up out of death through the waters of Baptism.

Verse 14 depicts the power of the Gospel over the Law. χειρόγραφον can be translated “written code” (NIV) or “handwriting of requirements” (NKJ). “A χειρόγραφον was a statement of debt signed by the debtor in token of his acknowledgment of his indebtedness. Thus the Law of God with its specific ordinances stands as God’s statement of our indebtedness” (Carson, 69). The cross is the place and the time when our indebtedness was removed.

Homiletical considerations: The context sets the stage for a message which recognizes that the Christian faith given to believers by the Holy Spirit will come under attack from a variety of directions. Each attempt on the believer’s faith is made through an appeal that is attractive to the feelings or to the intellect. As such, each has the potential not only to damage faith, but also to destroy it.

Paul does not want panic to ensue among his readers, however, as if they were without defense and helpless before the onslaught. Quite the contrary, by emphasizing the fullness of Christ and the fullness, or completeness, which they have received by faith in Christ, the Colossians are fully prepared to withstand the deceptive philosophies. Confident of their own fullness in Christ, which is certain through their burial with Christ in Baptism and their being raised to new life, they recognize the emptiness of the human traditions and rejoice that their own trespasses have been wiped away.

In an article entitled “Preaching the Law in the 90s” (*Concordia Pulpit Resources*, [4:1], 2), Robert Kolb describes preaching of the Law as an action that “convinces corpses that they have already died.” Paul, in presenting the Gospel to the Colossians, appears to have the goal of convincing those who have risen from death to life through Baptism that they have left their tombs and are now truly alive in Jesus Christ. The life lived in the joy of this Gospel is a most powerful apologetic against attack for the Colossians, and for us as well.

Outline: The sermon plays on the theme of “having it all,” the present drive toward self-fulfillment in every conceivable category. Care should be taken in opening illustrations to carefully define the “it” of “having it all.” Having it all is a threat to the Colossians as they are tempted to doubt what they already have. Having it all is a threat to us through materialism, consumerism, individualism, etc. The paradox is that to have it all, one must lose it all. At this point, “it” is redefined from human goals to divine goals. Fullness rather than having it all will become the language of the message.

Having It All

- I. The fallen human nature wants to have it all.
- II. The fallen human nature must lose it all in the death and burial of Baptism.
- III. The new person raised with Christ has it all in the fullness of Christ’s work for us.

John Oberdeck

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
Colossians 3:1-11
August 19, 2001

Liturgical context: The opening words of the Epistle reading serve as a connecting link between all the appointed readings for the day, providing the basis for the Christian's life and hope: "Since, then, Christ has been raised..." The difference the resurrection of Christ makes touches each and every facet of life; nothing remains the same. Life is no longer meaningless (Old Testament) nor does it find its sole purpose in self-indulgence (Gospel). Indeed, because Christ is risen, there is something new "under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9), and we, ourselves, are being renewed in that newness daily (Epistle). The believer lives life with "heart set on things above," seeking help and guidance from Him alone who keeps His church unto the end (Collect).

Biblical context: In his Letter to the Colossians, Paul responds to the reported concerns of Epaphras, who visited him during the apostle's imprisonment in Rome. His response proclaims Christ Jesus in unparalleled amplitude and depth. Paul wants to stop the subtle, but vicious, attack upon the pre-eminence of the Christ. Especially deadly was this attack because, on the surface, it did not seek to supplant the person and work of Christ, merely to help it along, to complete it. Left unattended, this aberrant teaching and wrong believing where Christ is not "all" (3:11) leaves people either smug and comfortable in their sin, wasting time in foolish speculations about all sorts of things, or terrified and without hope whatsoever. Paul lifts up the Christ, proclaiming His utter supremacy "in all," while calling God's people to recognize the results, both here-and-now, and in eternity, of the life that we have been given "in Christ."

The text: In the first two chapters of Colossians, Paul proclaimed the supremacy of the person and work of Christ. He—and He alone—is "God's mystery in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:2-3). The opening words of chapter 3 display the extent to which His all-sufficient work reaches, the outcome of life lived "in Christ."

Verse 1: The first word of the text (εἶ) introduces an assumed fact, one that is finally the anchoring fact of the Christian's life and hope! It forms a connecting line from the εἰ of 2:20, with the word οὖν looking back to Paul's teaching regarding the Christ in the whole of chapter 2. Συνηγήροθητε, as a constative aorist, denotes a single action in the past, namely, resurrection to new life. This happened at Baptism (2:12; Rom. 6:4), wherein we were buried and raised up with Christ.

"Keep seeking" (ζητεῖτε) urges the apostle, with the present active imperative expressing the ongoing nature of the powerful gift we have been given in being united to Christ in His death and resurrection. Connected to τὰ ἄνω, these words bring forth from those in Christ a resounding "No!" to "the earthly things" (τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, v. 2). Ours now is a perspective "out-of-this-world," so to speak. Our death with Christ has completely cut the old ties. Ἀπεθάνετε declares Paul in verse 3. "You died!" This is not a metaphor. It really happened, and it happened to us in Baptism. The knots that bound us to the old world order are cut through, and our resurrection with Him has established new ties—ties with heaven's order where the ascended Christ rules supreme (Mark 16:19; Ps. 110:1). Of course, those who promoted some brand of Gnosticism also could have urged people to "seek what is above" since they were intensely desirous of living life on a higher plane (Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1994). Paul, however, does them one better, for Christ has ascended far above *all principalities and powers*. The perspective that our baptism into Christ gives to us is His: risen, ascended, exalted. It does not get any better—or any higher—than that!

Verse 2: Τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε calls us continually to be fixing our minds/thinking on “the thing above.” Our Baptism into Christ has given us this “above” way of thinking/reasoning (Τὰ ἄνω), a way that confesses “Christ in all” (cf. Rom. 8:5; Phil. 2:5), that sees even here, even now, the final and victorious culmination of all things in Christ when He comes again in glory.

Verse 3: Here Paul not only underscores what he had said in 2:20, but also provides the reason we are able to fix our minds on things above, not on things of the earth: ἀπεθάνετε γάρ!

Καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται expresses the result of our baptism into Christ: our life is hidden with Christ in God. The sense here is that of being kept in a secure, safe place. This is a word of tremendous comfort and strength, for by it Paul would—again—underscore the supremacy of Christ and His atoning work. Our well-being depends on His life, not ours! Not ever! We are assured of safety and security because He lives (John 14:19).

Verse 4: Here the apostle turns our vision from the present reality—life kept hidden with Christ in God—to the coming finality: being with Christ in glory (cf. Phil. 3:20-21; 2 Thess. 1:10). The phrase, ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν, refers directly to Christ. He is the believer’s very life. Here again, Paul underscores the supremacy of the Christ and His work.

Verse 5: At this point the apostle puts flesh on an otherwise skeletal structure, applying what he has said to the daily living out of life in the world. To be sure, there is nothing theoretical about living the Christ-life: it is found within the day-to-day life of every Christian. No doubt, though, the examples that catch Paul’s attention in this text are drawn from the report of Epaphras. Οὖν looks back to what has gone before, especially to the first four verses. BAGD offers this helpful paraphrase: “Put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth.” The verb, an aorist imperative of νεκρώω, paints the picture of just how radical and drastic this action must be. To this Luther would agree, as he writes of Baptism (Part IV) in the *Small Catechism*, that “the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires....”

Verses 9-10: The two participles employed (ἀπεκδυσάμενοι [v. 9] and ἐνδυσάμενοι [v. 10]) picture the stripping off and putting on of clothing. The old has been stripped off. Therefore, all that which belongs to the old is daily stripped away. Conversely, all that belongs to ὁ νέος ἄνθρωπος is put on. It is this very “new man” that is constantly in a state of renewal/change (τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον), the Lord Himself being the “change-agent.” This happens as believers return by daily contrition and repentance to their Baptism wherein “the new man” daily emerges and arises... (cf. Rom. 6:4).

Verse 11: Not only old habits and attitudes are abolished in God’s new creation. So also are the old barriers that separated people: race, culture, social standing. In the community of believers—the new order of things—what matters is Christ. He is supreme. His work is supreme. Christians know one another first and foremost as being united to Him. He is all, and lives in all His people, without distinction.

Homiletical considerations: “Out with the old! In with the new!” This rather simple but common cliché might provide the preacher a clear format for Law-Gospel proclamation of this text, stressing to God’s people that they continue to

resist (“put off”) any attempts at self-transformation and self-renewal. It cannot be done. “Out with the old! In with the new!” is God’s work. He has accomplished this work in Christ, His Son, and He applies it in all its fullness through Holy Baptism. With humble joy, the believer receives by faith this totally-sufficient work of Christ in which the old is killed and buried, and the new person in Christ arises to life, certain that He who began this good work will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus. It is in that confidence that the believer in Christ returns daily to his/her Baptism: “Out with the old! In with the new!”

Possible introduction: (Permit this more personal introduction to spark your thinking.) Growing up, our son was quite involved in athletics. Until recently, we had boxes and boxes of his old, worn-out athletic shoes to prove it. For a number of years, it seemed as if we were purchasing a brand new pair of athletic shoes every couple of weeks, and the scenario at the shoe store was always the same. He found the new pair of shoes he liked. He begged me to let him wear them home, but I made him promise that, if I let him wear the new ones home, he would wear the old ones a little longer before we got rid of them. He wore the new, spotless athletic shoes home and he never, ever put the old ones on again! We lined the side of our basement and garage steps with his old tennies. Then we resorted to boxes. Once, in an appeal to “economy” I pleaded with him to let me “duct-tape” an old pair up so he could just get a little bit more wear out of them. It didn’t happen—and I should have known better. After all, when you have new shoes in which to run/compete (or, live life), why bother putting on the old ones again? This was Paul’s point, too: walking (living) in the new shoes. Living in Jesus Christ. The old has no place whatsoever!

Larry W. Rockemann

The Twelfth Sunday of Pentecost
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
August 26, 2001

Liturgical context: The appointed lessons for today are centered upon the gracious gifting of God. He gives His command and the universe is created (Epistle). He gives His promise to one “as good as dead,” and that one receives the impossible: “so shall your offspring be” (Old Testament). God gives His very kingdom to those who are but a “little flock,” and it is so (Gospel). He gives help and deliverance to those who are utterly helpless (Introit). In His gifting, God creates and nurtures faith in all that His words and promises declare, being “always ready to give more than we either desire or deserve” (Collect). This faith, given and nurtured by God in the believer’s life, expresses itself in calm, trusting assurance (“*Do not be afraid*”) and hope, being given to see what the natural eye cannot see (Heb. 11:18). Thus seeing, the believer—by faith—anticipates even within the “not-yet-ness” of this time, that which is sure and soon to be: “the Son of Man will come” (Luke 12:40).

