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The Three Great Elements of Christian Preaching According to the Account of the Great Sinful Woman Luke 7:36-50 *

* "Die drei grossen Stuecke der christlichen Predigt nach der Geschichte von der grossen Suenderin, Luc. 7,36-50," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (April 1914), pp. 115-136. The translation is by Pastor Norman Greve. — Editor.

August Pieper

It is unfortunate that the account of the sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50) is not appointed for a Sunday. Ancient church tradition identified the sinful woman of this text with the well-known Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord had driven seven demons; and thus Jerome appointed this pericope for her supposed birthday, July 22. From this it followed that it was lost as a standard sermon text in the Lutheran church, which in the course of time has dropped this day as a festival. Incidentally, let it be said here that the identification of Mary Magdalene with the sinful woman of our text lacks all foundation. Indeed, we are prohibited from considering these two to be the same woman by the fact that Luke [Pieper incorrectly has Mark], immediately after telling this account, mentions Mary Magdalene as a person from whom the Lord has driven out seven demons, without identifying her with the sinful woman just treated, and indeed

manifestly treats her as a completely different woman (Luke 8:2). Accordingly, it is an abuse when people, even down to the most recent times, have named homes to rehabilitate fallen girls "Mary Magdalene homes." We do not know who the sinful woman of our text was or what she was named. It is then incorrect to identify the event mentioned in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 11:2; 12:3 (the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha) with the account told in our text. People have been misled to do so by the similarity of the general circumstances of both accounts and especially by the fact that both incidents take place in the house of a man named Simon (Matt. 26; Mark 14) and that John has Mary, just as Luke here has this woman, anoint the feet of Jesus and dry them with her hair (12:3). Matthew and Mark, on the other hand, mention only an anointing of Jesus' head and make no mention of a drying with the hair. However, the identity of the two events does not follow from this. The name Simon was then as common among the Jews as the names Schmidt, Schultz, Meier, and Schroeder are among the Germans today, as even a superficial student of Scripture knows. Therefore they gave the various bearers of that name surnames in order to distinguish them from one another: Simon Peter, Simon of Cana, Simon of Cyrene, Simon the tanner, Simon the magician. Thus the Simon from Bethany, in whose house Mary anointed the Lord, had the surname "the leper," while the Simon of our account is treated by Luke as an otherwise unknown man, and at first receives no name at all, but is simply introduced as a Pharisee. We only learn his name when our Lord addresses him. We would be justified in making a single event of this incident and the one related by the other Evangelists and in considering Mary of Bethany to be the same person as the sinful woman in our text, only if Scripture itself identified this Pharisee, named Simon, with Simon the leper. We also do not know in which city the account here related took place. It cannot have been Bethany already for this reason: that is never called a city (πόλις), but rather always only a small town or village (κώμη). The order of events within which the account stands in Luke lets us conclude that it is a place in Galilee.

However, this is of little importance. But the account itself is so precious, so typical of the character of the gospel, so rich in teaching for Christian and non-Christian alike, and, in addition, so full of important hints about the proper way to preach God's Word that it is well worth subjecting it to a thorough scrutiny. It presents to us in vivid colors the three great elements which must be the chief subject of all Christian preaching: sin, grace, and love. We first give a coherent overview of the text. It offers no difficulties in its particulars.

Although our account in itself forms an independent whole, nevertheless the context in which it stands throws a special light on its scope. Luke had noted a few verses earlier (v. 30) that the Pharisees and scribes rejected the counsel of God against themselves and did not allow themselves to be baptized by John. At this obduracy of the Pharisees, the Lord, using the picture of children sitting in the market place, had complained that they had dismissed John's preaching under the pretext that he had a devil and that they had heedlessly rejected His preaching with the blasphemous comment that He was a glutton and a winebibber, a companion of publicans and sinners. At this point our account begins. One of those slanderous Pharisees, in spite of that reproach to our Lord, invited Him to a banquet. With this, Luke points out the hypocrisy of that reproach. What they made a sin for the Lord, they themselves did; they ate and drank not only out of necessity but also occasionally to have a good time. Their vexation was not so much at the fact that Jesus ate and drank as that He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He should have stayed in their, the Pharisaic, company and have avoided the common people, as they did; then they might have been able to take another stance toward Him. Thus they sought, on the other hand, to draw Him over into their camp. The invitation which the Pharisee extended to the Lord in our text also served the interests of this desire. Deep in his heart, Simon did not believe in the intemperance of the Lord. The Lord stood out to

his and his companions' conscience as a person of moral purity. Yea, the thoughts which went through his heart during the meal, "If this man were a prophet, etc.," prove that Jesus' Messiah-ship had produced a powerful witness to his conscience. A man like Jesus (especially since He had so quickly become a popular celebrity) belonged in their ranks. And if they succeeded in consolidating him with Phariseeism, that could produce a real gain for the kingdom of God, as they conceived it to be; and if He really were the Messiah, or the great prophet, then with their aid, the kingdom of the Messiah could be established very successfully. Therefore it was worth their pains to attract Him to their side. It is in this frame of mind that Simon the Pharisee invites the Lord to his house for a banquet.

