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CONTENTS

Journal of Theology: Fifty Years Ago

Foreword - Edmund Reim

The Form of Sound Words - Egbert Schaller

The Imperatives of Scripture - Edmund Reim

The Lord's Prayer in Light of the Lord's Passion.....

Frank Gantt

Exegesis: Psalm 68:1-6.....

Paul Naumann

Beyond Confirmation

Anonymous

Book/Periodical Notices and Reviews

See the sections at the end of this issue

Reviewers: David Lau and David Schaller

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Journal of Theology: Fifty Years Ago

It was fifty years ago—February of 1961—that a newly formed confessional Lutheran church body published its first issue of the publication known as the *Journal of Theology*. This endeavor has served the Church of the Lutheran Confession as its confessional voice in print, along with *The Lutheran Spokesman*. The *Journal of Theology* has also aimed for the goals stated in the CLC Directory: “to deepen the understanding and sharpen the skill of those who teach the Word.” Such aims, if they are to be pleasing to God, are always beyond the reach of those who seek them. Therefore, in the wake of the CLC Jubilee of 2010 and with the Journal’s own jubilee in mind, we look to our Lord with gratitude for giving us one mind and one mouth as the fruit of the Spirit.

And in commemoration of the blessing God has given, selected reprints from the five issues of Volume 1 will appear in the issues of Volume 51. In this issue the inaugural mission statement of the Journal’s intent and scope comes forth again in the Foreword of the first editor, Edmund Reim. Also reprinted from the first two issues are “The Form of Sound Words,” a study and application of 2 Timothy 1:13 by Egbert Schaller (1:1), and “The Imperatives of Scripture” by Edmund Reim (1:2).

Foreword

Edmund Reim

The launching of a new professional journal, particularly in the category of theology, certainly calls for some explanation. Those of our prospective readers to whom we are relative strangers are entitled to know something about our history and background. Those who have known us in the past, but are members of synods with which we no longer are in fellowship, may wonder about our intentions. We invite their scrutiny. But particularly the members of our immediate group are entitled to a discussion of our policies as well as an indication of what we conceive our function to be. In short, we must state our reason for being—or for our coming into being. Also we should state a number of things for the record.

Our *Journal of Theology* emanates from a very young Seminary, Immanuel Lutheran, with an admittedly small faculty of two members. Together with the other departments of Immanuel Lutheran College, this school was founded some eighteen months ago, not as a haven for unemployed pastors and professors, but to meet a serious need that was pressing even at that time, the need of providing

for an increasing number of young people who had been studying at established synodical schools, but now found themselves orphaned, scholastically speaking, by their or their parents' withdrawal from their previous synodical affiliation. The substantial growth of our school since its founding has demonstrated that this was not a mere imaginary need.

These withdrawals were chiefly from the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian), both members of the Synodical Conference. They began in 1956, became a matter of public notice in 1957, and have continued to this day. They did not represent a concerted group movement, but were rather the separate actions of individual members—pastors, teachers, professors, laymen—plus single congregations or parts thereof, each representing an individual protest over an issue that we shall presently describe in some detail. As these withdrawals continued, the need for mutual contact was felt, leading to a rather informal type of gathering called, for want of a better name, the “Interim Conference.” After considerable study a statement of principle entitled “Concerning Church Fellowship” was adopted, covering the main points of the controversy. Supplementary propositions concerning the doctrines of the Church and Ministry were also prepared and subsequently incorporated as part of the doctrinal platform of the organization that has now been effected, the “Church of the Lutheran Confession,” which takes the place of the temporary “Interim Conference.”

That brings the history down to date. The issues remain to be discussed. For, it must be granted, our infant Church was born out of controversy—even as this was true also of that first Lutheran Church, in the days of the Reformation. But this is nothing of which to be ashamed, if only the issues are valid ones, valid by the standards of Holy Scripture. We are fully aware that our actions are something for which we owe an account, above all to God. But we are perfectly ready to explain ourselves also to those who will be taking time to read our efforts. This will be part of the function of our Journal.

To define at least the main issues is no simple matter since it involves the actions and present position of the two synods from which most of us have come—ELS and Wisconsin, both mentioned above. As we see it, two questions are involved in either case. First: When a church body in one way or another has clearly recognized and publicly declared a sister synod to be guilty of causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine that they have learned, may it (even if only within the framework of a larger federation like the Synodical Conference) still continue in the active practice of church fellowship with such a synod in spite of the clear warnings of a passage like Romans 16:17-18? Second: May the arguments that are advanced in official support of such continued practice of fellowship be isolated from the doctrinal position of such a church, or do they become part of the public doctrine for which the entire body must be held responsible? It lies far beyond the scope of a Foreword to answer these questions here and now. They will help, however, to show what we have in mind when we shall touch on these issues from time to time. For touch on them we shall. There are things that need to be said. And the forum of this Journal may perhaps be the best place to say them.

It is our earnest hope, however, that we shall also find other things to discuss, other interests that will command our attention. For to live on controversy alone can become a monotonous diet. Or, to change the metaphor a bit, it would prove to be a sorry luxury, one that we simply cannot afford. By such a purely negative policy we would be depriving ourselves of the blessed benefits that come only through the positive study of Scripture and its saving doctrines. For it is this that serves so wonderfully for the edification, not only of the individual Bible student, but as we read in Ephesians 4, of the entire body of Christ—in our case, of those souls that are entrusted to our particular care. We shall try to do this to the extent of our time and ability by widening the range of interest, by deepening the measure of understanding, by enriching the store of knowledge, by cultivating the practical skills of all of us who serve in the ministry of the Word, be it by teaching or preaching—editors as well as readers.

The material that we plan to offer is to be arranged under several heads. First of all there shall, of course, be such articles of general interest as are characteristic of a theological publication and which will give body to it. Such articles are quite naturally the particular responsibility of the editors. But we

are keenly aware of our limitation and hope therefore to enlist the occasional help of other members of our fellowship. Whether this be in the form of new material, or perhaps of conference essays that should be accessible for the larger group, or even the republication of some earlier effort—the question is only whether it will serve the overall purpose to which we have committed ourselves above. Another source that we should not neglect is the treasure house of theological literature that is in danger of being forgotten because it is in the German or Norwegian of our forefathers in earlier days of Synodical Conference history. Much of this material has so vital a bearing on the problems of our present time that we hope to render a real service by making at least some of it available in translation. But regardless of the source of our material, one rule needs to be kept constantly in mind in connection with our eventual selections, that is the old principle that whatever is not Biblical is not theological—“*quod non est biblicum non est theologicum.*” We invoke this rule not so much for the sake of keeping out a type of material which is appearing with increasing frequency in so many modern religious publications—articles on psychology, sociology, economics—as for the need of checking on ourselves, lest we let our publication become an instrument for giving expression to our personal feelings (either of individuals or the group), our own pet ideas, our particular wishes and desires. The “*biblicum*” must always remain our clear point of orientation, lest this present project cease to be truly “*theologicum.*”

In keeping with Luther’s axiom that there is nothing that serves better to keep people in the Church than good Scriptural preaching, our special departments will of course include one for Homiletics. In addition to special text studies we hope from time to time to bring complete sermons of particular interest, either from earlier days or out of the life of our newly organized group. So [it is] in this issue [Feb. 1961], where we bring the sermon given at the dedication of the new building erected for our school, Immanuel Lutheran College. Other departments will include one for Christian Education, which we offer not only for the sake of the importance of the subject, but also because of the particular problems which this phase of our work presents to a small and struggling church body. Current events will also come in for a share of our attention, in a department under the heading of “Panorama.” And of course, there are always books to be discussed. While these will usually fall into the classification of theology or Christian Education, we shall not exclude the possibility of occasionally going beyond these categories.

So we launch our modest little venture, fully conscious of the responsibilities we are thereby assuming. We are aware of the delicate sense of balance that will be required to keep our Journal from on the one hand becoming an ivory tower of lofty discussion into which one takes refuge in order to escape the stark realities of life, or on the other of falling into the habit of controversy for controversy’s sake and so descending to the level of querulous complaint, of unbridled criticism, of intemperate invective, of vindictive retaliation. We know the danger of both of these extremes. We know that it is not even possible to show just where the exact line of demarcation is to be drawn, where moderation ceases and the immoderate begins. But our readers shall know that we will be trying to avoid these ever present pitfalls, saying what must be said in the face of existing conditions, doing what can be done by way of constructive suggestion, praying that our friends will understand and opponents not misunderstand us, knowing all the while that humanly speaking the extent of our influence must be small indeed, but committing ourselves and our cause to the Lord of the Church.

We trust that our readers will have sensed that neither we of the editorial board, nor our new church body which has requested this project are suffering from delusions of grandeur, that we are not launching this Journal for the sake of acquiring a status symbol, but that we are simply trying to do what we can, where we can, in a day when there is so much that needs to be done—doing this for the sake of preserving the truths that we once held jointly with so many brethren, and in the hope of serving, if God will grant His grace, toward a restoration of the wider fellowship that once we enjoyed.

To this end we dedicate our efforts and this Journal.

The Form of Sound Words

Egbert Schaller

Since this Journal is venturing to add its contribution, however modest it may be, to the blizzard of present-day theological literature blowing in from all points of the compass and settling in heaps on the desks of our pastors, it offers herewith to make some slight amends by rescuing from drifts which have well-nigh buried it an admonition of the Apostle Paul to Timothy and thus restoring a somewhat forgotten criterion for all who would read and write theology with discrimination. The Apostle writes [in 2 Timothy 1:13]:

“Ever have (that is, hold in useful possession) as original pattern of healthy words those which you heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; . . .”

Without presenting here a detailed grammatical and exegetical analysis of the Greek text, we refer this task to the reader and invite him to verify by personal study and research the validity of the brief commentary which follows.

The thinking of Paul in this passage is eschatological, as verse 12 shows. He is persuaded of the power of his Lord Jesus Christ and commits to Him the guardianship of a sacred and precious deposit, the Gospel which was entrusted to Paul's charge and use but which no man in his own might can safely preserve. The Lord Jesus will keep it safe to the end of days. Paul is assured of that. At the same time, the Apostle understands his personal obligation in that respect, and the obligation of all who are endowed with possession of the saving oracles. The Lord of the Church is their Keeper; but He chooses to work through His human instruments. In this problem of preserving the Truth, Timothy also has a commitment, as verse 14 shows: “The good deposit guard thou through the Holy Ghost Who dwells in us.”