Biblical context: The Epistle reading is part of the larger section of Hebrews that encourages believers to abandon the old order and way and to live fully in the new: that order and way that Christ alone has opened. He ran the race all the way to the finish, undeterred by the cross. Placing our trust and hope in Him, we have a firm assurance of those eternal realities which are not yet visible to the eye, living daily in eager anticipation of the returning Lord. This is the same forward-looking faith of the saints of old, that great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. With them,

ours is the same race, the same faith, the same sure hope: “Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

The text: In the reading for the day the writer to the Hebrews provides us not so much a definition of faith as a description of what faith (πίστις) produces, moving from the more general to very specific and concrete examples of faith in the Old Testament.

Verse 1: Ἔστιν δὲ continues the author’s thought from 10:32ff. The faith that does not “shrink back” (10:39) has the following characteristics ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων. Both participles are plural, underscoring that which is common to all the faithful who look to Christ. Ἐπόστασις suggests something which “stands under” something else (Ellingworth), giving the sense of that which is foundational. Its use in Hellenistic papyri leads Moulton and Milligan to suggest this translation, “Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for.” The term ἔλεγχος is used in the papyri of legal proofs of an accusation (something cross-examined and tested for reliability). See also its use by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16.

Verse 2 complements the description of faith. Ἐν is instrumental, “by.” This is the faith lived out by the people of old (πρεσβύτεροι), and which received God’s commendation.

Verse 3: To describe this faith, the writer begins at the beginning, at Scripture’s opening statements. In so doing, he unites believers of every time and place. Πίστει is instrumental, “by faith.” Westcott notes the tense of κατηρτίσθαι as underscoring the abiding use and application that the “original lesson” of creation serves. The phrase, ῥήματι θεοῦ, harkens back to the *ex nihilo*, “Let there be” of Genesis 1, as well as the result, “and it was so.”

Verses 8-16 recount Abraham’s forward-looking faith, giving concrete evidence of faith at work in life. The phrase, “by faith,” is used seven times in verses 8-22.

Verse 8 describes Abraham in a manner paralleling what had just been said of Noah (v. 7). As Noah received God’s word (forewarning), so Abraham “was called” (καλούμενος) by the voice of God addressing him (Gen. 12:1; 15:1; Acts 7:2). Upon that word received, Noah built an ark. Similarly, upon the Word received, Abraham headed out from Ur. Likewise, both men trusted God apart from what could be readily seen and evidenced around them. The description of Abraham is instructive: καὶ ἐξήλθεν μὴ ἐπιστάμενος ποῦ ἔρχεται. No map. No pre-determined plan. No written destination. No attractive travel brochure promising “greener pastures.” Just καλούμενος. That was all, but that was enough.

Verse 9: Although Abraham entered the land of promise (εἰς γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), he never owned a bit of it (Acts 7:5), save for a field near Hebron which he purchased from Ephron the Hittite to serve as the family cemetery (Gen. 23). He lived as a πάροικος. Like a foreigner, having no rights or resident legal status, Abraham, together with his son Isaac and grandson, Jacob (“fellow heirs with him of the same promise”), moved his tent from place to place. Τῶν συγκληρονόμων is used of Gentile believers in the body of Christ in Ephesians 3:6 (see also Gal. 3:29).

Verse 10: Here is the underlying, foundational substance of Abraham’s faith and that which gave it impetus. He was given to see, by faith, something far greater, far more lasting than the real estate of Canaan. He “saw” a city (πόλιν) with a foundation (τοῦς θεμελίους). No more portable habitats of skins stretched over poles with all the “security” of stakes driven into whatever soil was available. The city Abraham saw by faith was anchored to stay (12:22; 13:14). Furthermore, “its architect and builder is God” (ἡς τεχνίτης καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ θεός), a description of God rare in the New Testament.

Verses 11-12 recount the appointed Old Testament reading for the day (Gen. 15:1-6).

Verse 11: Bruce (*New International Commentary on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994]) provides a thorough and balanced summary of the translation challenges of this verse. Suffice it to say, however, that with Abraham as the subject both immediately prior and immediately following, the final point must remain with him. The GWNBS translation best captures the Greek text: "Faith enabled Abraham to become a father, even though he was old and Sarah had never been able to have children. Abraham trusted that God would keep His promise."

Verse 12: Διὸ καὶ introduces the result, namely, faith's outcome: from this one (ἐνός)—one νεκρωμένους! (here is impossibility compounded!)—yet nonetheless, from one came the many (see also Paul in Rom. 4:19). This was in fulfillment of God's promise that his offspring would be as numerous as "the stars in the sky" (Gen. 15:5; 22:17) and "as the sand upon the seashore" (Gen. 22:17).

Verse 13 serves as an interjected summary within the writer's accounting of Abraham's faith. Here he pauses to point, once again, to some of the common characteristics in Abraham's faith as well as in the faith of the other patriarchs. They all lived—and died—without seeing with their own eyes the fulfillment of what God had promised. Nonetheless, they lived their lives in such a way as to confess the "already" in the "not yet." Τὰς ἐπαγγελίας takes into account not just the promises, but also the very content, the substance, of those promises. Finally, this is how faith works. (For an excellent overview of the descriptive terms, ζένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί, see Ellingworth, *New International Greek New Testament Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993].)

Verse 14: γάρ draws a conclusion from the thought immediately prior: the confession that they were aliens and strangers/pilgrims upon the earth. This remains the confession of God's people while on earth. They are never completely at home in the surroundings of this present world.

Verse 15: Abraham and the patriarchs sought by faith that which no piece of this world's real estate could provide. Their vision (ὀρέγονται—present tense signals continual, ongoing striving/desire) was for a better country (κρείττονος—certainly far better than Ur!). Their continual longing was for a heavenly country (note that by its placement, ἐπουρανίου, is emphatic). Lauersdorf in *The People's Bible* (Hebrews) pens a poignant statement: "Toward the heavenly Canaan and the new Jerusalem, prepared for them by God, they stretched forth faith's hand in earnest longing all their days."

Verse 16: Διὸ οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται αὐτοὺς ὁ θεός, "Therefore God is not ashamed of them," with the infinitive, ἐπικαλεῖσθαι, "to be called their God." In grace, God gives His very name to us, putting it upon us in Holy Baptism, bringing us to faith in Christ and making us members of Christ and of His family. And—wonder of wonders!—He takes our name upon Himself! In Exodus 3, God called Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and our Lord in Matthew 22:32 speaks similarly (see also Mark 12:26-27).

Homiletical considerations: Telescopes, binoculars, and microscopes accomplish the same thing: they bring into close, clear focus what otherwise is distant and unseen. The greater their power, the sharper, more detailed, and closer the image(s). People who make use of these instruments with frequency usually are heard to exclaim their newly-discovered wonder in what they have been able to see, along with an appreciation for what they otherwise never realized even existed. In a

similar way, God's Word of promise creates and nurtures faith in Christ, a faith that is given to see what otherwise is unseen to the naked (sinful) eye. And what faith sees brings not only the praise-filled exclamation of awe and wonder, but also a realization of reality that the surrounding world can neither see nor make available. With panoramic vision stretched from creation to cross to Second Coming, faith's eye sees the otherwise unseen, living the future hope in the very here-and-now, all the while actively heading toward that which the visible realities of Word and Sacrament make ever sharper, more detailed, ever nearer.

Larry W. Rockemann

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Hebrews 12:1-13
September 2, 2001

Encouragement to Run the Race of Faith

Introduction: Like 1 Corinthians 9:24 this passage uses the picture of a race or marathon to describe the life of faith. The struggle and striving of the athlete portrays ongoing repentance, spiritual revival, and reliance on the Lord for the preservation and upbuilding of Christian faith and hope. We all need encouragement not to drop out of the race in despair or rebellion, but rather to continue running with patience and endurance. Resources for encouragement are found in the text:

I. A great cloud of witnesses (v. 1).

This cloud (or host) of witnesses is the list of heroes of faith in the chapter just concluded—Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the others. These are not mentioned here as spectators of our race (the departed saints are not aware of our affairs [Is. 63:16]), but as testifiers; the Greek word *martus*, witness, and its verb *martureo* indicate the bearing of testimony—e.g., Acts 1:8, 22; John 5:33). They are the victors of previous races, champions of testimony to faith in the Gospel, what trials can be borne, what victories won, what works accomplished by it.

II. Jesus, the author of faith (vv. 2-3).

A. He is the originator of faith, with whom it began and upon whom its hope is based. By the same Greek word (*archegos*) Hebrews calls Him the author of salvation (2:9-11), who died for all, brings many to glory, and makes them holy. In the collect for this day we look to Him as we run our race for the benefits He gained for us as the author of salvation.

B. We are told to fix our eyes on Him, as the supreme example of running the race of faith, for He has run it Himself, for a higher purpose than any of us, namely, to give us a race of faith to run in the first place. The author of Hebrews is drawing thematically from earlier passages: Jesus' human nature had perfect faith in His Father (5:7-8), as He carried out the saving will of that Father (10:5-10). In His work as high priest with the joy of exaltation of victory in view, He was able to endure the cross; so also we are helped to persevere by looking forward to the glory we will have with Him in eternal life. "Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

III. Hardship—a fatherly discipline (vv. 5-11).

- A. This, too, is included in the collect's "fruits of His redeeming work." Opposition, persecution, the need for self-denial, and the like need not be seen as evidence that God does not love us, or is not there for us, or is not there at all. Faith that is enlightened by revelation is able to look at tribulation right side up—as the heavenly Father's discipline.
 - B. Hardship shows the Father's love for us as His children (vv. 5-8). Through justifying faith we have been adopted as His sons (Gal. 4:4). Now we see Him treating us as such, with a fatherly discipline, to lead us into continuing repentance and spiritual growth.
 - C. Our Father means the chastening for our good (vv. 9-11). He wants us to share His holiness—that is, become like Him through the cleansing of justification and the spiritual growth of sanctification, and ultimately have the perfect righteousness of the world to come, freed from the sinful flesh. He lovingly brings us into fellowship with Himself and wants us to be freed from sin and all its misery. In the proper understanding, disciplinary sufferings are confirmation of our justification and reconciliation with God.
- IV. Our Christian courage and endurance as encouragement to others (vv. 12-13).
 We are urged by Gospel admonitions to lift drooping arms and weak knees and pursue a straight course. And just as we have been encouraged by the great cloud of witnesses (v. 1) and all those noble people who have resisted to the point of shedding blood (v. 4), we pray that our own endurance, such as it is, may be an encouragement to the "lame" in the race of faith, who waver or move with uncertain steps. Christians are called to help one another on the way to heaven, remembering that Christ died for all.