And the Lord accepts the invitation. It does not bother Him that by doing so He could have given a new semblance of justification to the reproach that He really might be a glutton and a winebibber; in fact, the injustice and hypocrisy of that reproach stood out plainly before their own eyes in that the Pharisees themselves invited Him to their own dinner parties. "So if I eat and drink with you, I am no glutton and winebibber, but if I do it with the publicans and sinners, then I am,"— thus the Lord's participation at this meal with the Pharisees must have preached to the conscience of Simon and of his table companions. And this, coupled with the particular situation created by the following events, leads to the point of view from which the sermon our Lord here delivered should be understood. That is the question: Whose side will the Lord take in this critical situation, Simon's or the woman's? — For this reason the Evangelist deliberately sharpens the contrast. At first he gives no name at all to the one who invited the Lord, but rather, in accord with what has just been said, he is concerned merely with establishing that the man was a Pharisee. "One of the Pharisees," "into the Pharisee's house," and again in the next verse, "in the Pharisee's house," and in verse 39, "Now when the Pharisee saw it." In the company of these "Separated Ones" who avoided the common rabble because of their uncleanness according to the law, to whom the publicans and sinners were a loathsome abomination, who reproached this Jesus of Nazareth on just this account, that He mingled with such people—in this company the Lord takes His place at the table. Suddenly—Luke draws attention to the strangeness of the event with the little word "behold"—a prostitute of the city, known as such to the host and to his guests, pushes herself unexpectedly and contrary to all convention into this circle of the spiritual elite. How shocking! The eyes of everyone are aimed at her in amazement, perplexity, and soon enough also in disgust and wrath. What does she want here? — She walks around behind to the feet of Jesus, sinks to her knees, weeps and wets His feet with tears, dries them with the hair of her head, kisses them and anoints them with ointment! — The significance of this gesture of the woman indeed forced itself clearly upon the Pharisees present, even though they were not able to assess it spiritually. Here again was one from the dregs of society who forced herself on Jesus; she here wants to declare to Him her reverence and to find comfort at His side. And she is tactless, shameless, and brazen enough to do that here, in this elegant house, in this exquisite company, on this festive occasion! What an embarrassing situation! The Evangelist continues, "When, however, the Pharisee who had invited Him saw it"—not as though the others had not seen it. On the contrary, the incident was of such a nature that all simply had to watch it, and all naturally had the same thoughts concerning it. But they, like our Lord, were only guests, and hence proper manners forbade them to comment at this point. It was the host's business to resolve this embarrassing affair. Therefore Luke mentions only him. But neither did he think it was the proper thing to do to bring up this embarrassing circumstance. That is the business of Jesus, his honored guest, who is answerable for this unheard-of incident. He knew into whose house and into what sort of fellowship He was going when He accepted the invitation. The woman has come here running after Him, and with Him alone has she anything to do at my table; it lies on Him to release them all from this unbearable situation.

And for Simon it is entirely self-evident that Jesus will shake this person off as soon as He knows “who and what sort of woman” it is who is touching Him. And if He is a prophet with God-given prophetic vision, then He will perceive it and act. But Jesus does not push the woman away from Him; He permits her to do as she pleases. For Simon this is nothing but proof that Jesus is not really a prophet. “If this man were a prophet,” he thinks to himself; He is not, or He would have known that a prostitute is touching Him and would have shaken her off from Him as an unclean thing. That Jesus could acknowledge the woman in this situation and even take sides with her and against them—that thought does not even occur to him at first. It was entirely self-evident to Simon that Jesus would get rid of her and renounce her as soon as He knew who she was. And he would have told Him this and, as master of the house, shown the woman the door, had Jesus given him time to do so.

But Jesus does not give him time for that. He saw Simon’s thoughts; He knew what he thought and expected of Him. In order to anticipate him and to prevent him from driving the woman out, the Lord addresses him and tells him a parable. He wants to make the whole situation clear and to explain why the woman and He acted in this manner. He takes sides with the woman and justifies His way of handling the situation to the Pharisees—indeed, not for His own sake (He did not accept honor from men), but for their sake who needed this witness for their salvation.

The Lord sees the thoughts, the Pharisaic thoughts, of His host and begins to speak in answer to them. He addresses him with a certain warmth in that He calls him by his name. “Simon,” He says, “I have something to say unto you.” This is exactly the way the words in the original text read. There is a deep and solemn earnestness in this introduction. The Lord here brings to the forefront His divine person and His divine office. He is never a private person who deals with fellowmen simply as a man. He is the Son of Man who is from heaven and has come into the world to redeem sinners and to witness to them the truth that saves. It is as such that He has also come into the house of this Pharisee, as such that He sits at his table; such is His relationship to the woman and also to him and to his guests, and as such He has for him on this opportunity a divine message which he should hear and take to heart. Simon is fascinated by this emotional address. “Master, say on.” He yields the floor to the Lord eagerly and courteously. It is very apparent to him that Jesus desires to speak on account of and concerning the situation at hand, provoked by the woman. Simon certainly expects that Jesus would attempt to explain how He had come into this position through no responsibility of His own, but due to the woman, and that He would request him as master of the house to use his domestic authority to free Him from the frowardness of this person. But the Lord does nothing of the sort. Seemingly passing the circumstances by, He tells Simon a story. “A creditor,” [δανειστής is not necessarily a professional money lender, a usurer; the remitting of the debt does not fit with that; but rather, generally speaking, a creditor] “had two debtors, etc., etc., . . . will love him most?” After Simon, who probably as yet does not clearly see where the Lord is leading with His parable, had given the correct answer, “I suppose the one he forgave the most,” the Lord immediately applies the parable to the present situation. He, Jesus Himself, whom Simon had invited into his home, is the creditor. The debtor owing 500 denarii is this woman; the one owing 50 is Simon himself. By comparing the love which the despised woman had just shown Him with what He had experienced of love from Simon in the invitation to this banquet, He demonstrates to the latter, as emphatically as possible, that the love of the woman is genuine, true, and furthermore a real spiritual love. It is born of deep humility and heartfelt thankfulness and offers all that she has, while Simon offered Him no love at all. Yea, he had even omitted the civilities usually granted to an honored and welcomed guest and had afforded Him only superficial courtesy, which was not prompted by real love. — Simon should have recognized in