The intervening verse (13) proposes a vital measure for the discharge of this duty. Paul admonishes Timothy to persist in the use of healthy words for which Paul's inspired record offers the original pattern. As a painter might copy the work of a master, so Timothy is to speak and write in the language of his teacher. The term *logos* refers both to individual words and to forms of expression in general, all of which are to be—note well—not merely healthful (health-giving), but healthy, sound. Although the element of sound content is certainly a primary concern of the Apostle where language is concerned, it would distort his meaning to say that his admonition is restricted to a demand for dogmatical correctness in communicating the Gospel, as though doctrinal accuracy could be divorced from the words which are used. It is precisely the Apostle's concern that the Gospel be preserved in its integrity not merely by what Timothy says, but by the way he says it. The fitting word is essential. Not the thoughts that Paul expressed, but the words that he used are the “*Urbild*,” or pattern, to which he would bind his disciple. The apostolic church has consistently heeded both the letter and the spirit of this prescription. Even the expressions employed in orthodox theology that are not biblical in form, such as the terms “Trinity” and “objective justification,” respond precisely to the doctrinal formulations of the Word itself.

Orthodox pastors concerned with the task of keeping the Faith inviolate are well aware of the fact that not all who retain in their form the use of healthy, traditional words and expressions in theological discussion do so in the spirit of the Apostle. Satan has devised semantic means for corrupting doctrine through the employment of scriptural terms with a change in connotation. The words have the old, familiar ring; but both content and context have been altered. The powerful and idiomatic scriptural terminology, by a subtle process of exinanition, has in some quarters been divested of its divine definitions and filled with a human content which makes it a fruitful exponent of error. Thus the modernist advances his destructive cause, not by excising such key terms as righteousness, salvation, atonement, reconciliation, inspiration and many others from his theological parlance, but by

withdrawing them from the analogy of Scripture and arbitrarily investing them with human and unscriptural concepts, employing them liberally in their perverted sense to the confusion of the simple. Healthy words cease to be healthy when the inspired content is aborted. They thereby become additions to the list of "vain words" by which men are deceived (Eph. 5:6).

It is equally prejudicial to doctrinal purity, however, when theologians, either in ignorance or by design, presume or pretend to clothe the old truths in new expressions calculated, as they allege, to make them intelligible to the modern mind. The abuse of distinctive scriptural expression by the exponents of unscriptural theology does not warrant the surrender of such terms and the substitutions of new ones. And it is precisely in the coining of sonorous "modern" verbiage that Satan has more recently poised his most effective weapon against the defenders of the Truth.

There seems to be an implication current in theological circles, in the conservative as well as in the liberal camp, that only such theology is relevant today which operates freely and learnedly with terms such as "self-disclosure," "divine encounter," "existential," "confrontation." Some theologian with the soul of a press agent invented the use of "dynamic" as a catch-all adjective which successfully defies the necessity for precise dogmatic definition of the term it modifies.

Many a humble theologian, trained in the relatively clear and uncomplicated terminology of the age of orthodoxy in the Lutheran Church, has been terrified by his adventures in the never-never land of the modern scientific theological jargon. The familiar expressions of doctrinal formulation common to the Lutheran Confessions and the dogmaticians of the 17th century were employed in the literature of our more recent fathers, and their treatises printed in theological journals of a later age were home territory for the students of Scripture in our conservative circles until very recently. Now, however, those who undertake to write and publish professional theological works must, if they fail to season their paragraphs with the spicy erudition of 20th-century *logoi*, confront their contemporaries with the same shrinking sense of fossilized inadequacy that might assail a man who drives a Model-T Ford down a highway populated by its 1961 descendants.

There is a certain horrible fascination in the grandiloquent theological dialect in common use today. This is obvious from the fact that even nominally orthodox theologians have succumbed to its demands. Conservative theological journalists seem to show a compulsive need for escaping the stigma of amateurism by adopting the new slang of their more ostentatiously learned colleagues here and abroad. It sometimes proves difficult to tell, without looking at the by-line, whether one is reading Archbishop Temple, John Baillie, or a member of the Concordia Faculty at St. Louis. The number of those who continue to speak the oracles of God exclusively in the traditional terms of the old orthodoxy is rapidly decreasing. We are witnessing not so much the death of a theological era as the gradual extinction of a theological species.

The question then arises: Must the orthodox church of today, in restating the message of Scripture and its doctrinal tenets, do so by employing the terminology of the modernist? To borrow a few occult phrases: Is theology existential only when it speaks of the divine encounter through the self-revelation of God in concrete action in history? As matters stand, one is never quite sure that superb obscurities such as these make any sense, or convey to others the sense intended by the author. For modern terminology issues from the womb of evasiveness and is *per se* ambiguous. To understand it, one needs a glossary, not merely of words, but of contexts in which the words are employed. The verbiage of liberal theology is by design a tool of the Schleiermacher school. It is a robust handmaiden of those who have spearheaded the development of a doctrinal theology rooted in Christian self-consciousness rather than in Scripture.

Significantly, many of the terms now current in Protestant theology are found clustered about the area of revelation and the Word. They serve to disguise a virulent and uncompromising attack upon verbal inspiration and the authority of Holy Writ. They are the stock in trade of the present-day agents of the *Ich-Theologie* in the new Barthian garb. They are rationalistic in intent, and subjectivistic in

content. Their use creates an illusion of depth that conceals a tragic theological superficiality. They are not “healthy words.” Insofar as they restate the old orthodox position, they are unnecessary additions and an encumbrance to the Christian’s vocabulary. The traditional expressions are clearer. Insofar as they seek to supplant scriptural concepts with those of Neo-orthodoxy, they are abhorrent to the devout servant of the Word.

Doubtless these observations will occasion contemptuous shoulder-shrugging in some quarters; and for the dissenters such unscientific blasphemy against the word-gods of the modern theological Babel will betray the reactionary nature of this Journal. We are confident, nevertheless, that our strictures against the overtly irreverent terminology of Modernism will stand in the judgment of God; and, except for the necessity of adverting to them in occasional critical evaluation of the modern scene and thought, these pages will scrupulously avoid the use of the abstractions of liberalism in favor of words that reflect the spiritual health of a 20th-century Theology of Repristination. As the Formula of Concord declares: “It is safest of all, according to the admonition of St. Paul, 2 Tim. 1:13, to hold fast as well to the form of sound words as to the pure doctrine itself, whereby much unnecessary wrangling may be cut off and the Church preserved from many scandals” (Trig. 949:36 [CPH 1921]).

The Imperatives of Scripture

Edmund Reim

* The reprint below, selected from the Journal’s second issue (April 1961, pp. 1-8), has been edited to conform to MLA standards of documentation. Only a footnote has been deleted. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

It is quite natural that in theological discussion we search for every legitimate argument that we can find to support the convictions for which we are contending. That this support must have its source in Scripture is a basic premise of our theological method. The dangers of putting reason on a par or even above Scripture are so obvious that we need not recount them here. But we need to scrutinize even our arguments from Scripture with constant care as to their relevance and validity. This is particularly necessary when we are dealing with a devious and evasive exegesis that would deprive a simple and clear passage of Scripture of its obvious meaning. Such attempts have been made with regard to Romans 16:17-18, in spite of the fact that this passage has long been recognized as a *sedes doctrinae* concerning church fellowship. Under these circumstances it would seem to be a conclusive argument to point out that such an exegesis involves a tampering with one of the imperatives of Scripture. This seems to be such a crushing reply that we leap at the opportunity.

But is this eagerness truly of the Spirit—or is this our flesh which is speaking? The intent of this article is to show that this depends on how we use the argument and what it is that we put into the term “imperatives.” It is certainly true that each of these imperatives is the voice of God, is an expression of His holy and perfect will, and may therefore never be ignored with impunity. But simply to equate the term with “Law,” to invest it with all the implications of threat and punishment, to forge the mere grammatical form of the imperative into a lethal weapon which we then proceed to swing like a bludgeon—all this would mean that we fail to recognize the many different uses of which this “command” form is capable. It is this severe restriction of the sense of these terms plus the resultant meagerness of our own understanding of the function which also these imperatives fulfill with regard to the proclamation and application of the Gospel which would make him who wields this weapon the first one to suffer from it. The following examples taken from the words of Jesus will illustrate the point.

How wide this range of meaning can be is shown by two words, spoken in close connection with each other, parallel in substance if not in form, but which are nevertheless poles apart in their implications. In Matthew 25 the Lord describes the Great Judgment, when He shall say to those on His right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father,” and to those on the left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed” (verses 34 and 41). The one expression is a most wonderful invitation to enter upon full possession of a blessed heritage, the other a word of final judgment and banishment. The latter is fearful Law, the former purest Gospel. Yet the outward form of both words is the same.

It is instructive to observe how frequently this same δεῖτε recurs in the words of our Lord: in the “Come and dine” of the risen Christ on the shores of the Tiberian Sea (John 21:12), in the invitation to discipleship (“Follow me” - Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17), in the invitation to the marriage feast (Matt. 22:4), in the invitation to share a few moments of rest with Him (Mark 6:31), but above all in the Great Invitation: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). In each case the word that has the form of a command is in reality a most gracious offer to receive or to share a great and unmerited blessing. This thought gives us the key to another familiar word of the Savior, one which because of its somber setting is, however, often not appreciated as fully as it should be: “Enter ye in at the strait gate.” For children of God who know what lies beyond that gate there should be not a moment’s hesitation in recognizing this as another one of those gracious invitations to partake of a great and unmerited blessing. For whatever else these words may say—and we shall return to them presently—they first of all grant us a privilege that would otherwise forever be beyond our reach.

Closely related are the imperatives that confer a gift. They appear in almost every instance where the merciful Healer granted such blessings as the gift of speech and hearing (“Ephphatha” - Mark 7:34), of sight (“Go, wash” - John 9:6-7), of health (“Be thou clean” - Mark 1:41), and of life itself as it was granted when the Prince of Life spoke those mighty words of command to the daughter of Jairus, the youth at Nain, and at the tomb of Lazarus. Sometimes these gifts were purely spiritual: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). And then there is the priceless gift of His blessed Body and Blood: “Take, eat . . . take, drink ye all.”

Rather in a class by themselves are the imperatives of prayer. It is one of the little courtesies of life that in dealing with people we temper our requests with a “Please,” or put them into the form of a question, even a conditional inquiry: “Would you be so kind as to . . .” We do not want to appear to be too demanding. Extreme need may indeed make one very importunate, as in the case of the Syro-Phenician woman (Matt. 15), or the disciples who so rudely broke in on their slumbering Lord with their despairing cry, “Lord, save us, we perish” (Matt. 8:25). It seems strange, therefore, that Jesus should not only encourage a most direct approach in prayer (“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” - Matt. 7:7), but would actually teach His disciples to be shamelessly importunate in their prayer by showing them the example of the man who was finally heard “because of his importunity” (Luke 11:8). For the important thing is that we secure those blessings that our Heavenly Father alone can give—be they great or small. So He has taught us to pray with imperatives: “Give us this daily [*sic*] our daily bread,” as well as “Forgive us our trespasses . . .”