Conclusion:

All honor, praise, and majesty
 To Father, Son, and Spirit be,
 Our God forever glorious,
 In whose rich grace
 We run our race
 Till we depart victorious.
 (*Lutheran Worship* 406, stanza 5)

Thomas Manteufel

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Hebrews 12:18-24
September 9, 2001

Liturgical context: Linking the three readings for this Sunday provides the preacher with a formidable challenge. In the Gospel reading, Luke 13: 22-30, Jesus indicates that entry into the kingdom of God (conversion) will occur only through the narrow door (v. 24). The Epistle reading concentrates on perseverance in faith based upon the person having been brought to "the city of the living God" (v. 22—conversion). The link between the two texts thematically derives from the Old Testament reading (Is. 66:18-23), where all the people of God, from all the nations, will be gathered by God to His chosen mountain in Jerusalem through the sign that He will set among them. Christ is the sign and the narrow door, the means for all

the people of God to come to Mount Zion and the perfection by which the people of God remain within the city of the living God.

Biblical context: This pericope is positioned within a broader section of the letter that encourages the baptized (perhaps in Rome) to persevere by faith in running the race set before them (Heb. 12:1). This call to perseverance begins at 10:19 and includes both the rationale or basis for perseverance and exhortations to persevere in specific matters of communal faith and life. Chapter eleven provides a litany of Old Testament saints who believed and lived by faith in God's promises, awaiting the final perfection in Jesus. Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16, the Epistle reading for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, focuses upon Abraham's perseverance in faith, longing for the heavenly country and city of God. Like Abraham, with eyes fixed on Jesus (12:2)—the author and the perfecter of faith—the baptized are to endure hardship and discipline from God (12:7-11) and pursue peace, holiness, and sexual purity. (Hebrews 12:1-13 is the Epistle reading for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.) Sunday's pericope thus affords the basis for the exhortation to persevere in faith, not out of fear on account of the word (of threat) of the old covenant, but because of the life and freedom given through the mediator of the new covenant.

Textual and homiletical comments: Verses 18-19: These verses recount the potentially deadly nature of the encounter with God on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19; 20:18-21). The writer envisions a literal, physical touching of the mountain, although in reality it is a groping after something that, if touched, brings death. 1 John 1:1 indicates that this groping has ended and that, in Christ, people touch the very life of God: "That which...our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

The gloom (ζόφω) of the mountain cannot be distinguished from the gloom and darkness of the regions of hell (see Ex. 10:21; 2 Pet. 2:4, 17; Jude 13). In other words, one cannot tell a difference between the darkness of God and the darkness of Satan. Likewise, there is a deliberate contrast between the voice of God from the mountain (v. 19) and the voice of the sprinkled blood of Christ (v. 24). The verb for Israel's hearing of the voice of God indicates ongoing action. In other words, the Law of God is still active. The preacher ought to preach the horrible mountain of God in such a way that people see the mountain as the Israelites did and absolutely stand in fear of touching the mountain, i.e., living by the Law or their own self-contrived laws and gods. The theophany on Sinai does not invite the people into His presence and their approach to God is limited and circumspect. In contrast, the mountain of the living God established by Christ is approachable, touchable, and immediately accessible.

Verses 20-21: The hidden God must be mediated, through Moses and his veil. It is not desirable to know the hidden God, nor ought one to investigate that God, for the best one could hope for is death. Just as the Israelites wanted no further words to be added to the ones spoken, so the new Israel should want only the words that our Lord has given and nothing more.

Verse 22a: Inclusion in the new covenant occurs through Baptism into the salvific work of the Trinity accomplished through Christ's redemption of humanity on the cross. The verb for coming near, repeated from verse 18, προσεληλύθατε, is the verb from which proselyte is derived. The recipients of the letter—Jewish converts or proselytes to Christ—have come not to the physical Mount Zion, but to the true mountain where God has located the city bearing His name (see 1 Kings 14:21). The city comprises all those baptized into the name of the living God (the church).

Verses 22b-23: As the Lord came to Mt. Sinai with myriads of holy ones (Deut. 33:2), so the new Israel has come to Mt. Zion where a numberless (μυριάσιν) host of angels has assembled. They have assembled for a festive gathering of the whole people (πᾶν + ἀγείρω) for worship [faith] (see also Rev. 5, 19, 21).

Verse 23: The church of the firstborn (πρωτοτόκων) probably refers to all the baptized, but especially those within the community who have died. Although the word does not refer to Christ, since it is in the plural, nonetheless one recalls that Christ in His incarnation is the firstborn of the Father (Col. 1:15) and in His resurrection is the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18). Coupling these references with Romans 8:29 and John 3:3, 5, believers are the firstborn through Baptism into Christ, who is the pre-eminently firstborn over all. The recording of the names of the firstborn in heaven (ἀπογεγραμμένον [cf. Luke 10:20]), recalls the third to fourth-century practice of solemnly enrolling the names of those being baptized on Easter before they made the final preparations during Lent for Baptism. In Baptism, we are already the firstborn from the dead in Christ (Rom. 6:1-7).

Verse 24: This verse clearly indicates that the approach to Mt. Zion is made through Christ alone (see Heb. 7:25). He is the only mediator (μεσίτη) of the new covenant, because His sacrificial death establishes that covenant which reconciles God and man (Heb. 8:6; 9:15). [Tradition contended that the offering of Cain and Abel took place on the fourteenth of Nisan, Good Friday, the same day on which the blood of Christ was shed. Abel's blood cries for vindication; Jesus' blood cries for the vindication of both Abel's blood and that of Cain, that is, all of us contaminated with the sin of Cain.] The blood of sprinkling, αἵματι ράντισμοῦ, conveys the idea that inclusion in the new covenant is imparted through the blood of Christ sprinkled on the believer through Baptism. The reference to "having our hearts sprinkled" in Hebrews 10:22 makes explicitly clear that the sprinkling of Christ's blood takes place in Baptism (having our bodies washed with pure water). Hebrews 9:18-21 refers to the conclusion of the covenant at Sinai and Moses' sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice on the people (Ex. 24:8). Hebrews 9:13 with its reference to the sprinkling of the blood of goats and bulls recalls the great Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). The reference to the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer refers to the mixing of those ashes with water for the purification of those contaminated by contact with a corpse (Num. 19). Thus, the sprinkling of Christ's blood both atones and cleanses.

Central thought of the sermon: The believer has not entered the new covenant by means of the old covenant and its revelation on Mount Sinai. Rather, the believer has entered the new covenant through the revelation of the living God on Mt. Zion, that is, the mediation of Christ through the pouring out of His blood on the cross.

Possible goal of the sermon: That the hearers persevere in faith—return to Mount Zion—not by creating new laws for themselves, but by daily dying and rising through Christ's blood sprinkled upon them in Holy Baptism.

Kent Burreson

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Hebrews 13:1-8
September 16, 2001

Liturgical context: The Gospel reading (Luke 14:1, 7-14), the parable of the first and the last at the wedding feast, sets the theme of the day: the prominent reversal motif in Luke's Gospel (see Luke 13:30). "For everyone who exalts himself

will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (v. 11). The ultimate reference for the reversal of which the parable speaks is to the humiliation of the exalted one. Christ Himself, who is invited by His Father to the great wedding feast, takes the lowest place: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:6-8). The Lord’s Supper, as the great foretaste of the Lamb’s feast of life in the kingdom that will have no end, expresses this great reversal. As Jesus says during the Last Supper in Luke’s Gospel, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). Jesus, the promised Messiah, is the one exalted by the Father to His right hand because Jesus served us by taking the last place at the banquet of death, the coarse and splintered seat of ignominy, the bench of the cross.

The Old Testament reading (Proverbs 25:6-7) furthers this great reversal theme by admonishing the hearer not to seek exaltation in the king’s presence. Rather, joy comes in the king’s undeserved election, the gratuitous invitation to sit next to the king. The Gradual confesses that the reasons for God’s paths and judgments, his gracious turns of the expected on its head in Christ, are not to be explored, but revealed in and adored.

Biblical context: This is the fourth and final reading from the Letter to the Hebrews, stretching from the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. The reading for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost recalled the arrival of the people of God at Mt. Zion to receive the blessings of the new covenant and the sprinkling of a blood that speaks a better Word than that of Abel. The writer to the Hebrews is describing the worship of the new people of God. This Sunday’s text conveys a set of exhortations to the people of God who have been sprinkled with the blood of the new covenant. They are to live in a new and different way from the world, just as the people of the old covenant had been called to live differently.

The intervening section (12:25-29) calls the new Israel to receive the words of God spoken from Mt. Zion, from the mediating altar of Christ. Here in 13:1-8 are words that flow out of that blood that cleanses from death—so that we may serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). In fact, these words mimic the very words of Jesus, who is the mediator of the new covenant and who died to make ransom for our sins (Heb. 9:15). The encouragement to brotherly love (v. 1) echoes our Lord’s *mandatum* to His disciples at the Last Supper, “Love one another.” The encouragement to hospitality for strangers and for remembering those in prison reverberates with Christ’s words from the parable of the sheep and the Goats: “I was a stranger and you invited me in...I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matt. 26:35-36). The exhortation to chastity is infused with Jesus’ response to the Pharisees’ question about divorce: “Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matt. 19:9). Finally, the counsel to material contentment resounds with Jesus words to His disciples: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:24). The author to the Hebrews is invoking the words of the Christ who shed His blood and sprinkled it on a new people, a people who offer their very selves (shed their blood) in service to their sisters and brothers.

Textual and homiletical comments: The theme of the day, the great reversal, provides a theological framework for interpreting this pericope. The exhortations are specific expressions of how the believer takes the last place at the banquet, submits to the humblest position. Martin Luther wrote in his 1519 Sermon on Two

Kinds of Righteousness: “Paul’s meaning [Phil. 2] is that when each person has forgotten himself and emptied himself of God’s gifts, he should conduct himself as if his neighbor’s weakness, sin and foolishness were his very own” (*Luther’s Works*, 31, 302). The great reversal in Christ, His assumption of our sin and our reception of His righteousness and holiness, provides the new life by which the baptized sit in the muck and mud of their neighbors’ sin and its bloody consequences.