this the justification of Jesus' mode of action. Indeed, He, Jesus, in spite of all this, was a prophet, and more than a prophet; He was the Lord and Savior of sinners. He was not in Simon's debt because he had invited Him as a guest, but Simon was His debtor, even if in a lesser measure than the woman, yet truly also His debtor. And He did not take Simon's side against the woman, but her side against him, because it was clear that she clung to Him in sincere, deep repentance and love, while it was just as clear that Simon met Him with no love at all, but only superficial courtesy. And in order to underscore His siding with the woman even more emphatically, He turns away from Simon and toward the woman and confirms for her the forgiveness of her sins. Doing so, He deeply offends Simon and the entire company of Pharisees and, with His last words, offers their wickedness new cause for blasphemy. "Who is this," they say among themselves, "that He even forgives sins?" The Lord wanted to reveal to the consciences of these impenitents precisely that divine majesty which expressed itself in these words. And the woman He dismissed with the new comfort, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace!" — The Lord, the Savior of sinners, took sides with a deeply-fallen but repentant and thankful sinner against the unrepentant self-righteous who had hypocritically offered him a kind gesture. What significance the manner in which our Lord acted holds for His way of salvation the Pharisees themselves say at another time: This man receives sinners and eats with them! [Luke 15:2]. They meant it perversely. But rightly understood, it is a characteristic description of Jesus' entire conduct. "Jesus sinners doth receive."

Now as concerning the homiletical, that is, the edifying value of our account, one could very well make its formal scope as just developed (the Lord's justifying of Himself for taking sides with the sinful woman against the Pharisees) the starting point for treating its sublime content. Why does the Lord side with the sinful woman and against the Pharisees? — The development would then need to bring out the answer: The sinful woman offers the Lord a true and ardent love as a penitent sinner; the Pharisee lacks all love of the Lord as an impenitent and self-righteous sinner. This can be done in a great many ways, because the material is so abundantly rich. It is our concern now to present from our text the three great elements which really constitute Christian preaching.

Preaching concerning sin comes first. What makes the scene that just took place at the Pharisee's table so unique, so noteworthy, and, for the Pharisees, so embarrassing, is the fact that this woman is a sinner by profession, who is held in greatest contempt by all decent people and who pushes herself into this circle, into this festive group of people who stood forth in the eyes of the public and, above all, in their own judgment as pious and holy. It is the Evangelist's intention to bring this contrast into prominence. In Simon's thoughts concerning Jesus' toleration of this woman is revealed how far superior to this sinful woman he imagined himself and his table companions to be. It is on account of their imagined holiness that the Pharisees expected Jesus to brush the woman off Himself. He was in His proper place among the Pharisees, in their fellowship, a saint among saints. He Himself was contaminated simply by the contact on the part of the woman. The Lord confronted this very Pharisaic delusion—that they presumed themselves to be pious and despised the others—already in the fact that He lets the woman quietly have her way, and also, above all, in the first part of His parable. With the words, "A creditor had two debtors," the Lord topples Simon the Pharisee from his self-made pedestal of holiness and places him on the same level as the woman, in the ranks of sinners. For this is what the Lord wants with His parable of the creditor and his debtors. He is speaking here of the debt of sin. It means misconstruing the method and activity of the Lord if one supposes that He deduced the debt-relationship to Himself, into which He places the sinful woman and the Pharisee, from outward benefits He had rendered the two of them. No, He is here, as everywhere, active in His office as Savior and Judge of sinners. The debt of the woman is her sin, and likewise it is also Simon's sin, which the Lord calls his debt. Simon, just as the woman,