It is quite natural that our Lord should also make constant use of the imperative in His patient teaching of His disciples. For so large a part of teaching is simply guidance, telling the learner what he should or should not do. But what made His teaching particularly precious was His constantly recognizable concern to provide and preserve for His disciples the priceless blessings of the salvation that He had come to bring. The Sermon on the Mount is full of such instances. It abounds in words of instruction. Following on the parable of the salt of the earth and the light of the world with its obvious bearing on the function of His followers in the world, He tells them, first positively, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” and then negatively: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:16 and 17). These were things they had to know and understand if they

were to serve Him effectively. He spoke words of warning as well: “Agree with thine adversary quickly,” as well as words of encouragement: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 5:25 and 6:33). In fact, some of these words serve several purposes at the same time. We have already noted the invitation that lies in the “Enter ye in at the strait gate.” But that same word certainly offers encouragement to the weary traveler, just as on the other hand it warns against the dangers of the enticingly broad and easy way that leads to destruction. Elsewhere there are words of sound advice: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . .” (Matt. 6:19-20). It sounds a stern and much needed warning: “Beware of false prophets” (Matt. 7:15). But in all these words, in each of these imperatives, we recognize the intense concern of the Savior for the well-being of His own, the concern of the Good Shepherd for His flock and each individual member of it.

These examples are enough to show how in most cases the imperatives of our Lord are bearers of blessings rather than terms of demand, threat, and compulsion. They lie in the area of grace and not of works. True, He could speak sternly also to His disciples; His reply to Peter’s tempting suggestion that He spare Himself the suffering and death that He had just foretold was a stunningly stern rebuke: “Get thee behind me, Satan!” (Matt. 16:23). His dismissal of Judas (“That thou doest, do quickly” - John 13:27) was terrible in its implications. But among the many words spoken to the disciples these are rare exceptions. There is, however, one group of imperatives that call for special attention, those by which our Lord conferred upon His disciples the mission for which He had prepared them. It began when He sent forth the Twelve (and afterwards the Seventy - Luke 9:1-2; 10:1) and commanded them, saying, “Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of God is at hand” (Matt. 10:5-7). It became very personal when the risen Christ reinstated a fallen Peter with His “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). It was a truly royal mandate for them and for the Church of all time when He said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,” and “Preach the Gospel to every creature” (Matt. 28 and Mark 16). These were imperatives indeed, and yet no one was driven or coerced by them—just as little as were those women at the Tomb who were told to “go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead” (Matt. 28:7). This was no burden! It was a privilege to be bearers of such good news, of such an εὐαγγέλιον, a privilege for them as well as subsequently for His apostles. And though the words with which He told them how they were to conduct themselves, how they were to carry out their difficult assignment (see the rest of Matt. 10) as well as how to function in a particularly trying situation (Matt. 18:15-20)—though all these were indeed in the command form, yet they were most welcome directives for these disciples who still had so much to learn and who would have been hopelessly lost without this wonderful guidance and instruction of their Great Teacher.

It is therefore not surprising that these imperatives of Christ find a constant echo in the subsequent writings of these same Apostles, as well as of that one who was born out of due time. So we hear Peter, warning as he had been warned (“Be sober, be vigilant” 1 Pet. 5:8), and repeating almost the very words that had been spoken to him: “Feed the flock of God” (1 Pet. 5:2). We hear John, teaching others as he had been taught: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11). We find Paul, massing his imperatives for the sake of his disciple: “Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). But always one can hear that same note of concern for the welfare, the salvation of “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

And so with Roman 16:17, “avoid them.” It is an imperative, indeed. But before we stress the grammatical form for the sake of the annihilating weapon which it seems to press into our hands, let us recall its content and its intent. For it is precisely one of those protective words of which we have noted so many examples, indicating the concern of the Savior (and in this case also His servant, the Apostle) for the well-being and safety of the Church for which He gave His very life. “Lest by good words and fair

speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple.” This 18th verse which is so often forgotten or, if remembered, is made a bone of contention as to whether certain causers of divisions and offenses may really be called “Belly-servers,” throws a wonderfully clear light on the stern “avoid,” letting us see it for what it truly is, namely, an expression of the saving love of the Good Shepherd who cannot bear to see harm befall His flock. As He warned against wolves in sheep’s clothing, so He warns here. Let us note this and we shall not have to resort to the “force of the imperative” for the sake of defending our use of the passage—or exposing the evil of evading it! We shall not want to treat these imperatives in that way. For we have found that so many of them are used to convey rich blessings, blessings that will suffer harm if we turn the words that bring them to us into harsh and forbidding commands.

But, it will be said, do we not weaken these words by this procedure? Are we not falling into some new form of Antinomianism? Not at all. For these are words that are addressed to Christians, to believers, to children of God, who recognize in these words the voice of their Heavenly Father, and who find in them an expression of His will, His gracious and good will. Their response has been formulated long ago: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:8). This is what the Apostle meant when he wrote “that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient . . .” (1 Tim. 1:9). For such willing obedience is worth infinitely more than any grudging compliance that may be exacted by the threats and force of the Law. And this is what the Father seeks in those branches that bring forth much fruit—because they abide in Him who is the true Vine, John 15:5.

But does this not indicate that men may after all ignore these words with impunity? Again we answer, By no means. To ignore these words that are such bearers of blessings is to incur the loss of those same blessings, whatever they may be. This may involve an absolute and irretrievable loss, as when the call to faith is scorned, for “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already” (John 3:18). It may involve a terrible, though not irretrievable experience—such as the one from which the Savior would have protected Peter, had he but heeded the warning. It may mean the loss of comfort and strength that could have been ours through prayer. And as for Romans 16—to ignore this word of guidance and protection will certainly jeopardize or involve the loss of that specific blessing that the Lord of the Church is bestowing by this particular directive. Therefore also this passage may not be ignored with impunity. But what that specific loss may be, that is not for us to say.

We do well to leave that to God.

The Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer in Light of the Lord’s Passion

Frank Gantt

* In his sermons on the Small Catechism, the writer’s treatment of the Lord’s Prayer was a Lenten series with the title above. Appearing in this issue is his Ash Wednesday sermon of 2006, which combined the Address and the First Petition.

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN: HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

(John 17:11)

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed:

Here we are, gathered again to meditate on the sufferings and death of our Savior for the next six weeks. One thing that should be abundantly clear to us from the outset is that as Jesus contemplated

the fulfillment of the mission given to Him by His Father, His thoughts were toward us. Even His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was not a prayer of self-centeredness, but a prayer in which He kept our eternal salvation—which is the will of the Father—as the desire of His heart. So we do well to come to these services not merely to commemorate what our Savior endured, but to rejoice in the fact that what He endured, He did *for us*.

In our midweek meditations this year we are also going to take the opportunity to increase our understanding of just what it is that our Savior wanted us to pray for when He gave us that prayer which we call the *Lord's Prayer*. We will see, as we reacquaint ourselves with this prayer, that its impact is not only on our prayer life, but on every aspect of our lives. That is, our relationship to Him and His Word, our place in His kingdom, the relationship of our will to His will, how we are to view the material blessings He gives, our relationship with one another as forgiven children of God, how we are to view temptation, and where we are to look for deliverance from every evil to body and soul. This evening we begin with a discussion of our relationship to our God and to His Word as we consider our Savior's words recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, verse eleven:

"Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."

Though spoken by Jesus in prayer to His heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit through verbal inspiration has given to us these same words for the purpose of making us complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. And so we pray: *Sanctify us by Your truth; Your Word is truth. Amen.*

It was Thursday night when Jesus prayed the words of our text. They are but one verse from what is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer—a prayer He prayed to God on behalf of His people. In a few short hours He would, from the perspective of the disciples, be ripped out of their lives. They were a sad lot—weak in understanding, weak in faith. They had a propensity toward fear, despair, and jealous ambitions. Without their Master they too would be like sheep having no shepherd. Jesus loved them, even to the end, but He did not worry about them. Rather, He confidently went to His Father in prayer and entrusted them to His safe-keeping, using these words: *"Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me."*

Notice to whom Jesus addresses this prayer. He doesn't plead with some great impersonal being. He calls on *Father*. He directs His petitions to the One who has an unshakeable love for Him and desires to listen to His petitions and to grant what they request. There's no uncertainty in Jesus' prayer, only full confidence that the One to whom He prays will gladly hear and lovingly act.

A few minutes ago we read together those words from Martin Luther's explanation to the Address of the Lord's Prayer. They reminded us that God is the one who invites us to come to Him in prayer with the same heartfelt confidence, just like little children who bring their questions and needs to their own fathers. But you know, the devil wants us to believe that we have no reason to be confident when we approach God in prayer. Satan wants us to believe that we have no right to call God Father. After all, we're nothing like Jesus. We don't share the same eternal relationship that Jesus shared with the first Person of the Triune God. And we certainly don't come close to the obedience that Jesus showed to His heavenly Father's will. "So," Satan reasons in our ears, "how can you dare to call God *Father*?"

You know, Satan is right in one way. If you were to look at your own miserable record, there is certainly no reason for you to think that God would own you as His child. I personally know of parents that had to give up on their children who, in spite of godly discipline and upbringing, had chosen to be a constant source of grief and sorrow to their parents. And I know that in my own life there is a similar response. Though I love my children dearly, it does happen that when one of them disobeys me and immediately wants to cuddle up to me after being scolded, I put them off. If that can be said of parents who are also sinful people, how much more do our sins grieve and displease the holy God! Well, can't

you hear Satan snickering right now: “Yes! Listen to what your pastor is saying. You have grieved God and caused much displeasure for Him. He wouldn’t—He shouldn’t claim you as a child!”

Away from us, Satan! Our status as children of God does not originate within us; it originates in the heart of God. God does not invite us to call Him *Father* because of who we are, but because of who He is and for the sake of His only begotten Son. Yes, we have grieved God by our iniquities; but the Son of God was bruised for every one of them. Yes, we have transgressed God’s Law time without number, but God’s Son was wounded for them all. It is He, the One who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, who has given us the right to be called children of God. It’s not a right we are born with; it’s a right graciously given to us by the One who came to be our brother—Jesus, our Savior.

To call upon God as “*Our Father who art in heaven,*” therefore, is a confession of our faith in Jesus Christ, for apart from Him no one has the right to call God his Father. And yet to call upon God as “*Our Father . . . in heaven*” is an expression of confidence too, because He who loved us so much that He “*spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all . . . shall . . . also with Him freely give us all things*” (Rom. 8:32). It is in this spirit, then, that we approach the rest of our discussion this evening and the rest of our midweek meditations on the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. We come boldly to the throne of grace, knowing that the One receiving our prayers hears them as the dear Father hearing His own beloved children.