Verse 1: The imperative (μενέτω) which conveys a present and active state of constancy relative to brotherly love, invokes the continuing and abiding life and presence of God, especially in the person of Christ. Thus, the imperative is first and foremost a directive to abide in Christ and in His love, as in Christ’s words in John 15:9: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love” and in 1 John 4:16: “God is love. Whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in him.” Ultimately, this means abiding in the person and work of Christ, the very love of God poured out on us in His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. That is where we abide in God’s love in Christ and so can love our neighbor and offer our body/blood/life for and to our neighbor.

Verse 2: The great reversal is further encapsulated in φιλοξενίας, the custom of hospitality to strangers. It is the incarnation of Christ’s righteousness within the life of the baptized, the extension of grace and mercy to those who from a worldly perspective are undeserving or from whom no benefit can be derived, especially the foreigner. Prior to the justification of the believer, Christ is as a foreigner to the believer and the believer is as a foreigner to Christ. In the Lord’s Supper, because of Christ’s assumption of the sin of every human sinner and the crucifixion and burial of that sin on His cross and in His tomb, Christ extends food and drink, sustenance of life, to the one who was formerly as a Samaritan to Him. The hospitality received from the Lord in his Supper is then extended through the believer to all the “foreigners” the believer meets. All of the believer, all he/she has and is, is given in service to those whom the baptized can’t even necessarily call by name.

Verses 3-4: The command to remember (μυνησθε) entails God’s conception of remembrance. When God remembers He recalls His promises (Ex. 32:13; Deut. 9:27) and He acts to fulfill those promises. Christ’s directive in the Lord’s Supper, “Do this in remembrance of me,” calls upon the new Israel to take and eat His body and blood in faith. God remembers His promise of a deliverer through our crucified Lord’s body and blood poured into His people and so forgives their sins through that very body and blood. God’s remembrance brings the very life of God in Christ to the believer. The people of God remember God and His promise by receiving Christ’s body-and-blood-forgiveness in faith. Therefore, in remembering fellow believers and neighbors who are in prison and mistreated, the believer takes action on their behalf in such a way that it seems as though the believer is actually the one in prison or mistreated. In other words, the baptized takes on those tasks—ministry to the imprisoned, delivery of food, support of the mistreated’s family, advocacy on their behalf—which put the fellow believer in danger of imprisonment.

Verses 5-6: If one loves money (Φιλάργυρος), one cannot love the neighbor (Φιλαδέλφια). Likewise, Christ did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but instead became obedient to death. Or in Luther’s words, “I believe that Jesus Christ...has redeemed me...purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, *not with gold or silver*, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.” Christ’s love of His neighbor is not for personal gain. He suffers and dies entirely for our benefit. Love of money deters the baptized from complete and unequivocal love of the neighbor.

Verses 7-8: This is the crux and climax of the pericope. The glorious exchange or great reversal is eternal (αἰῶνας), and forever the believer's reality before God, in the person of Christ. As Luther says in his Galatians Commentary, "Christ is both: While He is the Law, He is liberty; while He is sin, He is righteousness; and while He is death, He is life. For by the very fact that He permitted the Law to accuse Him, sin to damn Him, and death to devour Him He abrogated the Law, damned sin, destroyed death, and justified and saved me" (*Luther's Works*, 26, 163). What stands before God and intercedes for the baptized is this Jesus Christ, who is a priest forever (αἰῶνας). He died and now lives to intercede for the baptized with the marks of His permanent sacrificial priesthood embedded forever in His body which is ensconced before the throne of God. The baptized persevere in taking upon themselves their neighbor's suffering, the consequences of sin, because Christ and His pouring out of His blood on the cross and in His Supper (Heb. 10:20) have opened God's life to them forever.

Central thought of the sermon: Jesus Christ's once-for-all-sacrifice on the cross, which permanently (yesterday, today, and forever) mediates a new covenant (the sprinkling of blood for a new conscience) to the new Israel of God, is the way this new people of God live out their life in love for one another.

Possible goal of the sermon: That the hearer find their new life in Jesus Christ who died and now lives for them and offers Himself to them in His body and blood, now and forever.

Kent Burreson

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost **Philemon 1 (2-9) 10-21** **23 September 2001**

Liturgical context: As is often the case with the Epistle reading in the three-year series, the liturgical context is difficult; the reading from Philemon is no exception. The reading from Philemon has no obvious connection with either the Old Testament reading or the Gospel for the week; nor does it have an immediate connection with the Epistle reading from the preceding or the following Sunday. Philemon's liturgical out-of-placeness is fitting considering how many ancient and modern commentators have wondered why the book was included in the New Testament. For example, Chrysostom notes that some in his day considered Philemon superfluous because it added nothing important to the New Testament (NPNF I 13, 545).

Textual context: The pericope allows for the reading of nearly the entire letter. Verses 1-7 Paul's greeting and thanksgiving; Verses 8-20 Paul's intercession for Philemon; Verses 21-25 Conclusion and benediction.

Textual notes: Verse 1: Paul calls himself δέσμιος (prisoner), rather than apostle. Some have suggested Paul used the title "prisoner" not only because he was a prisoner of the Roman Empire and of Christ, but also to approach Philemon in humility rather than with the authority of his office as apostle. Although this explanation seems to fit the context of the letter, Paul also calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ or of the Lord in other places as well (see Eph. 3:1; 4:1; and 2 Tim. 1:8).

Paul addresses Philemon as συνεργός (fellow-worker). It is generally thought that fellow-worker refers to Philemon's support of the preaching of the Gospel in

the church.

Verse 2: Ἀφφία (Apphia) means “fruitful.” She is no doubt a member of Philemon’s household and quite possibly his wife.

Ἀρχιππος (Archippus) means “master of the horse.” He is quite likely the same man Paul mentions in Colossians 4:17. Archippus is addressed as a συστρατιώτης (a fellow soldier) that is a brother in the office of the ministry, a fellow pastor.

Verse 6: ἡ κοινωνία (the sharing) is nothing other than the sharing in the Lord’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper.

Verse 7: σπλάγχνον (bowels or inward parts) are the seat of emotion in Greek thought. In English, this might be equivalent to the emotions of the heart.

Verse 9: Once again Paul calls himself δέσμιος “prisoner.” The use in this verse supports the view that Paul desires to approach Philemon in humility.

Verse 10: Ὀνήσιμος (Onesimus) means “useful.” Later, Paul will make a pun on his name.

“Whom I have begotten in my bonds.” It would seem that Onesimus was not a Christian when he ran away from Philemon. Paul baptized Philemon in prison.

Verse 11: In this verse, Paul puns Onesimus’ name, which means “useful,” with ἄχρηστος (useless) and εὐχρηστος (useful).

Verse 12: Once again Paul speaks of his σπλάγχνον (bowels). Onesimus is Paul’s “bowels,” that is his very heart.

Verse 14: Although Paul is making a request of Philemon, he does not command him or require him to do it, but desires that Philemon is ἐκούσιος (willing or decides out of free will).

Verse 15-16: Onesimus ran away from Philemon for a while, but now that Onesimus is baptized, Philemon will have him forever as a brother in Christ. Paul is not abolishing the institution of slavery or making a social commentary on slavery. Formerly, Onesimus was merely a servant, but now he is a brother in Christ forever.

Verse 17: If Philemon considers Paul a “partaker” (κοινωνόν) of the body of Christ, then he should receive Onesimus as he would Paul, that is as one in whom the Lord has put His name and His body and His blood. This is how Christians receive one another; not for the sake of the person, but for the sake of the Lord Jesus who has given His body into the mouth of that person. One ought not dispose of a person whom the Lord has found worthy to receive His body and blood.

Verse 18: This is the Gospel in the book. If Onesimus has wronged Philemon, Paul charges that wrong to himself. This is what our Lord and Savior did for us; He took upon Himself the debt of our sin and paid for it with His holy and precious blood.

Verse 20: σπλάγχνον (bowels). Once again for the third time in the book, Paul is moved to such emotion to speak of his innermost self, his heart filled with joy, knowing that Philemon (v. 21) will do more than he asked.

Homiletical notes: St. Paul in this letter that first appears to deal with a minor, personal matter expertly divides Law and Gospel. Although Paul could command Philemon to receive Onesimus, he exhorts him and invites him of his free will to accept Onesimus the same as he would Paul, as a partaker of Christ’s body, a brother in Christ. The Gospel does not make demands or work by compulsion but suffers itself to be rejected and abused. Paul could ensure that Philemon receive Onesimus, but he does not. Instead, he invites Philemon to treat Onesimus as one on whom the Lord has put His name. Paul’s heart is full of joy in the confidence of

the Lord's work in Philemon, who will do more than Paul has asked. This is also how the Lord works in the Gospel. He always gives more forgiveness than we have sins. Because the Gospel is at work in Philemon, he will do more than required, and he will do it not under the compulsion of the Law but in the freedom and love that Christ has given him as a partaker of His body and His blood. Although there are many allusions to the Lord's Supper in the letter, the summary of the Gospel is verse 18 when Paul charges Onesimus' guilt to himself. Paul will pay Onesimus' debt to Philemon. Here the forgiveness of sins that Christ obtained on the cross is displayed in the lives of Paul and Philemon. Onesimus is forgiven not for the sake of Paul but for the sake of Christ, who has made Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus partakers of His body.

A sermon could simply expound the letter, highlighting Paul's division of the Law and the Gospel, as well as the allusions to the Lord's Supper, and the forgiveness given to Onesimus on account of Christ. Application then could be made to the hearers.

A more thematic approach may focus on verse 18 and Paul taking on Onesimus' debt as the way in which Christ took our debt and paid the Father with His holy, precious blood on the cross.

In either case, the focus is on Christ's forgiveness given to us. In this way, Philemon fits well with the collect for the day, "Grant, merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve you with a quite mind. . . ." Onesimus, made faithful in Holy Baptism and a partaker of the Lord's body and blood, received forgiveness and served the Lord in peace by serving Paul and Philemon, not as a slave but as a brother in Christ.