is His debtor because of his sin. — Still, at first it strikes us as odd that the Lord fixes Simon's debt at 50 and the woman's at 500. It goes without saying that this is to be taken rhetorically and not arithmetically. Simon's guilt is less than that of the woman. It is only a fancy when some, such as Meyer and others, have the Lord measure the guilt of these two according to their subjective guilt-consciousness. No, the Lord is speaking of actual guilt. This evaluation is admittedly somewhat puzzling at first glance. As great as the woman's debt of sin certainly was — still, the Lord, who looks upon the heart, does not possibly wish to declare Phariseeism, which also Simon lived and breathed, to be of lesser guilt than the woman's life of sin. Granted, she lived in extreme disgrace and depravity, whereby she trod underfoot the Word of God and stained her conscience, but the Pharisees lived in the really great sins against the first table, in self-righteousness, arrogance, enmity against God and Christ, and frequently in gross hypocrisy. They devoured widows' houses, and for a pretense made long prayers [Matt. 23:14]. Just compare the catalogue of the Pharisees' sins set forth by the Lord in Matthew 23 on account of which He called down upon them such manifold woes and concluded His discourse with the words: "You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" [v. 33] — But the Lord is here not comparing the woman and Simon the Pharisee to one another according to their total guilt before God, but only in regard to the one specific type of sin which here came into question. That Simon so arrogantly turned up his nose at this woman was not based on this, that she in general was a grossly sinful woman, but rather that she was caught in just this particularly shameful depravity, so despised also among men, and made a business of it. In this regard he knew he was clean! Our Lord's comparison refers to this matter alone. The case here is similar to the occasion when the Pharisees brought to Him a woman apprehended in the very act of adultery, John 8. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last" [vv. 7,9]. There would have been no reason, nor would it have made any impression on the conscience, if the Lord had here wished to remind the Pharisees of their general sinfulness. That could not have been able to restrain them from proceeding with the stoning. The Lord speaks here of their guilt in that very matter, on account of which they condemned the woman. And they stole away because their consciences declared them guilty of that. Yes, the Pharisees were frequently not pure also in just this matter of coarse sins. Although this was not the case here, Simon still certainly had no right to look down upon this woman with such scornful disdain and heartfelt condemnation, since he himself was not guiltless of the finer sins against the sixth commandment, unchaste lusts and desires. These the Pharisees actually did not recognize as sins; but the Lord had preached to them: I tell you, that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart, Matt. 5[:28]. And this is what the Lord here wishes to preach to the conscience of the arrogant Pharisee: In this matter, you are not such a coarse sinner as this woman, but even you are not quite pure in this matter. If her debt is 500, yours is 50. Thus He preaches to him what Paul (Rom. 2:1) accuses the self-righteous Jews of in general: Therefore, O man, you cannot be pardoned, whoever you are who judges, for in whatever matter you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you do exactly the very thing that you are judging. Here the Lord is preaching the cardinal truth of Scripture to Simon and his table companions: There is no difference, they are altogether sinners and lacking the glory they should have before God [Rom. 3:22f.].

To be sure, also before God there is a difference among sinners. Some are greater and others are lesser sinners. Judas was a worse sinner than was Peter; Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum had heaped greater guilt on themselves than did Sodom and Gomorrah. The leaders of the Jews, who delivered Jesus into the hands of Pilate, had greater sins than did this Gentile. In particular the magnitude of a sin is measured according to the canon: The servant who knows his Lord's will, etc. (Luke 12:47). And the greatest sins of all are the sins against grace,

against the gospel, against the activity of the Holy Spirit, precisely the ones of which Jerusalem and the Pharisees also made themselves guilty, just as did the above-mentioned cities. But basically there is no real difference among men in the sins against the law. The large majority of men are caught in some gross sin or another, as long as they have not been regenerated. Certainly, not all in the same sin. Each one has his own Achilles' heel, his own weak spot. If it is not unchastity, then perhaps it is overt greed or unfair practice and cheating, or lying and slander, hatred and animosity. Especially this sin of the Pharisees, the conceit, the arrogance, the self-righteousness, the despising of others, often clings to us Christians without our awareness. And the sin of our nation, the rich as well as the poor, is covetousness, an earthly-mindedness, the service to Mammon. And the pet sin of the German people, unfortunately also in our country, is drunkenness. Already Luther complains that in foreign countries they say, "Those drunk and raving Germans!" [*Die vollen and tollen Deutschen!*] Thus among men there is only a superficial difference in the matter of sin, brought out by varying physical characteristics, by external circumstances, upbringing, or temptation. The heart is the same in all: spiritually dead, carnally minded, at enmity against God, rebellious against all the laws of God, having no true fear of God and no faith, full of evil desire and inclination. What Paul says in Romans 3[:10-18] pertains to all men without exception: There is none who is just, no, not even one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks God. They have all gone astray and altogether become unfit; there is none who does good, not a single one. Their throat is an open grave, they deal deceitfully with their tongues, viper poison is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths is only misfortune and misery, and the way of peace they know not; there is no fear of God before their eyes. — Therefore the pot has little reason to call the kettle black. David Harum has quite aptly expressed this in his own style: "There is about as much of human nature in one man as in another, and even—more!"

And in the one matter there is absolutely no difference among sinners: "When they now had nothing to pay." Among men there is no atonement for sin. "With what shall I appease the Lord? With obeisance before the high God? Should I appease him with burnt offerings and yearling calves? . . . Or should I give my first-born son for my transgression, or the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Mic. 6:6-7). Here no work and no offering, no remorse, no prayer, and no tears help, "though he poured out a sea of tears in his woe." Each sinner is absolutely bankrupt before God, whether he owes 500 or 50. Therefore, if another does not intercede for him, the law inexorably takes its course. The wages of sin is death [Rom. 6:23]. And that concerns all sinners.

That is the sermon on sin contained in our text. It is aimed at just those who need it: the Pharisees, the self-righteous, who also, to be sure, let the catchword fall from their mouth—we are all helpless men and sinners—but who know nothing and do not want to know anything in this of their actual sinfulness, of the total corruption of their hearts, and of their damnableness and spiritual impotence. It is this preaching with which the gospel cannot dispense if it is to attain its purpose, justify, and convert. The message of grace in Christ actually becomes a power of God unto salvation only to those who have been caught and battered by the law. We must first make such people, for by nature man knows so little of sin. In particular he knows nothing about the abomination of concupiscence and of the corruption of original sin. For this reason God has given the law into our hands and placed it in our mouths. We should preach to all people the law and their sins. The mirror of the law must also be held constantly before Christians, so that they might learn to recognize ever anew and ever more deeply their sin, to humble themselves before God, and to seize grace. "Cry out confidently, spare not, raise your voice like a trumpet and announce to my people their transgressions, and to the house of Jacob their sin!" (Isa. 58[:1]). The law as a mirror—that is the grandest and truly correct use which

we as preachers should make of the law.