The first petition our Savior taught us children of the Father to pray is “*Hallowed be Thy name.*” In a more modern English translation we pray: “*Keep Your name holy.*” That hardly seems like much of a request. From the surface of it, we seem to be praying for something that is already the case, as Jesus’ words in our text indicate when He recognizes God as “*Holy Father.*” Furthermore, it seems that we are praying for God to do something that is not for us, but for Himself. In a sense that is true; we are praying that God would keep and maintain that by which He Himself is glorified. But how is God glorified? Well, certainly by His creation, by what He has made and what He continues to preserve. And so writes the psalmist: “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*” But more than that, God is glorified when sinful people, born dead and corrupt in trespasses and sins, are brought back into a loving relationship with Him, rescued from eternal punishment and death, and delivered into everlasting paradise. This is entirely to God’s glory because just as God is the one who made all things and is thus glorified by creation, so also God, or rather our Father, is the One who has brought about our salvation from beginning to end.

Now the question remains: What does all this have to do with His name? Jesus prays in our text: “*Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me.*” Likewise in the Lord’s Prayer we pray, “*Hallowed be Thy name.*” What does God’s name have to do with our salvation? Well, let’s do a little exercise that I do with the confirmation students, and hopefully you will see. I want you to close your eyes for a moment. Now I’m going to say a name. When I do, let’s see what comes to your mind. The name is *Grandma*. So how many of you, upon hearing “Grandma,” saw the letters G-R-A-N-D-M-A? How many of you saw the letters that spell out your grandma’s name? Most of you, I imagine, saw a face or remembered something about your grandma that reveals why she is so special to you. You saw her curled hair, her smile. Maybe you saw her opening up her arms to give you a hug, or you saw her doing some kind thing, as she so often did. That’s your grandma’s name—it’s not what she is called, it’s what she actually is. Your grandma’s name involves characteristic things that you know about her.

And so it is with our heavenly Father. His name is what we know about Him. Now how do you know what you know about your Father in heaven? Well, you glean only bits and pieces from your conscience and from creation, what we call the natural knowledge of God. The fuller, more personal knowledge that you have of your Father has come to you only through the revelation of the Spirit as given in the Word of God. And so in a very real and practical way the Bible and its teachings are God’s name to you.

Now consider where God's Word is. Is it up in heaven, out of the reach of mortal mankind? No, it's given and brought to us that we might have a family relationship with Him, the relationship of Father to children and children to Father. This family relationship is one of faith, founded on the truth.

Our relationship with the heavenly Father is one of faith in that much of our relating to Him depends upon things that cannot be seen. You cannot see your sins being forgiven. You cannot see, at least not now, the book of life in which your name is written. You cannot see Christ taking your place under God's wrath or His righteousness being credited to you. You cannot typically see that all things are being worked together for your good. You cannot see the resurrection. You cannot see eternal life. But they are all just as real as the nose on your face. Well, how can you be certain that they all are real? God tells you so in His Word and has given you a heart that takes Him at His Word. That is faith, which in Hebrews 11:1 is given the same type of definition: "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*"

Yet a relationship with the heavenly Father is also a relationship founded on the truth. Speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus said, "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth? It means that you worship Him not only by saying that you believe in Him and His promises; you also show your relationship with Him by being obedient to His Word, as children ought to be toward their Father. In matters pertaining to sexual morality, in our Father's command to feed and help the poor and needy, and as Jesus mentions in our text, in striving to keep unity among ourselves as children of God, God's name is to be kept holy among us. And so the Apostle John writes in his first epistle: "*Let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth*" (1 John 3:18).

Of course, the opposite is also true. Living in disobedience is a defaming and dishonoring of God's name, even as not believing His promises is to defame and dishonor His name. Rushing headlong into sexual immorality, withholding what God gives you from those in need, stirring up strife among the brethren, these and every other sin which God condemns are equivalent to taking your Holy Bible off your shelf and using its pages to wipe the manure off your boots.

Now when we stop and think about it, we will certainly have to recognize, unless we are deceiving ourselves, that we're often guilty of dishonoring God's name. In fact, we are incapable of keeping God's name holy at all. And so we see a glaring reason why Jesus made this request the first petition to our heavenly Father. Unless He causes His name to be hallowed, that is, His Word to be rightly taught, believed, and obeyed, we would only trample it under foot and despise it both as a life-giving message and as godly instruction. Then we would but lose our relationship with Him and also the salvation that Christ died to obtain for us. That this never be the case among us, together with Jesus we pray:

Holy Father, keep through Your name the ones You have given to Jesus as His disciples and His brothers and sisters. Help us to believe and to live according to that name as it comes to us in your Word. Preserve us from teaching and living contrary to it. This prayer we bring in the name of Him through whom we have the right to call You "Father," Jesus Christ, Your Son, our brother and Redeemer. AMEN!

Exegesis: Psalm 68:1-6

Paul Naumann

* Included with the following exegesis is a wedding address ("God Sets the Solitary in Families") that the writer preached on the basis of this text some years ago. See the appendix on pages 32-35. The exegesis and sermon were originally presented at a CLC regional pastoral conference in 1999. Translations given below are either the writer's or New King James.

Translation

(For the choir director. A Psalm of David. A song.)

1. *May God arise, may His enemies be scattered:
And may those who hate Him flee before Him.*
2. *As smoke is dispersed, may You disperse them;
As wax melts before fire, so may the wicked perish before God.*
3. *But as for the righteous, let them rejoice!
Let them exult in the presence of God,
And let them be jubilant with joy!*
4. *Sing to God, celebrate His name in song!
Exalt Him who rides upon the heavens;
JAH is His name, rejoice before Him!*
5. *A Father for orphans and a Judge for widows
Is God in His holy dwelling-place.*
6. *God places the solitary in families;
He leads out the prisoners into prosperity,
Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*

Overview

Psalm 68 has historically been classified among the *thanksgiving psalms*. More specifically, many identify it as a song of thanksgiving for the community of Israel.

It might well have had a peculiar cultic significance for Israel as well. It appears to be a song of ascents, one of those hymns that might have been used for the ritual approach to the sanctuary in Jerusalem. The heading attributes authorship of the psalm to King David. It seems clear from internal evidence that it commemorates some major demonstration of the power and primacy of Jahweh. A number of important events from David's reign have been put forward as the basis or occasion for the composition of the psalm.

Some are convinced that Psalm 68 commemorates David's sending forth of troops to battle the Ammonites and their allies, after these enemies had incurred David's wrath by shaving the beards of his envoys and cutting off their garments. As supporting evidence for this view scholars cite verses 12-15 and 20-24, which express hope for a future victory over enemy kings.

More convincing perhaps is the hypothesis that the psalm might have commemorated the event of David bringing the ark into Jerusalem from the house of Obed-Edom, as is reported in 2 Samuel 6:10-15:

So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. Now it was told King David, saying, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep. Then David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

The elements of extreme rejoicing and dancing certainly correspond well with Psalm 68. Additionally, the words of exhortation with which the psalm opens mirror closely the words prescribed by Moses as the liturgy to be used whenever the ark of the covenant was moved: "*So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: 'Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You'*" (Num. 10:35).

The above argument seems persuasive, though it must be admitted that any number of joyful events in David's reign could have occasioned the writing of Psalm 68. Clearly this is, above all, a psalm of great rejoicing and thanksgiving. It is for that reason that I selected a portion of it (verses 3-6a) as the text for a wedding address (cf. appendix). The description of the Lord as the One who "sets the solitary in families" in verse 6 has ever been a comfort to the lonely, and a particular reason for rejoicing to those who have been blessed by God with a pious Christian household.

Introduction through Verse 2 (Heb. 1 through 3)

לְמַנְצַח לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר: יָקוּם אֱלֹהִים יִפּוּצוּ אוֹיְבָיו
וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׂנְאָו מִפְּנָיו: כְּהִנְדֵף עָשָׁן הִנְדֵף כְּהִמָּס דֹּיג
מִפְּנֵי־אֵשׁ יֵאבְדוּ רָשָׁעִים מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים:

(For the choir director. A Psalm of David. A song.)

1. May God arise, may His enemies be scattered:
And may those who hate Him flee before Him.
2. As smoke is dispersed, may You disperse them;
As wax melts before fire, so may the wicked perish before God.

לְמַנְצַח [נצח]	Piel part. sg. + pref. <i>lamed</i> ; supervise, superintend; (in music) lead singing
יִפּוּצוּ [פוי]	Qal juss. 3 pl.; be scattered, dispersed
מִשְׂנְאָו [שנא]	Piel part. pl. + 3 m. s. pron. suff.; hate much, despise
כְּהִנְדֵף [נדף]	Niph. inf. const. + pref. <i>kaph</i> ; be driven about, dispersed
עָשָׁן [עשן]	noun m. s.; smoke
הִנְדֵף [נדף]	Qal impf. 2 s.; drive away, disperse
כְּהִמָּס [מסס]	Niph. inf. const. + pref. <i>kaph</i> ; melt, dissolve; perish
דֹּיג [דויג]	noun m. s.; wax

Grammar:

The heading is interesting. The *masorah parva* indicates that the formula לְמַנְצַח לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר occurs four times, while the same phrase with the addition of שִׁיר is unique in the Bible.

There is a variant in the first verse, in which many manuscripts of the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate have rendered יִפּוּצוּ (with the *waw* added), possibly to bring it into conformity with Numbers 10:35, of which this verse is a close quotation. I rejected the variant; it is of little consequence either way.

There is also the question of the jussives in this verse. The jussive expresses a wish: "May His enemies be scattered . . . may they flee before Him." While the third person *singular* jussive is often distinguished by a shortened form, the third person *plural* is indistinguishable from the regular imperfect. If you render imperfects here, it would read, "His enemies shall be scattered . . . they shall flee before Him." In this section, however, the jussive idea seems to fit quite well. I retained it, as do the major translations.

Comments:

As said above, this is a direct quote from the instructions of Moses regarding the words to be spoken whenever the ark was moved from one camp to the next in the wilderness. It invokes the mighty power of Jahweh in the wish that His enemies (and thus Israel's) might scatter in confusion before His mighty power.

One notes, as elsewhere in the Psalms, that David was not shy about identifying and castigating the “wicked,” the “enemies of God,” and “those who hate Him.” Indeed, in the so-called imprecatory psalms the language is even more severe than here, often expressing hatred toward them and sometimes wishing for their death. It is interesting to contrast David’s attitude toward these unrighteous with the careful maxim of today’s mainstream churches: “Hate the sin, but love the sinner.”

David, by way of contrast, clearly hates the sinners! He here calls upon the Lord to scatter them, to drive them away like smoke, to melt them like wax. “So let the wicked PERISH before God!” is what he concludes.