Albert B. Collver, III

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost **1 Timothy 1:12-17** **September 30, 2001**

1 Timothy 1:12-17 begins with thanksgiving and ends with one of the great doxologies of Scripture, so something must be going on in the middle! Sure enough, a close look reveals that here we have the story of the snatching of a violently blasphemous Prometheus-type insulter (take a good look at the concept of *hubris*, from the word translated "violent man" in the NIV) of God from the very gates of hell itself.

A cursory reading of this text makes it sound as if the reason for St. Paul's salvation somehow rests within him. Why does St. Paul say, "I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief?" Is he saying that ignorance is his excuse, that Jesus "made allowance" for his actions, that Jesus said, "well, it's not his fault, he just doesn't know any better?" Jesus' words from the cross come to mind, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Does the fact that those soldiers acted in ignorance of who Jesus was excuse them, so that they were not really sinning? Jesus' use of the word forgive would argue against that—only sin needs forgiveness! Is Jesus worried that His Father will be so blinded by rage that these soldiers are hurting His Son that He will automatically condemn them? Hardly. Why would Jesus need to "remind" His Father to forgive these men? Because on the surface they are committing the unforgivable sin, the sin against the Holy Spirit. By their actions they are saying that the Holy One of God is a criminal

deserving of death. They appear to be saying that holiness is evil. Jesus “reminds” His Father (and the Gospel readers) that these men have no idea that they are doing anything other than executing a duly condemned criminal, and are not nailing Him to the cross because He is the true Messiah. They are not rejecting Him for who He really is, but for who they have been told He is.

Similarly with St. Paul, then. Yes, he was guilty of blasphemy, but not because he rejected who Jesus really is. Rather, in his ignorance St. Paul followed the Pharisaical tradition he had been taught, and thought he was serving God in rejecting Christ and persecuting Christians. He was still sinning, of course, but not committing the sin against the Holy Spirit, even though that might appear to be the case, and even though he was as close as close could be to that sin.

The part of the action of Christ showing mercy that resides in St. Paul, then, is purely the eligibility, that is, he needs the mercy and he has not committed the sin against the Holy Spirit that would prevent him receiving what he needs.

In verse 16, where again it looks like the mercy is dependent in some way on St. Paul, it is, in fact, still all Christ’s mercy. The part St. Paul plays in this is simply that he is such a good example of how low Christ can and will reach, how far into the jaws of hell He will rescue one from. Because Paul has committed every sin but the unforgivable sin, because he has publicly come closer to eternal damnation than anyone else, because no one could be any guiltier of any sin than Paul, Christ’s action of showing mercy to him proves the case that He will show mercy to me, no matter who I am or what I have done.

St. Paul, therefore, can say, “Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the cosmos to save sinners, the first being me myself.” But how should I read this verse? “Christ came to save sinners, St. Paul being the worst?” No doubt this is stretching it a bit, but as I (whoever I might be) read this, I know the depth of my own sin (if I have dared, based on the Gospel, to be really honest in confession) better than I know the depths you (whoever you might be) have fallen into. Perhaps this is carrying things a bit too far, but maybe what makes this word of St. Paul so faithful and worthy of acceptance is that every Christian can say and mean it. The blasphemous, violent, prideful guilt of my own sin, as I alone know it, ranks higher on the list of sinners than the sin of any other human as far as I can tell.

The lives of the saints bear this out. As one reads the writings of those whom others call “saints” this common thread runs through them—“I am chief among sinners.” What drove Luther to wreck his health in acts of penance in the monastery, though he was more pious than all his brother monks? Then, when he learned the Gospel, did he say, “I was mistaken, I really wasn’t such a sinner?” Hardly!

Thus every Christian can join in singing, “Chief of Sinners Though I Be,” not in a theoretical sense but as a factual confession.

There is another song to sing. “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise” also begins from this text. If it is true that St. Paul, though such a sinner, did receive mercy and is saved, then he must break out in a great doxology, and so he does. If it is true that I have received mercy, that I am forgiven and saved from the things I have done, then I too must break out into a high doxology.

Preaching this text will require first that the preacher determine whether he truly counts himself chief among sinners. If he has been struggling with his elders, or one of the unelected leaders of the congregation, or his wife, or whomever, and has developed a feeling that, though he is a sinner, he is not as bad as _____, then he better either get that straight while on his knees before Sunday or else he better pick a different text. This one can only be preached by the congregation’s number

one sinner.

Next, this text requires that the beautiful Gospel does its work in the preacher's life, that he enters the pulpit singing with St. Paul of Christ's blessed mercy. Though he must face his sin squarely, he may not bring a guilty conscience to the pulpit and think he will be able to preach this text! The words here are the overflowing thanks and praise of one rescued just before the gates of hell swung shut behind him, who is now bathed in Christ's mercy.

Finally, preaching this text calls for a missionary zeal. If the preacher knows he was in the same lost condition as St. Paul, but now is rescued by the same mercy of Christ, he can only, with St. Paul, say, "It was in order that I might proclaim this truth that I was rescued from such disaster."

Suggested outline:

- I. Chief of sinners—St. Paul? (Note that he makes no excuses, only points out that he has not committed the unforgivable sin. List his sins. Make his case.)
- II. Chief of sinners—Me? (Note how each of us knows our own sins better than we know the sins of others. Although we often try to make excuses, deep down our conscience prevents us from believing them. Make the case that any one of us might be able to claim the title of Number One Sinner.)
- III. Chief of sinners—Jesus! (If, in fact, He carried the sins of all, He is the undisputed champion sinner. But look what happened as a result!)

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, only God, honor and glory into ages of ages. Amen!"

Jeff Moore

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

1 Timothy 2:1-8

October 7, 2001

1 Timothy 2:1-8 provides an opportunity to concentrate on prayer in the context of the congregation. St. Paul does not distinguish between corporate prayer and private prayer in this text, leaving the impression that perhaps a distinction makes little sense. That is, he speaks of the men praying in such a way that the prayers may be happening in the gathering or in the home. There is no indication that he is picturing only one man leading the prayer as the pastor would in the liturgy, nor is there any indication that he pictures this praying activity as fractured into each man praying privately in his own home.

Rather, St. Paul seems to be speaking of the prayer life of the entire congregation, or even the whole church (verse 8 gives this impression) in all its aspects. He uses four Greek words for prayer, *δεήσεις*, *προσευχαίς*, *ἐντεύξεις*, and *εὐχαριστίας* to speak of "the whole range of prayer rather than of the distinction of individual aspects" (Kittel, vol. 2, p. 807). An attempt to draw distinctions between these four will yield some slightly different shades of meaning, but it appears that Greeven in Kittel is correct, that St. Paul is picturing a "ministry of intercession" in all its aspects rather than trying to say, "pray this kind of prayer, and this kind, and this, and this." "Pray without ceasing" fits in with this picture of a prayer life of a whole congregation, or even the prayer life of the whole church. There is no flavor here of the church triumphant somehow figuring into this prayer life, but

Christ Himself certainly does as “the mediator between God and man” (v. 5).

To preach this text, then, will call for placing before the hearers a picture of each person being a part of a whole life of prayer manifested first within the family (St. Paul’s distinction between the role of the men from the role of the women, which follows in verse 9, leads to this picture of the head of the family leading in prayer), then the congregation, then the whole church on earth. Perhaps the preacher might choose to speak of “personal prayer” rather than “private prayer,” picturing an interdependence among all those who pray, holy saints of God joined in the common task of raising from earth a single voice of petition and thanksgiving to the Father through our Lord. While it would require great care, the preacher might even choose to use Dr. Seuss’s “Horton Hears a Who,” with its single young shirker whose voice, when finally added to all the other voices, raises the cry for help over the threshold so all the animals can hear it. (There are problems in this analogy if carried very far at all, but a skillful preacher should be able to avoid them.)

If prayer is then pictured as, in a way, always corporate, yet at the same time always personal, the next question is the content of the prayer. St. Paul speaks of praying for all people, and thus all needs and all thanks, but then zeroes in on praying for those in authority with the idea that peace and quiet on the national and international level helps somehow in the spread of the Gospel for the salvation which God desires for all.

This text is straight exhortation, leaving the preacher hunting for Gospel to preach, not just to mention. It is not enough just to mention that God wants all men to be saved, or that Jesus is our Mediator. The Gospel message needs to be preached. Perhaps the most direct route, the one most in tune with this text, will be found in the implicit truth that God hears these prayers brought to Him through His mediating Son, the one who became man and can hear the prayers of men with the ears of one who has lived in this troubled world and suffered the death that comes to a man of peace in a world of war. There is no need to “import” Gospel here, simply to listen for it carefully.

In a church where the congregation may be told to be seated in order to sing, “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus,” there is the danger that a magnificent sermon on prayer might be set in a worship service that takes no special care for the Prayer of the Church! Part of proper preparation for this sermon would include making sure that the leaders of our local, state, and national governments are prayed for, along with the leaders of all the nations of the world. In a congregation which uses the General Prayer this might be a good Sunday to somehow emphasize these particular petitions, perhaps naming those occupying the offices or adding special petitions thanking God for the peace and freedom of worship that we enjoy in this land. In a congregation which does not use the General Prayer ordinarily, this might be a good Sunday to use it, or to use at least this part of it. In some way, though, it would seem fitting to pray directly for “kings and all authorities” with the stated goal of peace that will prosper the spread of the Gospel. In many LCMS congregations there might have been a tendency for the last eight years to neglect our national leadership in prayer, or perhaps even to have prayed more against our leaders than for them. Whatever one’s political bent, God through St. Paul commands us to pray for our leaders diligently, and this would be a good Sunday to especially heed this command.

Probably the greatest danger in preaching this text would be to preach only on the phrase “God desires all men to be saved,” turning this into a proof text against limited atonement. This text is an exhortation given by the Holy Spirit through St.

Paul to St. Timothy and then to all pastors concerning the prayer of the church, and to narrow the focus until prayer is less than the main point of the sermon is to do violence to the text.

Proclamation of the Law here will come easy. Few preachers and few hearers have the kind of prayer life pictured here. Few LCMS members would dare claim to be praying for our leaders in the way St. Paul commands. Proclamation of the Gospel, as mentioned above, will require more diligent attention to the fact that God hears, and just why it is that He hears—for the sake of Jesus.

Suggested outline:

- I. Who prays? (Interdependent persons linked together in family, congregation, church.)
- II. What is prayed? (Intercession for all, but not just in a lump—and with special emphasis on those with special needs, notable our rulers, with the goal that conditions will be best for the proclamation of the Gospel)
- III. How's *your* prayer going, measured against this standard? *Our* prayer as a congregation?