And now we should also learn from the Lord how one should preach the law in this use. It will not do that we perhaps with each sermon repeat to boredom that mankind, that we all are sinners. After all, even the Pharisees did not deny that. But a special sinner, a sinner in this or in that matter, that no one wants to be. As soon as the word "sinner" denotes something concrete and tangible, no one wishes to have it applied to himself. But it is just this that the Lord here does to the Pharisee, Simon: You Pharisee are also a sinner against the sixth commandment, and if not to the amount of 500 pence as this woman, yet certainly to 50 pence; if not in coarse deeds, yet certainly in longings, thoughts, and desires. Even you are not pure, but impure and therefore guilty before God; and you have nothing whereby you could pay your debt! Truly a candid sermon! The Pharisees boasted of their purity in this matter precisely by so severely condemning and so deeply abhorring sinful women that they assisted in stoning adulteresses to death. How it must have offended and outraged them that the Lord denies their purity to their face and charges them with impurity. No wonder they became hostile to Him and gnashed their teeth at him. The Lord knew this well. Nevertheless, He announced their sin to them, as He did to all people. Only thus could they be helped; only thus could they come to a recognition of their sins and become prepared for receiving saving grace. Luther says, "A preacher who does not rebuke sins must go to the devil with alien sins." And to rebuke sins means to call them by name and tell them plainly to the hearers. The Lord always does so. The prophets do so. Isaiah ever and again names the sins of which Judah was guilty. See chapters 1 and 3 and throughout his entire book. He rebuked the mighty among the people as well as the masses. The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint [1:5]. And whenever it is necessary, he confronts individuals, be it the godless Ahaz (ch. 7) or the pious Hezekiah (ch. 39). This is especially true of Jeremiah, the prophet in an evil time; so all the prophets; so also Paul with his congregations. They have not merely preached abstractly about sin, but they also rebuked concrete sins, just as they found them. That is also our duty. That requires courage and frankness. You will not be praised for it. But that is the only way to preach the law unto repentance. We cannot avoid this duty without becoming dumb dogs and neglecting the salvation of the souls entrusted to us. On the other hand, this task requires also a sanctified heart and much Christian tact, a genuine sense of propriety. Here it is important above all to bring no strange fire onto the altar of the Lord, to keep the Old Adam from expressing himself in self-righteousness, in seeking to condemn, in malicious joy, or in crudeness. Above all, the preacher dare not exaggerate here, dare not say more than is true, dare impute to the people no gross transgressions of which they are not guilty. Here, if anywhere, moderation is called for. And it is self-evident that the sins of individuals, even if they are public, do not belong as such in the pulpit which, as a public institution, has to do only with general sins. Also the words used in preaching against sin are to be weighed and measured carefully and to be kept in moderate bounds. The uncouth brawler does not belong in the pulpit. Here everything is ruined with an unbecoming and unbecoming word. And when we preach sin, and indeed rebuke concrete sins, then this must come, also in the judgment of the rebuked, from a sanctified and God-fearing heart, from a heart which preaches to itself the same sermon and trembles and shivers before it, just as the hearers are to tremble and shiver, from a heart that brings these things up only with reluctance, but must bring them up in order to be able to make the hearers partakers of saving grace. Our Lord's law-sermon delivered to Simon the Pharisee breathes this emphasis, wholly and completely. How candid, how concrete, how direct it is in this matter! How delicate in words—a parable and its application! How it is borne by a love which wishes only to save! Go and do likewise!

We arrive at the preaching of grace. This is so richly contained in this account. "But when they had nothing to pay, he forgave them both." Here everything is said at once. With God is

grace. And this grace consists not merely in a benevolent attitude of God toward the “undeserving,” the transgressors, the guilty, who have already been sentenced to hell; it is more, it has become deed and truth. It consists—in part—of the gracious remission of guilt, in the forgiveness of sins. The Lord here uses the very same word otherwise used in Scripture of the remission of the guilt of sin (Col. 2:13; 2 Cor. 2:7,10; 12:13 and other places). The creditor remits the debt of both debtors by grace. Grace consists of this: God remits the debt, forgives the sin, does not impute misdeeds to sinners, His debtors. He looks on them as guiltless, as just, as though they had never committed an offense (Exod. 34:6-7; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Ps. 32; Rom. 3 and 4). And this grace, the forgiveness of sins, is a pure *beneplacitum dei* [Kindness of God — Ed.]; it is attached to no expiation to be performed by the guilty party, to no condition to be fulfilled. It takes place on God’s part in view of (*intuitu*) nothing in man, on the mere fact that the sinner is bankrupt. The forgiveness of sins has its foundation in no part in man, but rather only in the good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus. Whatever here must be paid or performed, God Himself pays or performs in Christ. He alone is the object of His foreknowledge. As far as the sinner is concerned it happens absolutely freely. And it is poured out over the debtors without further ado. God is reconciled, God has forgiven the guilt— and not to an abstract crowd, but to all individual, particular sinners, who constitute the whole of the world. Throughout the world there is not one, single remaining soul, whose guilt of sin God has not canceled and really forgiven (2 Cor. 5:19). The matter does not stand like this: God would now indeed be graciously enough disposed toward all men for Christ’s sake to forgive sins to each individual under certain conditions, but this forgiveness still would have to be executed—no, it has already been given. The forgiveness of sins is exactly as much a fact and reality for each individual sinner as is his guilt and bankruptcy. The guilt was remitted to this penitent woman and just as much, in fact, to the impenitent Pharisee. Only here was the decisive difference: the woman recognized the remission of her guilt and snatched it for herself in faith, but the Pharisee cast it from himself. — And sin-forgiving grace has no bounds. It does not limit itself to a certain magnitude of debt; 500 or 50 pence, it cancels limitless debt. Although with us there are many sins, with God there is much more grace (Rom. 5:20). Here no sinner, not a single one, can, nor should, nor dare exclude himself!