Verse 3 (Heb. 4)

וְצַדִּיקִים יִשְׂמְחוּ יַעֲלִצוּ לְפָנָי אֵל הַיּוֹם וַיִּשְׂשׂוּ בְשִׂמְחָה:

*But as for the righteous, let them rejoice!
Let them exult in the presence of God,
And let them be jubilant with joy!*

יִשְׂמְחוּ [שִׂמְחָה]	Qal impf. 3 pl. juss.; <i>shine, glitter, sparkle; rejoice, be glad, joyful</i>
יַעֲלִצוּ [עֲלִיצָה]	Qal impf. 3 pl. juss.; <i>exult, rejoice, triumph</i>
וַיִּשְׂשׂוּ [שִׂשׂוֹן]	Qal impf. 3 pl juss; <i>rejoice, be glad</i>

Grammar:

Again the Masoretes demonstrate their mastery of the text by advising that the word וְצַדִּיקִים occurs four times in the Bible with this spelling, and that the word יַעֲלִצוּ, though a common construction, occurs only once with this accent. It should be noted that the detail and precision of these Masoretic notes seems impossible to believe, until you check them out. I once checked each note of the *masorah parva* in a three-chapter section of 2 Kings in the Aleppo Codex. I found every single one to be exactly correct!

In two minor variants in this verse, versional evidence suggests a slight change in spelling. Neither warrants consideration.

Comments:

Here David presents the logical obverse of his statements in verses 1-2. May the wicked perish . . . , but may the righteous be glad!

Within the analogy of Scripture we naturally understand צַדִּיקִים, “the righteous,” to mean those who are declared righteous through faith in the Messiah. How the understanding of that one simple word will open the Old Testament to our eyes! How clear the expression when viewed in the light of Paul’s epistles: “*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe*” (Rom 3:21-22 NKJ). Indeed, even when we stay within the bounds of the Old Testament, it is difficult to misunderstand the term. Witness the explanation given by Jeremiah: “*In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (23:6 NKJ).

It is clear, then, of whom the psalmist is speaking when he says, “*But as for the righteous, let them rejoice! Let them exult in the presence of God, and let them be jubilant with joy!*” He is referring to those who are saved by faith in the coming Christ, a remnant of whom ever existed within the congregation of Israel, be the people of Israel ever so apostate.

Especially noteworthy in this verse and the following is the accumulation of synonyms for the word “rejoice.” There are no fewer than eight words here which describe the believers’ joyful attitude toward their Savior God—so many, in fact, that English translations tend to use “rejoice” over and over

again, simply because we do not have as many synonyms for it in English as they had in Hebrew. Also interesting is that many of these words were routinely used to denote celebration of another joyful event in Jewish society, that of a marriage. That is part of what prompted me to select the current passage as the text for a recent wedding address I gave, particularly as I recalled that some of the same words occur in Isaiah 61:10: *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels”* (NKJ).

What reason does the believer have to rejoice? Every reason! In a recent sermon I was privileged to hear one of the brethren expound on Matthew 10:5-8, Christ’s commissioning of the twelve to go into the countryside and preach. Jesus concluded with the joyful entreaty: *“Freely you have received, freely give.”* The preacher made the point that the motivation for true mission work lies in the fact that everything really worth having in life—every good thing we could possibly aspire to—has already been given to us in Christ.

David will presently enumerate the many blessings of God toward his people Israel, but surely the chief blessing is contained within this verse: that the Lord *has already* declared them not guilty in Christ, allowing them to appropriate the lofty yet undeserved title of “the righteous” and granting them the attendant blessings which that name implies.

Verse 4 (Heb. 5)

שִׁירוּ לְאֱלֹהִים זְמִירוֹ שְׁמוֹ סִלּוּ לְרִכְבֵּי בְּעֲרֵבוֹת בְּנֶה שְׁמוֹ
וְעֲלִזּוּ לְפָנָיו:

*Sing to God, celebrate His name in song!
Exalt Him who rides upon the heavens;
JAH is His name, rejoice before Him!*

שִׁירוּ [שִׁיר]	Qal impv. m. pl.; <i>sing</i>
זְמִירוֹ [זְמִיר]	Qal impv m. pl.; <i>play, sing</i> ; w acc.: <i>praise, celebrate in song</i>
סִלּוּ [סִלַּל]	Qal impv. m. pl.; <i>heap up, cast up, level</i> ; <i>extol, exalt</i>
בְּעֲרֵבוֹת [עֲרֵבָה]	noun f. pl; <i>desert, wilderness</i> ; (prop. <i>waste, expanse</i>) <i>heavens</i>
וְעֲלִזּוּ [עֲלִז]	Qal impv. m. pl.; <i>exult, rejoice</i>

Grammar:

Note the change in this verse: The writer becomes even more insistent in urging the righteous to rejoice, switching from oblique jussives to direct imperatives.

Comments:

The root זמר means “to celebrate in song.” David continues in the same vein as the previous verse, exhorting the redeemed to sing for joy to the mighty God who deigns to call them His children.

The next colon is somewhat problematic. סִלּוּ can mean “exalt” and עֲרֵבוֹת can mean “heavens” (from the idea of “expanse”), leading to the rendering, *“Exalt Him who rides upon the heavens (or clouds).”* However, סִלּוּ also commonly means “cast up, level” (as a road), and עֲרֵבוֹת can mean “deserts” or “steppes,” which leads to the rendering, *“Prepare (a road) for Him who rides through the deserts.”* This latter is strikingly similar to Isaiah 40:3: *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God’”* (NKJ).

I favor the first rendering. The term “Rider on the Clouds” was a common expression for the Deity in the Old Testament; cf. Deuteronomy 33:26, Psalm 18:10-14, and Isaiah 19:1. Not only that, but there is the possibility that this passage represents a type of polemic against the pagan religion of the

Canaanite region. In the Ras Shamra texts, written in Ugaritic, Baal is often called “the rider on the clouds,” and evidently was known as such long before the conquest of the land by Israel. Perhaps David was here turning their well-known appellation against them, as much as to say: Jahweh is the *true* God, the *real* Rider upon the heavens! Though somewhat speculative, this presents an interesting thesis nonetheless.

Verse 5 (Heb. 6)

אָבִי יְתוּמִים וְדָן אֱלֹמִנּוֹת אֱלֹהִים בְּמַעוֹן קָדְשׁ

*A Father for orphans and a Judge for widows
Is God in His holy dwelling-place.*

דָּן [דָּן] noun m. s. + pref. *waw*; *judge*
בְּמַעוֹן [מַעוֹן] noun m. s. + pref. *beth*; *dwelling, habitation*

Comments:

King David gets down to human cases to exemplify the extent of God’s care for the individual believer. Again, the pictures are common throughout Scripture. Widows and orphans were at far greater jeopardy in that society than they are in modern times. In the ancient Near East such people, bereft of their providers, sometimes starved to death. The plight of the widow and fatherless is given great attention in God’s Word, as revealed in Deuteronomy 10:17-18: “*For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing*” (NKJ). Also in the New Testament widows and orphans get special mention and receive special attention in the caring view of God; cf. Mark 12:42, Luke 4:26, Luke 7:12, Luke 18:3, and others. The Lord shows Himself the merciful Advocate of even these most humble and defenseless members of society.

Verse 6 (Heb. 7)

אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיב יְחִידִים בֵּיתָהּ מוֹצִיא אֲסִירִים בְּכוֹשְׁרוֹת
אֶךְ סוֹרְרִים שְׂכְנוּ צְחִיחָה:

*God places the solitary in families;
He leads out the prisoners into prosperity,
Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*

מוֹשִׁיב [ישב] Hiph part. m. s.; *set; cause to sit; make to dwell*
יְחִידִים [יחידים] Adj. m. pl. + pref. *waw* (here as subst.); *only one; alone, solitary*
מוֹצִיא [יצא] Hiph part. m. s.; *go out, go forth; Hith: bring forth, carry forth, take out*
אֲסִירִים [אסיר] noun m. pl.; *prisoner*
בְּכוֹשְׁרוֹת [כושרות] noun f. pl.; *prosperity, happiness*
סוֹרְרִים [סרר] Qal part. m. pl.; *turn away, be rebellious, revolt*
צְחִיחָה [צחיחה] noun f. s.; *dry (parched) land*

Comments:

Here David portrays the tender and gracious God, as He cares for each individual among His people. He is the only one who can address the universal problem of *loneliness*—an affliction, incidentally, which seems to beset the members of the Information Age more than those of any previous generation. God sets the solitary in families. Whether it's a literal family, a church family, or the society of friends and peers, one of the Lord's most compassionate facets is His concern for those who feel all alone. Certainly the broadest and most comforting application of this verse is His adopting into His own family, the Holy Christian Church, those who by reason of their sin were separated from Him by nature. And that includes all of us! 1 John 3:1 comes to mind: "*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*" And even more to the point, Ephesians 2:19: "*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*"

The final imagery in this section is what is most explicitly demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ, for He is the One who by His blood and righteousness frees the captives from the dark dungeon of sin. In fact, in Isaiah we overhear the heavenly Father calling His eternal Son to carry out this very task: "*I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house*" (Isa. 42:6-7).

Reason enough, you'll agree, for the righteous to "*exult in the presence of God and be jubilant with joy!*" May they do so until the Day when the Bridegroom comes and the wedding feast begins!

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Appendix: A Wedding Address

GOD SETS THE SOLITARY IN FAMILIES

Psalm 68:3-6

Grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text selected for our meditation on this holy occasion comes from the 68th Psalm, verses three to six, as follows:

Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families.

This is the Word of the Lord.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who said, *"I know My sheep, and am known by My own,"* dear fellow redeemed, dear friends and family members, and especially you, dear Tom and Jennifer.

I am extremely honored to address you this evening. I felt it was particularly apt, since I believe we have something in common. That is, that the establishment of both our families came at a later time in our lives. In both our cases the Lord in His wisdom chose not to bless us with families of our own soon after we left school. We did not jump briskly from one family circle into another. For us God's plan was that we should wait, and, in fact, that the waiting should stretch on for a number of years. We were compelled to experience the meaning of the word "solitary," to learn firsthand exactly what the difference is between a *house* and a *home*. We learned, on our knees before God, just how fondly to be desired are the blessings of a Christian home and family.

Well, today your prayers have been answered. The waiting is over, the solitude at an end. For among the many mercies of our gracious God is the one highlighted in our text for this evening: GOD SETS THE SOLITARY IN FAMILIES. It's interesting that the literal translation of the Hebrew is: *"God causes the single ones to sit in a home."* With the promise the two of you are making to each other and to God this evening, the Lord is establishing your family. It's as if He is taking you by the hand and bringing you together to your family table and saying: You will not sit alone any longer; the two of you will sit here, together.