Someone's listening! Someone who wants to save, who wants to give, who has already proved how much he cares.

Jeff Moore

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost **1 Timothy 6:6-16** **October 14, 2001**

Preliminary considerations: Near the end of Year C there are seven semi-continuous readings from 1 and 2 Timothy. While they are not close links with the Gospels and the Old Testament readings, there are obvious connections on the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Luke 16's contrast between the rich man and poor Lazarus relates to 1 Timothy 6:9 (loving money too much). Amos 6 warns those who are too "at ease in Zion" to care about the "ruin of Joseph." The Gradual points to the depth of "the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 11:33)—like Paul's "godliness with contentment."

Since 1 Timothy is addressed to a young pastor, the preacher will undoubtedly hear Paul's message as addressed directly to him. What then is the potential for his hearers? Surely verses 6-16 are applicable to anyone who trusts in Jesus and follows Him. The wise preacher will illustrate this apostolic teaching with material from the lives of his hearers. Paul treats two aspects of the love of money: (1) why the desire to be rich leads to ruin and (2) why aiming at righteousness (by grace through faith) is the proper antidote to a craving for money. Since many congregations have a stewardship effort in November, a reading like this in October helps prepare worshippers for stewardship issues.

Seek Faith, not Money

Introduction: The activities of collectors of dolls (stamps, old automobiles, recipes, antiques, or sports memorabilia) reveal something of the true self. Life is arranged to find and buy what is dear to them. Such activity yields a certain contentment and fulfillment. Like them, we Christians should seek godliness for

the contentment and reward that it brings.

I. Godliness—what is that?

It is no secret that to be “godly” is to have something (spiritual) that comes from God or to be a person who observes the laws of God or who is wise in divine things. Essentially, a godly person is a collector of the godly word, directive, wisdom, and way of living. So Paul urges Timothy to train himself in godliness (1 Tim. 4:7), to see godliness as something of value in every way (4:8), to view Jesus’ teachings as words that suit godliness (6:3), to separate himself from those who like to argue about God and think that godliness is a means of gain (6:5), to find great gain in “godliness with contentment” and to aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, etc. (6:11). Paul’s instruction to Titus has a similar thrust (Titus 1:1). 2 Peter says that the divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness (1:3), that this knowledge leads to self-control to steadfastness, to godliness, to brotherly affection, and to love (1:6-7) and that a life of godliness is a life of holiness (8:11).

Thus, when God by the power of the Gospel turns a person from serving self to trusting in the redemption Christ brings, the God-given new life is one of being one who desires, finds, collects, and treasures the godly word, godly command, godly wisdom, and godly way of life. These treasures bring contentment and are profitable in this world and the next. There is “great gain in godliness with contentment” (1 Tim. 6:6).

II. The desire to be rich leads to spiritual destruction.

With what can we be content? If we have food and clothing—the necessities which sustain life—we can be content. Everything is from God. “We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world” (6:7). Some, like the US film producer Louis B. Mayer (1885-1957) of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer fame, when reminded by a friend that he could not take his wealth with him at death, would respond, “If I can’t take it with me, I won’t go.” They do not recognize that it all comes from God; they think it is all theirs.

Others are like the actor George Raft (1895-1980) who specialized in sinister gangster roles and earned and spent about ten million. He said, “Part of the loot went for gambling, part for horses, and part for women. The rest I spent foolishly.” The desire to be rich and enjoy wealth is so strong that it becomes a snare pulling them into eternal ruin and destruction. If we get drawn into amassing money because of our love of it, we can only expect anxiety and trouble. So Paul can say, “the love of money is the root of all evils” (6:10). Money becomes our god and we are eternally lost. In such a case Christ’s salvation is something we do not seek or desire; we can receive no forgiveness or eternal life.

III. True contentment comes from taking hold of eternal life.

By grace through faith in Jesus Christ we are God’s children and servants. With God’s help we shun all this chasing after money and whatever it brings. Instead our search in life is for these gifts from God: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. We find ourselves confessing Christ, claiming His redemption as our treasure. Indeed when we are tempted and chase after money, we have a Redeemer from this sin. It is Jesus. He did not refrain from identifying Himself as God’s own Son and God made Him—through His victory on the cross and over the grave—the “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Now everything is under His rule. He receives all honor and glory. And we will be taken to be with Him—enriched forever in His presence and contented

beyond all our dreams.

Conclusion: When godliness replaces our love of money, we will have an attitude like George Washington Carver (1864-1943) had. Once, when the crash of an Alabama bank caused him to lose \$70,000 Carver simply said, “Somebody found a use for it; I was not using it myself.” We are not collectors of money or of anything else. We are about faith, that is, trust in a God who would give His own Son for us. We treasure godliness.

James L. Brauer

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
2 Timothy 1:3-14
October 21, 2001

Preliminary considerations: In the first of four semi-continuous readings from 2 Timothy Paul remembers his young coworker and encourages him not to be ashamed of the Gospel. This reading, while admitting that there is suffering for the Gospel, points to its power and makes a beautiful case for the ministry God gave Timothy, Paul and all who serve the teaching and preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel reading (Luke 17:1-10), a series of sayings, contains a command to have enough patience to forgive a brother seven times in a day and provides a response to the apostles’ request to increase their faith. Jesus says, “If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed,....” The Old Testament reading (Hab. 1:1-3; 2:1-14) asks God, why do I have to see wrongs and trouble, and urges patience in such circumstances—for “the righteous shall live by his faith.” A sermon on the Epistle then could explore how the ministry of the Gospel is important to and serves well those who live by faith.

Comments on the text: Verse 4: τὴν περὶ σοῦ μνεΐαν. Paul had many memories to draw on when he prayed for Timothy. Timothy had been an associate of Paul and Silvanus at Corinth. From Athens Paul had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage that young congregation in a time of persecution and Timothy was able to return with a good report about their steadfast faith. In 1 Thessalonians 3:2 Paul calls him a “brother and God’s servant in the gospel of Christ.” In Romans 16:21 Timothy is called a “fellow worker.” When Timothy carries Paul’s letter to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:10), Paul calls him “my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (4:17). In 2 Corinthians 1:1 Timothy is again with Paul (at Ephesus?). Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon also mention Timothy as a faithful companion. In 1 Timothy 1:2 Paul had referred to him as “my true child in the faith.” To Paul Timothy was like a child and a brother as well as co-worker, frequently taking on tasks that Paul assigns him.

Verse 6: ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ. Paul reminds Timothy to rekindle the gift of God that is within him (to cause to begin again, to reactivate, to take on new life, to keep the gift alive). What is this gift? (1) Certainly it could be faith and its righteousness which comes from the Lord through His Word (1 Tim. 1:18), but, more specifically, here (2) it is the ministry of teaching the truths of faith in Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 4:14). This is confirmed by verses 7-8.

Verse 7: πνεῦμα δειλίας ἀλλὰ δυνάμεως. Timidity (having one’s heart disappear) is contrasted with power. A spirit of timidity comes from the collapse of a central belief or loss of conviction. Lack of faith leads to fear. A spirit of power, on the other hand, is given by God and is accompanied by love and self-control. It brings

moderation, an ability to behave in a sensible manner without being off-balance or reacting out of fear or from a sense of powerlessness. It provides an ability to understand how to make wise decisions. It makes aware of what is best.

Verse 8: τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. One testifies or witnesses, that is, brings information about a person or event, presenting the direct knowledge that one has. The content of what is witnessed or said becomes the testimony. Here it is “of God,” from or about Him. More precisely it is “brought...to light through the gospel” (v. 10). Since the power is in the Gospel, not in the one who bears the testimony, fear can come only with doubt in the Gospel’s power or with the notion that the power flows from the one who gives a testimony (information).

Verse 11: εἰς ὃ ἐτέθην ἐγὼ (“for this [Gospel] I was appointed”). Here is a reference to the Gospel ministry which the Augsburg Confession V so clearly attests to:

So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments as through instruments the Holy Spirit is given, who effects faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel, that is to say, in those who hear that God, not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace on account of Christ. Galatians 3:[14b]: “So that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to human beings without the external Word through their own preparations and works (Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000], 41).

Verse 12: φυλάξαι. This word contains a picture: that of guarding a prisoner closely, e.g., walking alongside, holding his arm, never taking one’s eyes off of him. Thus, not only is the power of the Gospel (entrusted to Paul, to Timothy, etc.) to be guarded by God, but God accompanies the Gospel to oversee its whereabouts and behavior. This will continue until Christ returns. Note that in verse 14 the same word is used, but here it is Timothy who is to “guard” the truth he has been given.

Verse 13: Ὑποτύπωσιν ἔχε ὑγιαίνόντων λόγων (“follow the pattern of the sound words”). “Sound” words are those that are “healthy,” not “sick.” Such words bring life and freedom from destructive powers. False teaching never does this. “Pattern” implies model behavior, example. Timothy got sound words, God’s word, from Lois, Eunice and Paul. The pattern of testimony to the Gospel should continue; Timothy must hand on what was given to him.

Suggested outline:

- I. A pattern for sound words.
 - A. Timothy’s upbringing by Lois and Eunice.
 - B. Timothy, chosen by Paul and instructed in the ways of a pastor.
 - C. The power of the Gospel.
- II. The ministry of the Gospel today.
 - A. The purpose of a congregation’s Word and Sacrament ministry.
 - B. Bringing sound words in times of trouble and testing.
 - C. Witnessing to the next generation of believers.

James L. Brauer

Reformation Sunday
Romans 3:19-28
October 28, 2001

By Faith Alone

Introduction: The title phrase is one of the great Reformation slogans: Grace alone, Faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone. Luther used it in his German Bible when translating Romans 3:28, making Paul say: “a man is justified by faith alone.” However, “alone” is not in the original Greek. What, then? Is the Reformation teaching actually based on an invention, a lie read into the text? No, it expresses what is actually taught in the sermon text today in other words, as the sermon will show.