This is grace from one viewpoint. But it has yet another side. It is not only forgiving, it is also seeking, offering, imparting, and healing grace.

Jesus seeks the straying. What did he want in the Pharisee’s house and at the Pharisee’s table? Not eating and drinking. The food which was served to Him here, Simon had, humanly speaking, thoroughly adulterated by his lovelessness. A morsel of love is better than a full table with hatred. The Lord, who knows the heart, well knew Simon and his circle in advance. He knows in advance that Simon will deny Him every real kindness, the water for His feet, the welcoming kiss, the festive oil, that he would slight Him with only the most indispensable courtesies. He hears already in advance the scornful thoughts of Simon: “If this man were a prophet.”

He perceives already in advance the indignant, furious grumbling of the guests, “Who is this, that He even forgives sins?” More. He knows in advance that everything He would say to Simon and to his guests about sin and grace He would say utterly in vain. Yes, He would only embitter this company the more and push them on toward their hardening. In spite of all this, He accepts the invitation and goes into the house of the Pharisee and sits down with this company at the table. Why? For what purpose? He had embraced even them, these hardened and lost people, with his Savior-heart which could do nothing but love—love sinners. He wanted, was obligated to purchase also them with His divine blood; even they were already His possession as redeemed people. He needed to seek to bring over even these with His mouth and with His

divine power from that which made their salvation impossible, from their impenitence. He needed to seek to save even these through faith in Him. Therefore, He went into this house.

And how faithfully he labors with the souls of these obdurate self-righteous people in order to bring them to a knowledge of their sin! How sternly and how tenderly He preaches to Simon and thus to all the others of their sin, their guilt, their bankruptcy before God! How searchingly, how devastatingly, and yet how gently He holds before Simon—always through the comparison with the woman so scornfully despised—his lovelessness and through this his hypocritical invitation! How He lays their arrogant and unjust judgment upon this pitiable woman under His chastening hand! How He demonstrates so plainly that they in their utter lack of love toward Him are much worse than this woman, who was now reformed and no longer a “sinner,” but an ardent maid-servant of her Savior and God! — Truly, a penitential sermon which could have melted stone! — And it was no sermon simply condemning and repudiating, no renunciation, no final judgment. The Lord preaches the law with a Savior’s love, for the repentance, conversion, and rescue of these lost souls. He preaches to them at the same time grace, free and full. The creditor has already remitted, even to Simon, his debt, and though it were also 500, as was the woman’s, it would still be forgiven him, just as her. And here was proof to them that He gave exactly the same consideration to them as to the woman: He had come to them despite all their lovelessness foreknown by Him. — Thus the Lord bestowed His grace here in full measure. Thus He labored on their hearts with all His divine power for their conversion. That was grace.

And to the woman!—Oh, no! He does not disavow her; He does not shake her off from Himself. Calm and relaxed, He lets her do what she wants. “Whoever comes to Me, I will not cast out” [John 6:37]. He delivers no sermon of repentance to her. Here is nothing left to rebuke. The woman had long recognized her sin. Our text does not say how she came to this knowledge. Maybe through John the Baptist’s preaching, perhaps even through the Lord’s own. She must have heard and received the preaching of sin and grace. And both worked mightily in her. The law has become a trumpet of judgment to her and has shaken her heart to its roots. She has heard of Him, who does not cast away sinners, or even sinful women. A ray of hope has fallen on her heart. She is penitent, she believes in grace.

She hears that He who receives even sinful women has come into her city. She must go to Him and hear from His own mouth a word of grace, must show Him some proof of her love. He is in the house of the Pharisee, having dinner. The thought oppresses her heart like a nightmare. Oh, there in that distinguished house, in that arrogant and judgmental society! Would they not point the finger at her? Would they not indignantly throw her out? But her longing for the Lord tears through all such thoughts, and before she regains her composure she stands in the house of the Pharisee. Not heeding the indignant and outraged glances of these saints, she modestly steps from behind to the feet of the Lord, kneels with bowed head, and weeps and wets His feet with her tears and dries them with her hair, kisses them and anoints them with the precious ointment she brought along. What Jesus would say, or Simon, or the others—to this she gives no thought or consideration. On the one hand, her whole behavior is one great cry of her heart, “Lord Jesus, Thou man of pity, of grace, Thou Savior of Israel, cast me not away! Tell me Thou hast forgiven me!” On the other hand, it is an act of deep modesty and humility, which regards herself as too insignificant to step before His face and therefore busies itself with His feet. It is an impulse of love which scarcely knows how she should treat her Lord and takes to Him this precious ointment. — Meanwhile the Lord delivers His sermon to Simon, and she is exposed to the condemning view of these antagonistically minded men with their noses in the air. This she must endure and awaits a rescuing word from the Lord. — What should the Lord tell this woman? He has already acknowledged her before this company. He has made Himself her advocate; He has justified her conduct by His own conduct towards her.