And what a cause for celebration the establishment of a Christian home is! How appropriate is the Bible passage before us, the first two verses of which contain no fewer than eight synonyms for joy and happiness:

Let the righteous be glad [literally: "let them sparkle and shine!"]; *let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him.*

Truly this is an occasion for singing, a day which sparkles and shines with the joy that only God can give. And we rejoice with you as well. Everywhere you look today there will be smiles and best wishes and prayers for your happiness. And yes, you may even see a few tears; but you can be certain that they will be tears of joy. Joy that God has so richly blessed the two of you, and through you He has blessed us as well. For when we see your happiness, and your love for each other, and your firm commitment to each other as a Christian husband and wife, well, it reminds us all to give thanks unto the Lord, for He truly *is* good, and His mercy really *does* endure forever!

Right about this point in the wedding address is where most preachers insert the obligatory wet blanket remarks. You know, the part where I'm supposed to remind you that all is not sweetness and light in the marriage contract, that there will be sorrow as well as joy, troughs of adversity as well as pinnacles of delight, etc., etc. I'm going to skip that, if it's all the same to you. For one thing, I only have ten or twelve minutes to speak, and I don't want to waste it on issues that I think you're grown-up

enough to be aware of anyway. For another thing, I believe you know that the God who has now taken you from your solitary existence and placed you into a family is the same loving God who through His Word will enable you to overcome the inevitable challenges that will confront you in your life together.

Besides, it's difficult to dwell on the downside when God's Word holds so much good news for you today! And I would like to remind everyone here that today's good news is not just for Tom and Jennifer. For the transformation of solitary souls into accepted members of a family goes far beyond this bridal couple. GOD SETS THE SOLITARY IN FAMILIES. That is a comforting and blessed truth for you as well!

When Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden, they ruined it for everybody. Ever since then, as we were reminded earlier in the service, all people have come into this world sinful by nature, naturally tending toward evil, not toward good. For the Bible says that *"the carnal mind is enmity against God."* And when each of us looks into his past, when we are really honest with ourselves and with God, we must admit that what the Bible says of all is true of us: *"They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one"* (Ps. 14:3). And what is the result of sin? Scripture leaves no room for doubt: *"The soul that sins shall die."* Our sin made orphans of us all, separating us from our heavenly Father and condemning us to a solitary eternity in hell.

But thanks and praise be to our gracious God, who SETS THE SOLITARY IN FAMILIES. Despite your sin God has made a place for you in His family. How? We read in Galatians: *"When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"* (4:4-5). God sent Jesus to live a perfect life in your place. Jesus kept, in your place, the holy Law of God that you could never hope to keep. On Calvary's cross that first Good Friday, Jesus offered the sacrifice necessary to cover your sin and reunite you with God. He poured out His precious blood—"treading the winepress alone"—so that you need never be alone again. By reason of Jesus' death you too are now invited to come in from out of the cold and into the warmth of God's love. You too can bring your sins in repentance to the cross and there find full forgiveness. You need not fear rejection—not from Jesus. For your Savior has promised: *He "who comes to me I will by no means cast out."* You too are now entitled to find your place among the saints at God's table, as Paul said to the Ephesians: *"You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God"* (2:19).

Before the cross of Christ it doesn't matter whether you are single or married, young or old, rich or poor. Your sins may be great. They may have continued long. In your life you may have wandered far from your Savior's side. Nevertheless, God says to you today: Return, O wanderer, return. *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"* (Isa. 55:7). So you see, this day isn't solely for the bridal couple. Today GOD WANTS TO SET YOU IN A FAMILY as well, HIS family that stays together forever!

Renowned Russian author Leo Tolstoy once observed, "Happy families are all alike, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Tom and Jennifer, today God is giving you an opportunity to demonstrate to the world what the common denominator in a truly happy family is, and that is a pious faith in and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Today God is bringing to a close the solitary portion of your life. Today HE IS SETTING YOU IN A FAMILY. Let us praise the Lord for that! Let us celebrate! Let us sparkle and shine in the happiness of this day, which God Himself has sanctified and blessed. And on this most joyous occasion may you—and may we all—join Joshua of old in saying, ***"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"*** (Josh. 24:15). AMEN.

Beyond Confirmation

The following is based on an actual group of young people who received confirmation instruction in a CLC congregation. The names of the congregation and pastor are being withheld, and the personal names of the catechumens have been changed. The class was confirmed some time between 1975 and 2000. Our interest in reviewing the details given below is not so much the specific souls involved, but what can be learned and applied to our pastoral work today.

Introduction

Every pastor in the ministry for even a short period of time has experienced the heartache of studying with young people for two or more years in the Bible and in Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*, only to see some of those confirmands fall away from the church. And in some cases it does not take long for the confirmation vows that were made to be broken.

We are going to take a look at one class and follow the course these young people have taken since the day of their confirmation.

Meet the class

Aaron

Both of his parents were faithful and active members. Aaron was a good student in Catechism class and faithful in his church attendance. After attending Immanuel Lutheran High School in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, he married an ILHS student. He and his wife have three children, and all are still active as CLC members.

Abigail

Though both of her parents were members, Abigail had a troubled family life. As an average student in Catechism class she did exhibit a good attitude. After confirmation she was faithful at first, but soon had serious trouble in school with alcohol, drugs, and boys. After high school she left the CLC. Her life has also included marriage, followed by divorce, but no children.

Elizabeth

Though both of her parents were members, Elizabeth's father was an alcoholic and delinquent in his use of the means of grace. She was a good student in Catechism class and faithful in her church attendance. She went on to attend high school at Immanuel. Her marriage to a non-member ended in divorce. She married again and has two children. At this time she is not a member of a CLC church.

Luke

Both of Luke's parents were faithful members. He too was faithful in his church attendance and a good student in class. His marriage to a non-member included the blessing that his wife became a member also. Their family, which includes two children, is active in a CLC church.

Mark

Mark's parents were members of the congregation. Though he attended Catechism class regularly and was a good student, he was also irregular in his attendance of worship services. Within six months of his confirmation he withdrew from the congregation, being the first of his class to do so. It is unknown at this time whether he was ever married or had any children.

Matthew

Though both of his parents were members, Matthew's mother was delinquent in attendance. He was a good student in Catechism class, faithfully attended church, and went to high school at Immanuel. He is married to a non-member and has two children. But he and his family are not members of the CLC.

Paul

Though his mother was active, Paul's father was absent from the family. He struggled in Catechism class and was poor in his attendance at church. Paul never finished high school, got into trouble with the authorities, and fathered a child out of wedlock. Within five years he withdrew from the congregation. It is unknown at this time whether he is married or has any other children.

Ruth

Though both of her parents were members and active in their own church life, they did not provide Ruth with the solid foundation that she needed. Ruth was a good student in class and very likeable. After confirmation her family moved away to an area with no CLC congregation. She would become the second in the class to withdraw from our fellowship. No information about marriage and children is known about Ruth at this time.

Sarah

Both of Sarah's parents were faithful members. She was a good student in class and attended church regularly. Her marriage to a non-member ended in divorce. As a single mother of one child she moved away to an area far removed from any CLC congregation. After ten years of being a distant member, she withdrew from our fellowship.

Timothy

Though both of his parents were members, Timothy and his family were below average in their attendance of worship services. He was a good student in class and very likeable. During or after his time at college, he lost his faith and left the CLC. It is not known if he is married or has any children.

Other items of note

The pastor involved had an excellent relationship with all of the confirmands in this class. He remembers the group as one of the better classes over the years in completing their homework and memory work assignments.

The congregation also had an active youth group in which most of the confirmands participated. There was a bond among them and also between them and the congregation, which did not have a Christian day school.

A summary

- Of the original class of ten students, only two are still in the CLC.
- Of the six known to have married, three have been divorced.
- To the six known to have married belong eleven children, five of whom are still CLC members.
- Of the entire class of ten, three went to Immanuel Lutheran High School in Eau Claire; two of these left the CLC.

Some conclusions

We certainly want to be careful not to read too much into the outcomes of one group in one congregation. That being said, the following observations seem valid.

1. Youth with two parents active in church rather than one or none were (and are) more likely to be active also.
2. Marriage to a non-member had (and has) a significant impact, as did marriage to a fellow believer—only in different directions.
3. A class of 10 youth lost most of its number at some point later. In some cases it was a loss to the CLC; others were lost, it would seem, to the Holy Christian Church.

Factoring in the original ten plus their spouses and children and assuming positive outcomes for all of them, the number of these as members in the CLC could be at least 27—a number that does not take into account the four with whom there is no current contact. The reality, however, is that only nine of the 27 are still active in CLC churches. Imagine if this ratio was to repeat several times over in a congregation and also in the synod; one can then understand why the membership in our church body is declining.

What could be done?

We know that the solution to this problem, as is the case with other problems in the Church, is to be found in the Word of God. Through the Word the Spirit of God will operate on the human heart; so our God has promised.

In 2 Timothy 3 the Apostle Paul related the following experience and confidence with one of his former students.

2 Timothy 3:12-13 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Paul clearly knew the serious threats to his young son in the faith. Paul also knew well the means of protection that could and would keep Timothy safe.

2 Timothy 3:14 *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.*

Against these threats around him in the world, Timothy had his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice, Pastor Paul, and ultimately Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

We too, as Paul did with Timothy, need to remind our youth of the care and concern given by those who really love them—as opposed to a live-in significant other, an agnostic professor, however brilliant, or the wayward direction provided by peers.

2 Timothy 3:15 *And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

Here we see the true priority for our children, our students, and ourselves: salvation, from cradle to grave, all in Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

What was good for the students of Christian doctrine in Paul's day, namely, to be built on the foundation of God's inspired Word, is certainly good for catechism students in our day too. Nothing else will do

2 Timothy 3:17 *That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

We can look to this Word of God to supply all of our students' needs during their confirmation instruction and beyond. Such needs include steadfastness, faithfulness, growth in grace, service in the kingdom of Christ—all to be provided by the Spirit through the Word.

And so we ask: How can the Word be employed further, that is, beyond the use being made of it in our youth catechetical instruction? Consider the following suggestions.

- A. Incorporate more parental involvement.
 - Have parents sit in on Catechism class.
 - Send studies home for the family to use.
 - Ask parents to teach a portion of the class.
 - Keep parents informed with frequent updates.
 - Emphasize to the parents the importance of practicing what God preaches (e.g., Do parents go to Bible Class also? Or just send their children to Sunday School?).
- B. Re-emphasize the importance of selecting a spouse that will share the same confession of the Word and be a help-mate in the use of God's Word.
 - Make this a topic of special classes with the high school youth group.
 - And also a topic series for other Bible studies, as well as articles written for the bulletin or the church newsletter.
- C. Promote the need for on-going Bible study (again and again and again . . .).
 - Suggested Bible studies for use at home
 - Encouragement to attend Bible Class
 - Matching that encouragement with carefully crafted studies that apply the Word to the life of our youth
 - Promoting the benefit of enrollment at Immanuel Lutheran High School and College
 - Participation in one of several summer Bible camps sponsored by congregations in the CLC
- D. Engage our youth in the work of the church.
 - Match our youth with older members who can help them to develop the use of their time and talents in the work of the kingdom (i.e., a mentor program).
 - Invite them to sit in on various board and committee meetings of the congregation.
 - Enlist their help in Vacation Bible School, Traveling VBS, or the CLC Mission Helper program.
- E. Make sanctified and frequent use of prayer.
 - In congregational prayers for the youth of the church
 - Printing such prayers in the bulletin or church newsletter
 - In requests for such prayer from the members
 - In the prayer life of called servants

Along with the promise and power attached to the use of the Word, remember also the promise and power our Savior attaches to prayer!