- I. One cannot be declared righteous by the works of the Law (v. 20).
 - A. This statement is part of the conclusion to the section in which Paul showed that not even the Jews, who had the revealed Law in the Old Testament Scriptures, could be justified by keeping the commands found there. Previously he had shown that the Gentile heathen cannot be reconciled to God by the natural law in their hearts (1:32; 2:12-16).
 - B. The Law makes us conscious of our sin (v. 20). It reveals our lost condition. It shows us what sin is and shows us what sinners we are.
- II. The saving righteousness comes only to those who believe in Christ (vv. 21-24).
 - A. There is no difference among human beings as to whether anyone is a sinner and needs salvation. These alarming facts are true of all.
 - B. All need the redemption by which Christ redeems from the slavery of sin and guilt. Justification is always given freely—as a gift, as the Greek word (*dorean*) for “freely” literally says.
- III. God has proposed Christ Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood (vv. 25-26).
 - A. God seemed in Old Testament times to be less than just and righteous, since many sins were not immediately punished. So it seems to many people today also.
 - B. Now the New Testament brings God’s proposal for the irrefutable demonstration of His righteousness—the horrific punishment of all sins in the death of His Son. It is a “sacrifice of atonement” for the sins of the world. The Greek word so translated (in the New Revised Standard Version and the New International Version) belongs to a word group (*hilasterion, hilasmos, hilaskomai*) in the New Testament and the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), which was used to refer to the propitiation of wrath (e.g., 2 Kings 24:4; Lev. 25:9). It also was used for the sacrificial offerings for sin (Ezek. 44:27) and the lid of the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, on which the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled. The sacrificial system foreshadowed the implementation of God’s gracious proposal: the reconciliation of the world unto Himself by the death of Christ as seen in 1 Corinthians 5:19. This was a propitiation of the divine wrath against the world of sinners, of which Paul had written earlier (1:18). The “world-reconciliation” comes to the one who has faith in His

blood and trusts that all this was done by a God who loves him and would have him to be saved.

IV. Boasting of works is excluded by the faith principle (v. 27).

No one can rightly say that he has earned his salvation by works. The faith principle is the truth that God wills and proposes that sinners be justified through faith in the blood of His Son. Faith is the recognition of one's utter need for the gracious gift.

Conclusion: This text shapes an attitude within us for us to live by. It is the humble spirit of praise to God which says with C. F. W. Walther: "To man all the shame, to God all the glory!"

Thomas Manteufel

On the reading of many books...”

MISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: ISRAEL AS A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS.

By Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. 103 pages. Paper. \$8.99.

As one who shares the author’s conviction that the whole of Scripture, Old Testament included, is properly understood only when its missiological drive is kept foremost, the undersigned was delighted to catch up with this intriguing book from a well-known evangelical interpreter of the Old Testament (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary).

As anticipated, there is much to affirm in this book, particularly the author’s holistic view of the Old Testament as Scripture. The mission outreach of God is properly rooted in God’s initial response to Adam and Eve’s sin, traced through God’s call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) and of Israel (Ex. 19:4-6), and then celebrated in the Psalter. Kaiser goes on to describe individual believing Gentiles, spending considerable space (almost 10% of the book) discussing “my friend” Walter Maier III’s study of the Naaman pericope (*CTQ* 97, 177ff.). Kaiser continues his survey of the Old Testament by discussing the Servant Songs, Jonah, other prophets, and then concludes by tracing Paul’s missionary calling to its Old Testament roots. To this study, Kaiser appends a glossary, bibliography, and several indices.

As much as there is to affirm in this book, there are some serious shortcomings, however. One is its brevity. By the time the appendices and introductory materials are peeled off, there are less than seventy pages of text, which means that much of the richness of the Old Testament expression of the *missio Dei* is left unattended. Something, of course, is better than nothing, but this seemed disappointingly brief. Of more significance are several methodological issues. One is a tendency to blend Old and New Testaments in a way that attributes to Old Testament times and people a New Testament faith, which in turn robs the New Testament of what is truly and uniquely new. In speaking of the faith of Old Testament saints, for instance, Kaiser avers that “to believe in one part of this promise was to affirm that one believed in all the promise” (41)—which consigns him to finding ways to explain away obvious faults in the faith of some of those saints. Another is such an overriding concern to document the *missio Israel* that he lets slip into secondary place what seems to this reviewer to be primary and fundamental, namely, the *missio Dei*, in which Israel is called to exercise alternatively active and passive, centrifugal and centripetal mission activities. A final concern is his idiosyncratic reading of individual pericopes: reference to the “seed” in Genesis 9:27 (20), translating “kingdom of priests” in Exodus 19:6 as “kings and priests or royal priests to God” (23).

It is refreshing and important for an exegete to articulate the mission heart of the Old Testament. That mission heart is not merely the importation of anachronistic missionary agendas, but is the expression of the *missio Dei*. Its study is as properly the task of exegetical theology as of missiology. For picking up that task, we are grateful to Kaiser. The challenge is now for others to extend and to refine it.

Henry Rowold

THE THEOLOGY OF THE APOSTLES: *The Development of New Testament Theology*. By Adolf Schlatter. Translated by Andraeus J. Kostenberger from the original German (edition of 1922). Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 453 pages. Cloth. \$39.99.

For all of us who were blessed to have Dr. Martin Franzmann as a professor of Biblical Theology, reading Adolf Schlatter's monograph is like sitting down to a great banquet with an old friend. Professor Franzmann enthusiastically recommended the writings of Adolf Schlatter, and clearly Schlatter profoundly influenced the spiritual vitality and theological acumen of our sainted teacher. Now, for the first time, English readers have available in translation the second volume (second edition) of Schlatter's New Testament theology. Kostenberger merits praise not only for his lucid translation of Schlatter's often complex German but also because he supplies helpful information of the original scholarly reaction (9-22). Equally helpful is Robert W. Yarbrough's concluding essay, "Modern Reception of Schlatter's New Testament Theology" (417-431). The English publication includes helpful indexes of subject and Scripture passages.

A good way to initiate review of Schlatter's profound work may be to cite his three key hermeneutical principles according to the translator's succinct identification and review. First, Schlatter "distinguished categorically between historical exegesis and 'dogmatics'" (10). Schlatter provides a timely reminder that exegesis must precede dogmatics. The constant temptation to start with dogmatics and then seek Biblical support for preconceived ideas is doomed to failure. Second, "historical research must confine itself to the exploration of available sources" (ibid.). Refreshingly, Schlatter did not engage in debate over source critical theories or attack their proponents. He simply reads and explains the Bible. This does not mean that Schlatter is naïve or uncritical in his Bible study. His chapters (in section II, 51-185) on Peter, Matthew, James, Jude, and John, together with an entire section (part III, 187-321) on Paul explore carefully the different nuances or emphases of the inspired authors. Yet, Schlatter always finds unity in the diversity. Schlatter's third hermeneutical conviction "connected Jesus' teaching in relation to his actual work rather than focusing exclusively on Jesus' proclamation" (10). "Jesus' major purpose was not the impartation of dogmatic or ethical instruction (a *Heilslehre*) but the establishment of the saving, kingly rule of God (Jesus' *Heilswille*)," (11, italics in original). Schlatter also clearly connects the message and ministry of Jesus with apostolic teaching. He gives a timely reminder that New Testament theology is an evangelical, pastoral, missionary, and spiritual task.

Schlatter's monograph is too detailed and complex for easy summary. The last section (section V, "The Knowledge Possessed by the Early Church"), however, can serve well as a review of the work and an invitation to read the whole. Schlatter summarizes the Good News of the apostles by describing their teaching of the God of Christendom and of the task to be accomplished by the church. With regard to the teaching of God, Schlatter marshals passages from throughout the New Testament linking them and showing how the truths structure themselves in ways that lead to formulation of the three articles of the Apostle's Creed. The task of the church is to provide leadership as Jesus' messengers, pneumatics, teachers, and exegetes of Scripture. Although the section on sacramental ministry (Baptism and Eucharist) is important and helpful, I thought that Schlatter's words on the unity and differences in the church were especially profound and surprisingly timely.

Unity is found in faith, the common struggle for ethical norms, uniting the community in love, and common hope. Difference within the church stems from conflicting opinions and traditions about the office established for the welfare and benefit of congregations (with the two levels of episcopate and diaconate), those who renounce possessions or marriage, the attitude toward martyrs, and ethnic challenges (Jew and Gentile). Within the LCMS, Schlatter's insights on the Biblical teaching of office provide much food for thought. Within the changing demographics of the USA, individuals and congregations can learn much from his historical review about continuity and change as the Word and apostolic mission moved from a Jewish to a Hellenistic world.

In conclusion, this reviewer is confident that readers will find *The Theology of the Apostles* methodologically challenging, intellectually stimulating, and spiritually enlightening. I marked sentences useful for new scholarly insights, and quotations for sermons, Bible classes, and personal devotional reflection. This is a very good book.

Robert Holst
St. Paul, MN

BIBLE INTERPRETERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY. Edited by Walter A. Elwell and J. D. Weaver. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 445 pages. Cloth. \$24.99.

The editors' stated purpose is to "provide basic information about certain influential evangelical interpreters of the Bible" and thereby to make it available to members of the younger generation for whom these scholars are little more than names.

The editors have chosen to review thirty-five Biblical scholars who have lived entirely or mainly in the twentieth century, and who qualify as "evangelicals" according to the editors' somewhat broad definition of that term. Many of the scholars chosen for review are well-known to generations of LCMS seminary students and pastors, e.g., Adolf Schlatter, Richard Lenski, Edward Young, and Bruce Metzger.

Not only the scholars under review, but the editors themselves and all the authors of the articles can probably be considered "evangelicals" as defined by the editors. Two of the reviewers are LCMS theologians (Erich Kiehl and Robert Rosin). One of the editors (Elwell) has also written one of the articles, and another reviewer (Walter Kaiser) is also the subject of one of the studies.

For anyone who has any sensitivity to the "liberal vs. conservative" battle over the interpretation of the Bible that has raged for more than a century, most of these studies make fascinating reading. One of the early conservative warriors was William Henry Green (1825-1900). The author of the study (Marion Ann Taylor) gives a brief biography in which she describes how Green, a brilliant student of Biblical Hebrew, became embroiled in the battle over the Scriptures at Princeton Theological Seminary. This is followed by a summary of Green's publications, his interchange with liberal scholars, and an elaboration of his reasons for adhering to the concept of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch in the face of liberal attacks. Overall, Green's emphasis on questions of canon, text, and the authority of the Bible laid the groundwork for later studies in these areas.

LCMS theologians will be particularly interested in the article on Theodor Zahn (1838-1933) by Erich Kiehl. Zahn was a New Testament scholar who taught

at a number of German universities, including Erlangen. His most significant work was a nine-volume study of the New Testament canon. He also edited a seventeen-volume commentary series on the New Testament.