When He is finished with that, He turns to her and says: Your sins are forgiven you! He confirms forgiveness to her through His personal word and makes her certain of grace. She had stormed the kingdom of heaven [Matt. 11:12] and from her anguish of heart with signs unspeakable had taken hold of grace, which shone forth to her from the preaching concerning the Lamb of God which bears the sin of the world [John 1:29] and from Jesus' gracious call, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" [Matt. 11:28]. And the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus Christ had worked this inexpressible sighing in this miserable woman through that very preaching, through the gospel. Thus she had forgiveness before she came to Jesus in Simon's house. Her coming was a coming of faith; her tears were tears of faith and of sorrow over sin. Only the consciousness of sin was not yet wholly overcome; the peace in her heart was not yet full. She craved more comfort, for confirmation of her acceptance. And she received it here. The Lord had nothing with which to burden her; He simply justified, defended, praised, comforted, and strengthened her. And in contrast to the murmuring of the table fellowship, which He wishes to refute and to bring to shame, He reassures her: Your faith has saved you, has taken hold of forgiveness. Go in peace!

The Lord deals in this way with penitent sinners. He does not burden them with this, that they have sinned so gravely and so long, that they have sunk so deeply, that they have fallen so often. Jesus seeks the straying. And when He has found them, when they come to Him, He receives them with joy. There is joy in heaven over a single sinner that repents [Luke 15:10]. He comforts them with forgiveness. He confirms to them grace, full grace. He fills their hearts up with peace and joy. That is grace! — And this we offer with joy to all sinners; this we bring in the name of Jesus to all who repent and confirm to them that grace which is seized in faith. For—Jesus Christ yesterday, today, and the same gracious Savior of sinners even into eternity—that is the preaching of grace.

And finally the preaching concerning love, concerning the Christian life and walk. The words of the Lord to Simon are really quite pointed, "Tell me, which of them will love him most?" Simon knows that well enough: "I suppose, to whom he has forgiven the most." Thereupon the Lord shows in the application of His parable that in this case it is the woman and not Simon. Here the subjective understanding together with the objective is as valid as was the objective alone in the parable itself. However, "little" is not to be taken literally; it stands for "nothing." Here there is a difference between the two recipients of grace. To the woman, a great debt is remitted, and she believes it and therefore she loves much. To the Pharisee a greater debt was actually remitted than to the woman, in the matter at hand a smaller one than hers; but he believed neither the one nor the other. Therefore there is not the tiniest spark of true love for the Lord in him; he has shown the Lord (who knows from what motive) superficial courtesy and has neglected every service of love. His heart is full of contempt and indignation toward the Lord.

Here the Lord has declared wherein true holiness, true spirituality, true morality, true virtue, the real demands of the law, walking in the Spirit, and practical Christianity properly consists: in love, in love for Christ, for God our Savior. How assiduously men deceive themselves in this! Something that is merely somewhat distinctive, something that overtowers the everyday and usual in might, position, wealth, culture, manners, or external way of life—that they consider great and noble. The Pharisees were "Separated Ones," who laid claims to a special holiness for themselves, and who shunned the common rabble which was not punctilious about the law. They were considered better than the common man, not only in their own eyes, but also in the eyes of the multitude. But caste, class, social position is nothing before God. A king is thus not at all better than his subjects simply because he sits upon the throne. The wife of a millionaire is not richer in virtue than a washerwoman simply because she goes about in velvet and silk and

can surround herself with all kinds of luxury. The cultured man is not nobler than the farmer simply because he takes greater pleasure in a work of art than the other. Fine manners are still no guarantee of moral excellence. Yes, even orthodoxy and blameless church life, uninterrupted attendance at church and the sacrament, irreproachable conduct and conscientious attendance to your calling, abstinence and self-mortification, well-doing, uprightness, and honesty—all this is yet nothing without love to God. “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind!” [Matt. 22:37]—that is the foremost and greatest commandment. That is the one commandment that is the essential command in all commandments, in which all the commandments are contained. What Paul says of the love for our neighbor applies to an even higher degree to the love for God: Though I should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I could prophesy, and knew all mysteries and all knowledge, and had all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and though I gave my possessions to the poor and allowed my body to be burned, and had not love, I would be nothing (1 Cor. 13). — To have no love for God, to despise Him, to be hostilely-minded toward Him, that is the immorality of all immoralities, the vice of all vices, the depravity of all depravities, the fundamental wickedness. Whoever does not love father and mother, who despises them, is a wicked man, even though the world should exalt him to the heavens; but whoever has no love for his God and Lord, his Creator and Redeemer, his Savior Jesus Christ, let him be—so says Paul—anathema, *maharan mota*—condemned to everlasting death.

Love, love to God, that is true virtue, morality, holiness, perfection. It is the fruitful source of all other virtues. Whoever loves God also loves his brother, his neighbor, for God’s sake. For we have this commandment from Him, that whoever loves God should also love his brother [1 John 4:21]. And whoever then says that he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he sees, how can he love God, whom he does not see [1 John 4:20]! Therefore the Lord Himself declares of the love of God: “This is the chief and greatest commandment. But the second is like it: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets” [Matt. 22: 38-40]. How would we be able to love God and not also love those who are embraced by Him with the same love that embraces us and who are created, preserved, redeemed, and pardoned and intended for the same eternal glory as we are? There love is the fulfilling of the law [Rom. 13:10]. One who loves God sins not, John says. He also stands firm against the greatest temptation. Joseph says: “How should I do so great an evil and sin against God?” [Gen. 39:9]. He who loves God offers all to Him, even the most precious nard, as this woman does. Our possessions and goods, our body and life are well employed, if we too could only anoint His feet with them. We are truly not worthy to unloose His shoe-latchet [Mark 1:7] or to do the least service for Him. — To love God, to cherish our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to serve Him, to wet His feet with our tears and to dry them with the hair of our head and to kiss them, to endure our grief to His honor, to yield our whole heart to Him in deep humility, to put all the adornment of womanhood and the whole crown of manhood at His service so that His kingdom come and His will be done—that is virtue, morality, true human dignity, holiness.