There can be no doubt that a tremendous struggle is taking place for the souls of our young people. That roaring lion, the devil, delights to devour the tender soul of a recent catechumen. The world will not be friendly to our youth, but opposes fiercely all that our God values. And what shall we say of the sinful flesh? It hates the Law of God and has even more disdain for the Gospel of Christ.

But for all that the grace of our Savior is more powerful. Let us who are charged with the awesome responsibility of spiritual care for the youth of God measure carefully what is at stake and with renewed zeal take up the sword of the Spirit in our ministries to them. That Word will preserve our

youth in the faith God has given them and also equip them, in turn, for their work with the youth of the future.

The desire of the Lord recorded by the Spirit in Psalm 78 remains the same:

For He [the LORD] established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments (verses 5-7).

Book / Periodical Notices and Reviews

* Most of the reviews in this issue are grouped together and treated more briefly, and in some instances with something of a “Panaroma” approach (cf. p. 5) by the first reviewer.

By Luther

Luther’s Works: Sermons V (Volume 58 of the American Edition). Ed. Christopher Boyd Brown. Concordia Publishing House, 2010, hard cover, 489 pages.

Only the Decalogue is Eternal: Martin Luther’s Complete Antinomian Theses and Disputations. Transl. and ed. Holger Sonntag. Lutheran Press (Minneapolis), 2008, paperback, 216 pages.

“Studies in Luther,” *Lutheran Forum*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Winter 2010). Transl. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, pages 34-35, which contain fifty of Luther’s theses on the remission of sins from 1518.

I don’t know that the day will ever come when absolutely all of Martin Luther’s many words in Latin and German will be translated into English. There always seems to be more.

The second volume in the projected twenty-volume addition to the American Edition of *Luther’s Works* provides some of Luther’s latest sermons, preached from 1539 to 1546. In these years Luther was involved in controversy with his one-time friend Johann Agricola on the need of God’s Law for Christians. Some of these sermons reflect that controversy. Luther was concerned that many of his listeners were not bringing forth the fruits of faith in their lives. At one point he was so disgusted with the Wittenberg congregation that he retired briefly and had to be persuaded to return. Some of his sermons in this volume deal with the problem of clandestine or secret engagements. Luther vehemently opposed such engagements, whereas some of the Wittenberg jurists defended them. We may find it surprising that Luther in his later years called on the secular government to punish flagrant sins against the first table of the law, specifically blasphemy, as well as sins against the second table. As a child of his time Luther could not conceive of the possibility of Christians living in outward peace with the Jewish community. Since the Jews were guilty of blasphemy for their views of Jesus Christ, he believed that they should be punished.

But the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ alone remained the center of his preaching to the end, as the following excerpt from 1546 helps to indicate: “How, then, is it that so many sins remain in me, if they are supposed to have been forgiven? If there is sin in me, how, then, can I be righteous before God and pleasing to Him? How shall I deal with this? Answer: God forgives sins in such a way that they are not counted against us and no longer condemn us, as David says in Psalm 32 . . .” (p. 451). “Our sins are not forgiven so that we can do whatever we please. . . . We must continue to struggle and work, so that not sin but faith and its fruits grow and increase in us. . . . You should exercise your faith by opposing the sins remaining in you, and thus you will understand the Ten Commandments and the Our Father better and better. If you are patient, humble, meek, and you believe today, it is so that you might become even stronger, even more humble, patient, and believe more tomorrow” (p. 452).

Some of Luther's antinomian writings have appeared in English before. But the translation by Holger Sonntag claims to include all of Luther's theses and all of his disputations in the antinomian controversy. Since antinomianism is a very present danger for American Lutherans, particularly with respect to sexual matters, it is good to have Luther's insights on this question, drawn as always from the Scriptures.

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson says that, to her knowledge, the fifty theses from 1518 have not appeared before in English. Here is Thesis 16: "The one who has been absolved by the power of the keys should prefer to die and renounce the whole of creation rather than doubt his absolution" (p. 34). God wants us to be certain that our sins are forgiven. Luther likewise.

About Luther

Oswald Bayer: *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification* (Lutheran Quarterly Books). Transl. Geoffrey Bromiley. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, paperback, 89 pages.

Oswald Bayer: *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*. Transl. Thomas Trapp. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, paperback, 374 pages.

Oswald Bayer: *Theology the Lutheran Way* (Lutheran Quarterly Books). Transl. and ed. Jeffrey Silcock and Mark Mattes. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007, paperback, 302 pages.

Robert Kolb and Charles Arand: *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church*. Baker Academic, 2008, paperback, 240 pages.

There must be considerable interest in the life and teachings of Luther among Protestants and Evangelicals. Eerdmans and Baker, two publishing houses in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that are not Lutheran, have given us these weighty books from Oswald Bayer, a German Lutheran theologian, in English translation, as well as a similar volume from American authors Kolb and Arand. Sometimes books about Luther reveal more about the authors than they do about Luther, but the authors of these books are considered to be experts in their field.

By LCMS and WELS authors

John Brug: *The Ministry of the Word*, Northwestern Publishing House, 2009, hard cover, 531 pages.

Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (various authors), Concordia Publishing House; volumes available when this review was written: Leviticus, Joshua, Ruth, Ezra-Nehemiah, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ezekiel (2 volumes), Daniel, Amos, Jonah, Matthew (1 of 2 vols.), Luke (2 vols.), First Corinthians, Colossians, First Timothy-Second Timothy-Titus, Philemon, Revelation.

Tom Eckstein: *Bearing Their Burden (Galatians 6:1-2): Speaking the Truth in Love to People Burdened by Homosexuality*, Lulu, Inc., 2010, paperback, 367 pages.

Edward Engelbrecht, ed. *The Lutheran Study Bible* (English Standard Version), Concordia Publishing House, 2009, hard cover, 2377 pages.

Curtis Jahn, ed. *Here We Stand: A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews*, Northwestern Publishing House, 2010, paperback, 350 pages.

Paul Zimmerman: *A Seminary in Crisis: The Inside Story of the Preus Fact Finding Committee*, Concordia Publishing House, 2007, hard cover, 444 pages.

The non-Lutheran Evangelicals have generally been much more prolific than confessional Lutherans in the writing of books and periodicals. Sometimes Lutheran colleges and seminaries have had to use textbooks written by non-Lutherans because nothing substantial by Lutherans has been published in a particular area of study. Sometimes Lutheran textbooks that were written many years ago are still being used because recent studies dealing with the problems of our day are not available. Nevertheless,

Lutheran authors have not been altogether silent, as the examples listed above indicate.

An important event in recent Lutheran history is taken up by Paul Zimmerman's study of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) controversy in the 1970s, which centered on the inspiration and interpretation of the Bible. After J. A. O. Preus was elected LCMS president in 1969, he recognized his duty to rid the St. Louis seminary of teachers who followed historical-critical procedures in their presentations. In order to get an accurate picture of what was actually being taught, he appointed a fact-finding committee, of which Paul Zimmerman was chairman. Zimmerman's book, *A Seminary in Crisis*, has two parts: the history of the controversy and then the report of Preus to the LCMS based on the information that his committee had uncovered. Unfortunately, the purge that followed was not complete, and so there is still much disagreement in the LCMS on doctrinal matters, although the situation at the seminary and in the synod does seem to be somewhat improved. At least it would seem some excellent studies are being produced by the synod's Concordia Publishing House, which would probably not be the case today if the anti-Preus forces had triumphed.

One worthwhile project of Concordia Publishing House is the ongoing production of full-length exegetical commentaries on books of both the Old and New Testaments. Pastors and professors of the Church of the Lutheran Confession who have used these volumes have generally given favorable reviews. See the listing on the previous page for volumes available, many of which are in the library of Immanuel Lutheran Seminary. Despite budgetary limitations for new purchases, the seminary librarian is attempting to obtain all volumes in the *Concordia Commentary* series for seminary use, even though they are quite expensive—and in some cases quite lengthy. For example, the commentary on Luke by Arthur Just, Jr., is a two-volume set that totals 1483 pages.

Concordia Publishing House has also produced *The Lutheran Study Bible*, which potentially could be recognized among us as the most useful and dependable of the one-volume study Bibles on the market. The translation text used in this Bible is the new English Standard Version, which seems to be making some headway in our circles, potentially becoming a fourth version for use in our church services, along with the King James Version, the New King James Version, and the New International Version. Since this study Bible is such a massive volume, it will take some time before we can give it a grade on such matters as accuracy, usefulness, readability, and agreement with confessional Lutheranism. It certainly ought to be an improvement over study Bibles produced by the Reformed or Evangelicals or more liberal Lutherans.

Northwestern Publishing House of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) has not been quiet either. Two of their more ambitious projects are listed above. Perhaps the most prolific writer from the WELS in recent years has been John Brug. One of his latest projects is a thorough study of church and ministry entitled *The Ministry of the Word*. Since the WELS and the CLC are in general agreement on church and ministry, we should not expect to find in this volume much with which we would disagree. The first part of the book presents the Biblical doctrine, which involves a careful study of the various Bible words and passages that deal with this teaching. Included are chapters on the priesthood of all believers, the forms of the public ministry, the pastoral ministry in particular, the call into the ministry, and also women and ministry. The second half of the book compares the views of others on the topic of the ministry, especially the views of various LCMS teachers. I found the long chapter (pp. 288-397) on "Romanizing and Enthusiastic Tendencies Among Lutherans" especially interesting and revealing. There is also a lengthy chapter (pp. 398-480) on the debate between LCMS and WELS leaders on church and ministry that originated when both synods were still members of the Synodical Conference. It is clear that the differences have not been resolved even to the present day. By this time the LCMS is the home for many differing views on church and ministry, as we can expect in a synod that fails to practice doctrinal discipline. The CLC is mentioned only briefly on page 478 where it is said: "The WELS, ELS, and CLC have shared the same position, sometimes inaccurately called the WELS view." The other CLC, the Concordia Lutheran Conference, has a different view. In this book the

Concordia Lutheran Conference is designated as “CLC².” In my opinion it would be good if our seminarians would be assigned this book for reading, especially for its sections on Romanizing tendencies and its discussion of the WELS-LCMS debate.