Another fascinating study concerns Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938), who in spite of over 420 publications was not highly regarded by the German liberal establishment. Nevertheless, he was a favorite of a number of LCMS seminary professors who especially valued his ten-volume running commentary on the entire New Testament. The title of this work was *Erlaeuterungen zum Neuen Testament*. One of the other hallmarks of Schlatter's scholarship was his attention to the Jewish background to the New Testament.

Many older pastors in the LCMS will have used several volumes of R. C. H. Lenski's commentaries on the New Testament. Concordia Seminary professor Robert Rosin is the author of the articles on Lenski. Lenski, who lived 1864-1936, was born in Prussia and, after coming to the U.S. with his parents, enrolled in studies which led him to the Lutheran Seminary of the Ohio Synod in Columbus, Ohio. Twenty-six years after becoming a student there, he returned as a professor. Author Rosin, himself a historian, does an excellent job of tracing Lenski's influence both at the seminary where he taught, as well as in the Ohio Synod. The account of an argument over non-theological matters between Lenski and a professor Pflueger demonstrates that Lenski had a penchant for controversy. Lenski frequently did the conservative cause that he espoused harm by his authoritarian manner. Rosin's assessment of Lenski's New Testament commentaries is especially insightful as he points out Lenski's shortcomings in his exegetical method, while nevertheless coming to solid Lutheran conclusions.

These are just a few examples of the thirty-five articles in the book which, taken together, make fascinating reading for any serious student of the history of Biblical interpretation over the last century. In the process, it very well carries out its stated purpose.

Merlin D. Rehm
Bronxville, NY

HOSEA, JOEL, AND AMOS. By Bruce C. Birch. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. 262 pages. Paper. \$19.00.

The author, a professor of Old Testament at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., has written a book which fits very well into the Westminster Bible Companion series. This series is designed for the intellectually inclined layperson who has a strong interest in the Bible. It takes the NRSV text (which is printed out in the book) as its starting point and comments on that. The commentaries in this series are arranged in the traditional order, rather than in a reconstructed chronological order.

The book under discussion begins with fifteen pages of introductory material, including a consideration of the importance of the book in the Bible, a summary of the historical context of the book, suggestions for how the book came to be written, a statement of the major themes in the book, and indications of how the book applies specifically to a Christian audience.

In his interpretation of Hosea, Birch focuses on the aspects of the book which he feels would particularly create difficulties for the lay reader. On the matter of the "wife of whoredom" (1:2), he presents the various interpretations and then

concludes that Hosea's wife Gomer was not a prostitute by profession but someone who behaved like a harlot. This behavior did not stop when Hosea married her. Though Birch understands Hosea's marriage to be an actual marriage, he believes it was intended to symbolize God's relationship to Israel.

In the important section, 6:1-4, he points out that the people's words (which on the surface sound like a sincere repentance) are really inadequate. This is proven by God's reaction in verse 4 ("What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?").

Birch does a good job of portraying the "heart of God" in his interpretation of 11:8-9 and 13:14. In the first instance, God states, "I will not execute my fierce anger" (against Israel's sins), but in His final assessment He concludes, "compassion is hidden from my eyes." Birch then goes on to suggest why, in the context of Christ's death and resurrection, it was proper for St. Paul to reinterpret Hosea 13:14 in 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Birch's consideration of the plague of locusts referred to in Joel chapter 1 is quite poignant. He tells of his own experience on the plains of Kansas imagining a similar plague of locusts (grasshoppers) based on a reading of O.E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. Agreeing with Joel, Birch states that there is nothing one can do in the face of such a crisis except "sanctify a fast," gather in "solemn assembly," and to "cry out to the Lord," thereby recognizing God as the only source of hope.

In his interpretation of Amos, Birch considers the question of whether, as some scholars contend, the doxologies in 4:13, 5:8-9, and 9:5-6 are the product of a later editorial hand. Birch disagrees with this view and states that these doxology texts are an important part of Amos' original message.

Birch suggests that Amos' enigmatic statement in 7:14, usually translated "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son," should be put into the past tense, which is permissible since in Hebrew there is no linking verb in this sentence. Birch sees in the translation, "I *was* no prophet, nor a prophet's son," an emphasis on the call of Amos as a prophet at a time when he had no prior training for this position. He compares this to John Wesley sending lay preachers from England to the American colonies.

These are just samples of what the targeted reader (a "layperson") has to look forward to. The book concludes with a brief bibliography for each of the three Biblical books studied. All in all, this is a book well worth reading.

Merlin D. Rehm
Bronxville, NY

THE WISDOM OF THE GREEK FATHERS. Compiled by Andrew Louth. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. 48 pages. Cloth. \$6.95.

When I requested a review copy of this book, I was intrigued by the title, and, having overlooked the physical aspects of the book such as its dimensions (6½ x 9 inches) and the number of pages (of which seven contain only a chapter title and illustration; most pages are not filled with text—one page, in fact, contains only five words of text plus quotation number, subsection heading, attribution, illustration, and page number), I was initially surprised and felt somewhat let down. When I first examined the book, I realized that it is one book whose review could have a larger word count than the book itself. Nevertheless, the book ended up being anything but a disappointment.

The Introduction sets the stage for reading this little volume by calling attention to the tension in Greek patristic thought between the transcendence and immanence of God. In speaking of divine transcendence the compiler gives an interesting quotation from a pagan Greek philosopher, Damascius, who said that God is so transcendent that “we do not even know whether he is unknowable” (6). The Greek Fathers were on target in emphasizing this paradoxical nature of God, which, if ignored or skewed too far in either direction, completely distorts the very nature of God and His meaning for our lives. The tension, of course, merges in the person of the incarnate Christ, who is so much like us (that we can experience Him) and yet so much beyond us (that we can never fully comprehend Him).

As Louth points out, this paradox motivated the Greek Fathers not to make the mistake of seeing theology only as an intellectual exercise, but also as a means of encountering faith as an experience, realized in prayer, in experiencing the love of God in the incarnation, and in the liturgy.

The book consists of thirty quotations from select Greek Fathers dated after 312 A.D., which Louth considers the year of Constantine the Great’s conversion to Christianity. The quotations are grouped under seven section headings, namely, God, Creation, Sin and the Fall, Incarnation, The Virtues, Prayer and Knowledge of God, and The Church. The Fathers quoted range from well-known figures like Athanasius and John Chrysostom to lesser-known individuals like Diadochus of Photike and Romanus the Singer.

Although one can read the book in a matter of minutes, it was not intended for a single reading. The best use of this book is to read one of the quotations at the beginning of the day or week and reflect on it for the rest of the day or week before proceeding to another quotation. In each of the quotations there is a profundity of meaning encapsulated in an economy of words. Even the last quotation from John Chrysostom of only five words, “Glory to God for everything” (47), cannot be put out of one’s mind too readily, especially when he or she reads the notation that, not only was that John’s habitual exclamation, but also his last words when he died under the harsh conditions of his exile. These words take on even greater significance when they are fleshed out against John’s brilliant, but star-crossed career as Bishop of Constantinople, one of the church’s greatest preachers, and writer of hymns and liturgy.

Perhaps two quotations from the section on Virtues will serve to entice clergy and others to acquire this little volume. First of all, on Faith:

The deep waters of faith seem turbulent when we peer into them too curiously; but when contemplated in a spirit of simplicity, they are calm. The depths of faith are like the waters of Lethe, making us forget all evil; they will not reveal themselves to the scrutiny of meddlesome reasoning. Let us therefore sail these waters with simplicity of mind, and so reach the harbour of God’s will (Diadochus of Photike, 29).

And on Humility:

Repentance lifts one up. Mourning knocks at heaven’s gate. Holy humility opens it. This I say, and I worship a Trinity in Unity and a Unity in Trinity. The sun lights up everything visible. Humility reaches across everything done according to reason. Where there is no light, all is in darkness. Where there is no humility, all is rotten (John Climacus, 30).

The book is a visual delight with its high-quality glossy paper and the text and illustrations set on a marbled background. Just as the reader's mind lingers on the text, his eyes can feast long on the illustrations drawn from monastery mosaics, ceiling bosses, etc. If the volume has any shortcomings they are the paucity of quotations and the smallish size of the beautiful illustrations due to the physical dimensions of the book. One finishes the book wanting much more.

I have not read any of the other titles in this series—*The Wisdom of C. S. Lewis*, *The Wisdom of Mother Teresa*, *The Wisdom of the Prophets*, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, and *The Wisdom of Desmond Tutu*—but I would certainly recommend this volume for at least one reading, if not for the better purpose mentioned above.

Quentin F. Wesselschmidt

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Anderson, Paul. GODS, MEN AND THEIR GIFTS: A Comparison of the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid and Paradise Lost. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000. 261 pages. Paper. No price given.
- Armstrong, John H. REFORMING PASTORAL MINISTRY: Challenges for Ministry in Postmodern Times. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001. 288 pages. Paper. \$17.99.
- Braun, Roddy L. JESUS: HIS NAME AND TITLES: A Devotional and Theological Study. San Jose: Writers Club Press, 2000. 94 pages. Paper. \$9.95.
- Carson, D. A. THE DIFFICULT DOCTRINE OF THE LOVE OF GOD. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000. 90 pages. Paper. \$12.99.
- Chapell, Bryan. USING ILLUSTRATIONS TO PREACH WITH POWER. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001. 256 pages. Paper. \$14.99.
- Leith, John H. PILGRIMAGE OF A PRESBYTERIAN: Collected Shorter Writings. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001. 240 pages. Paper. \$29.95.
- McKim, Doanld K. INTRODUCING THE REFORMED FAITH: Biblical Revelation, Christian Tradition, Contemporary Significance. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 320 pages. Paper. \$27.95.
- Neuger, Christie Cozad. COUNSELING WOMEN: A Narrative, Pastoral Approach. Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 2001. 239 pages. Paper. \$18.00.
- Petermann, Joel V. PRAYER: An Audience with the King. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2001. 180 pages. Paper. \$10.99.
- Schmidt, Alvin J. UNDER THE INFLUENCE: How Christianity Transformed Civilization. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. 416 pages. Cloth. \$24.99.
- Taylor, Mark Lewis. THE EXECUTED GOD: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001. 200 pages. Paper. \$16.00.
- Thomas, Curtis C. PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR PASTORS: Words of Encouragement and Counsel for a Lifetime of Ministry. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001. 240 pages. Paper. \$12.99.
- Westendorf, James J. NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2001. 222 pages. Paper. \$11.99.
- Wolfgang, Arno J. STEWARDSHIP: What I Do with What God Gave Me. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2001, 159 pages. Paper. \$10.99.

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