Here We Stand, also a Northwestern production, elucidates what it considers the confessional Lutheran worldview and then takes up a study of various areas where this confessional worldview clashes with other current worldviews. Topics covered include law, morality, science, ecumenical religion, and pantheism. I found Ryan MacPherson’s chapter on teaching objective morality in a post-modern world to be particularly enlightening. MacPherson teaches morality at Bethany Lutheran College (ELS) in Mankato, Minnesota, where a considerable number of his students do not enter his class with a confessional Lutheran worldview, but have imbibed to a large extent the popular worldview that there are no absolutes. We are reminded once more how necessary it is for us to promote genuine Christian education and thorough Bible teaching to the coming generation. For it seems that many things once nailed down are coming loose.

Surely one of the things coming loose in our time is basic sexual morality and the Biblical understanding of marriage. Tom Eckstein, an LCMS pastor in Jamestown, North Dakota, has written a book dealing with the burden borne by those who have struggled with homosexuality. What he writes in *Bearing Their Burden* clearly presents evidence from the Bible that “God condemns even consensual homosexual behavior” (p. 119). After discussing all the pertinent Bible passages that deal with this topic, he takes up the counter arguments of those who either misinterpret the Bible or reject it altogether. His main concern, however, is to help those who are burdened by their guilt and want to be set free. Galatians 6:1-2 is his guiding light: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” In view of the fact that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is now permitting even its pastors to promote and practice homosexual behavior, it is good to have a book that gives good Scriptural answers and pastoral advice on how to respond to this current problem.

Matthew Harrison: *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod’s Great Era of Unity and Growth*, Lutheran Legacy, 2009, hard cover, 826 pages.

Matthew Harrison: *A Little Book on Joy: The Secret of Living a Good News Life in a Bad News World*, Lutheran Legacy, 2009, paperback, 212 pages.

David Henkel: *The Works of David Henkel*, (The Evangelical Lutheran Library Series). Ed. Mark Taylor. Lutheran Legacy Publishing, 2006, hard cover, 681 pages.

Two of the books listed above have several things in common. Not only are they rather large works published in recent years by Lutheran Legacy. The Henkel compilation has an introduction by Lawrence Rast, Jr., who also wrote the foreword to the book compiled by Harrison. Both volumes give us a long look (but in their own words) at confessional Lutheran leaders in America who lived in previous times. David Henkel lived from 1795 to 1831 and, together with his family, was instrumental in the formation of the Tennessee Synod, the first American Lutheran church body that was truly confessional. As was true of many in his time, however, David Henkel exhibited unscriptural views of the millennium.

As indicated in the title, the huge Harrison compilation consists of the writings of the presidents of the Missouri Synod from its founding in 1847 until 1939. The early presidents were all confessional Lutheran theologians of the first rank: Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (1847-1850, 1864-1878), Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken (1850-1864), Heinrich Christian Schwan (1878-1899), Franz August Otto Pieper (1899-1911), and Friedrich Pfothenhauer (1911-1935). All of these men used the German language primarily. In the Harrison collection we have their writings in English, translated by Matthew Harrison, Everette Meier, August Crull, Elmer Hohle, Edwin Suelflow, W. G. Polack, and others.

Of special note is the fact that Matthew Harrison has been elected as the president of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, and thus he will have an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of the great leaders whose writings he has compiled. But, as Harrison fully recognizes, the Missouri Synod today is not the same unified orthodox synod that it was in the days of its first five presidents. Harrison introduces each excerpt from the writings of the five presidents with comments of his own, which reveal his own stance with respect to the content of the writings.

Introductory comments to an 1884 synodical address by H. C. Schwan state the following: “By 1884 [in connection with the great predestination controversy], it was evident that the Lord had preserved the Missouri Synod intact. . . . I dare to believe that even today, in the wake of a series of more or less unresolved controversies in the LCMS since the 1940s, it is possible for this deep unity to be ours again. My dream is a theological dialogue akin to what took place leading up to the Formula of Concord. Men of good will, representing differing views and factions, coming together in a nonpolitical fashion, spending time together in the course of some years, praying together, working together, identifying the points at issue, and humbly bowing to the Word of God and, with divine help, recognizing the requirements of the divine Word and the limits of love, that we may live together in missiological zeal and theological peace. If we believe in the Word, we must believe that Schwan’s address can be given again” (p. 520).

It seems Harrison agrees with the five presidents that church fellowship must be based on agreement in all of the doctrines of the Bible. No one makes a stronger case on this point than Francis Pieper. In 1888 Pieper presented a paper to the Synodical Conference on unity in the faith, of which Harrison says: “It is classic Pieper: biblical, confessional, precise, careful, and thorough” (p. 571). This paper presents the same Scriptures and explanation that our Church of the Lutheran Confession sets forth in *Concerning Church Fellowship*. Here is Harrison’s comment: “The issue of church fellowship is a topic that is extremely challenging for us in our postmodern world. But Pieper’s lecture demonstrates that the seeds of the postmodern idea that there finally is no unique ‘truth’ had already been sown in the nineteenth century. The matter was difficult for nineteenth-century Missouri, too. The early Missourians knew the Word of God and revered it. And they would suffer all before departing even a hair’s breadth from it. Today the mantra is that we must relax traditional Missouri Synod doctrine and practice on church fellowship in order to grow and cope with the postmodern world. Pieper sees the matter rather as a clear teaching of Scripture and the Confessions. The Missouri Synod was faithful to what it believed was the revealed truth of the Gospel. God granted the growth” (p. 571).

Will Harrison be able to lead the Missouri Synod back to the unified orthodoxy of Walther and his four successors? Let us pray for him and those like-minded with him, but let us also recognize that a large portion of the Missouri Synod is not sympathetic to such views as his, and prominent leaders will be opposing him at every turn if he tries to take action against false teachers in his synod. Opponents will put up with orthodox talk on his part, but orthodox action will most certainly be vehemently opposed.

David Henkel and the first five Missouri Synod presidents faced serious problems and dealt with them on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Certainly we can learn much from them. We already have some familiarity with the writings of Walther and Pieper. It is good to have in English also the testimony of Henkel, Wyneken, Schwan, and Pfothenhauer. The compilers, translators, and publishers are to be commended for making these writings available to our generation. The prefaces and annotations also help us understand their writings in historical context. The price? Not any more than most books half their size.

We also mention here *A Little Book on Joy*, which was written by Matthew Harrison to counteract the general pessimism and joylessness that seems so evident among Christians in our time. At the suggestion of a dear friend, Harrison says, he set out with skepticism in the task of searching the Scriptures to see what it says about joy. His initial skepticism comes across on page 1: “I have searched through the inspired Scriptures shaking loose every available shred of information on topics such as cross and suffering, faith and mercy, but joy? Really?! Would a serious and sober Christian really concentrate on joy? Is it a topic worthy of thought in its own right? Isn’t it merely a byproduct of faith in

Jesus? Isn't joy something which simply arises of its own accord out of knowing the Gospel of free forgiveness in Jesus? . . . Wouldn't a little book on joy simply amount to something like writing on flavor instead of writing a cook book?" But after his search: "I found joy in the Old Testament. . . . I found joy in the Gospels. . . . I found Paul's letters packed with joy. . . . As I contemplated these texts in rapid fire, . . . I, even I, began . . . to rejoice. I found myself surprised, encouraged and even delighted by joy in Christ. . . . I've found joy, and I want to share it with you" (pp. 3-4).

David Lau

Scott M. Hyslop: *The Journey Was Chosen: The Life and Work of Paul Manz*. MorningStar Music Publishers, 2007, paperback, 246 pages.

For as long as I can remember I have listened to the organ music of Paul Manz. When I was growing up, a new Manz LP record would show up in our family's stereo cabinet every now and then until all available releases had been purchased. If I have opportunities to sit down at the organ bench these days, my sister still says to me, "Play Paul Manz," by which she means his chorale on the tune Cwm Rhondda (God of Grace and God of Glory). In short, it is not an overstatement to say that as far as Lutheran church music is concerned, Paul Manz has had an influence on more composers, choir directors, organists, and worshipers than any other 20th-century musician.

In his book Scott Hyslop, organist and music director at St. Lorenz Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Frankenmuth, Michigan, takes a close look at the life and work of Paul Manz. The book is divided into three sections.

Part one is biographical. Born in 1919, Manz received his early musical training in the Cleveland (Ohio) area before attending Concordia-River Forest (Illinois) as a high school student. By the mid-1960s he was in high demand as an organist in the Missouri Synod, being asked to play for many synodical services and observances. For 27 years he was the cantor (which included duties as organist and choir director) at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. In the 1970s Manz supported the faculty and students of Christ Seminary-Seminex and was also involved with the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. After many years of giving concerts, organizing hymn festivals, and being a parish organist, Manz ceased playing in 2000 following a serious illness. While the biographical section of the book is quite interesting and surely the Lord's hand in the work of the church can be seen, this conservative reviewer had to let out a bit of a weary sigh at the way the author frequently praised Manz's crossing of denominational boundaries to bring various Lutherans and others together in worship. I seriously doubt, as the author goes so far as to suggest at one point, that Martin Luther would have smiled at the joint service involving Lutherans and Catholics, which Manz helped to lead.

Part two is an examination and analysis of Manz's music. This would appeal especially to organists and musicians, but it is not overly technical or overly long. The non-musician reading this part would appreciate what the composer of church music thinks about and does behind the scenes when exercising his art. Manz was especially gifted at studying the text of a hymn and presenting that text in a meaningful way through music. Hyslop shows the reader examples of musical settings by Manz and the way in which they capture so well the texts of the hymns they represent.

Part three is a set of reflections and commentary by others on the life and work of Paul Manz, including a few comments made by his son John. Here you will find several anecdotes by his organ students and an extended essay by David Cherwien, the current cantor at Mt. Olive Lutheran in Minneapolis.

The book also refers the reader to supplementary material available online at www.morningstarmusic.com where one can listen to audio clips and view graphics related to Manz.

Paul Manz always considered himself first and foremost a parish musician. He was not so much concerned about making a concert career for himself as he was about helping the people in the pews to sing and praise God. In a concrete way he very much did in the 20th-century what Luther did in the 16th-century by encouraging the Lutheran church to be the singing church. His music was written to serve and spread the Gospel of Christ.

Manz died in October 2009 at the age of 90, but his work will be heard for generations to come. If you are already somewhat familiar with him, then this book will offer you additional insight and information. If, however, the name Paul Manz is new to you, then first refresh your heart by listening to recordings of his hymn improvisations on the organ. They are available in three volumes on compact disc from MorningStar Music Publishers. After you listen, I suspect that you too will come away asking your church organist to play Paul Manz.

David Schaller