And from where do we obtain this love? — Oh, it does not allow itself to be commanded or offered. The law’s “thou shalt” does not produce it. We just do not now have it within us, and where there is nothing, even the Kaiser has lost his power. We are flesh and fleshly-minded, and to be carnally-minded is enmity against God [Rom. 8:7]. The Pharisees could indeed feign friendship with Jesus, but they were not able to conceive of a genuine love to Him. And no law-preaching by the Lord and no conviction that they had denied love to Jesus help, either. They only become more fierce against Him. The law kills and produces only wrath in the hearts of men. If they had opened their hearts to the Lord’s sermon of grace and had allowed themselves to be won by His grace and forgiveness of sins which He brought to them so lovingly

and in full measure, then they would have experienced a rebirth. That is what happened to the woman. She had trampled underfoot the commandments of God and had despised the Word of God. Then, as soon as God's voice of thunder from the mouth of John the Baptist had entered her heart and as soon as the grace of Jesus Christ had won her confidence, her heart, confirmed in sin, was softened and melted through faith, in faith, with faith in forgiveness. Then faith produced a godly sorrow, a remorse unto salvation which no one regrets [2 Cor. 7:10], and simultaneous with this sorrow, peace and joy and bliss, and with the bliss, love toward Him who had saved her and rescued her from ruin. How could she do otherwise than to return His love, who had first loved her beyond telling? How could she not want to repay Him for all His favor, which He had done for her? — Thus love for God grows in our hearts. It is a love for Jesus, our Savior. It springs up from faith in His grace, in the forgiveness of sins. It is God's gift and donation, as is faith itself. It is poured out into our hearts in and with faith, through the gospel. We have that gospel, the gospel which brings grace and forgiveness of sins to us. Oh, that we could believe, then we could also love!

And the magnitude of love depends on the magnitude of faith. What do we mean by magnitude of faith? Faith that we have been forgiven much. Much, oh, so much, immeasurably much has been forgiven to us, but we do not recognize and feel it. So little is forgiven to us; therefore our love is cold. Oh, that we might learn how much has been forgiven us, then we would, with the woman, also learn to love the Lord more, to wet the Lord's feet with our tears, to dry them with our hair, to kiss them with our mouth, and to anoint them with our ointment.

A Study of the Difference Between A Typical Prophecy and a Direct Prophecy

David Lau

In his *Exposition of the Psalms* (Wartburg Press, Columbus, Ohio, 1959) Dr. H. C. Leupold states the difference between a typical prophecy and a direct prophecy in these words: "By a psalm that is 'directly Messianic' we have in mind one that is from beginning to end an out-and-out prophecy about Christ. . . . By a psalm that is 'typically Messianic' we have in mind one that refers to an actual situation which obtained in the days of some . . . king of Judah. . . . Throughout the psalm this earthly king would then serve as a type of Christ. . . . He would have experienced something on a lower level which is closely analogous to what the Messiah encounters on the higher level" (p. 42).

In further explanation of this difference Dr. Leupold states: "The psalm that is Messianic by type is in no sense Messianic in an inferior sense. The providence of God is most manifestly displayed in this class of prophecies also. For in them the Spirit of prophecy so worded the things that the God of history had in His wisdom controlled that the lower level of experience of man expressed the higher level which would become reality in Christ. The whole Old Testament thus became a shadow of the things to come" (p. 44).

An Example of a Direct Prophecy

The prophecy of the virgin-born Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14-15 can serve us well as an example of a direct Messianic prophecy. That this is a **Messianic** prophecy is proved by Matthew's statement in his Gospel (1:22-23): "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child,

and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.'"

That this is a **direct** Messianic prophecy is shown from the fact that we know of no Old Testament person born of a virgin and called Immanuel who could have been a type of Christ. Therefore, even though Isaiah 7:16 seems to demand a contemporary fulfillment of the prophecy, it is safer and saner to interpret the entire prophecy as referring to one Child born of a virgin, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, true God and true man.

Dr. P. Peters, writing in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (April 1961 and July 1961) concludes his study of Isaiah 7:14-16 by stating his conviction that this prophecy must be a direct prophecy and not a typical prophecy. His reasoning?

Isaiah 7:14 as a direct prophecy promises only one virgin birth, namely, the birth of the coming Messiah, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary." . . . Must we not instead resort to a typical interpretation of this prophecy, so as not to isolate 7:14 unnecessarily from its Old Testament context and read into it a New Testament fulfillment? It would, of course, be following the line of least resistance for our thinking if we would simply designate the Immanuel sign as a type of Jesus Christ. But this would necessitate the finding of the type in the Old Testament. All attempts at finding it have heretofore failed. . . . Mention is nowhere made in the Old Testament of a type of the virgin's son and consequently not of a primary and partial fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Its one and only fulfillment is the one of which Matthew speaks. (Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 191-192,195)

An Example of a Typical Prophecy

Are there any typical prophecies in the Old Testament? In order to prove that there are such prophecies, we must be able to find a person prophesied who is a type of Christ in the prophecy. In addition, in order to prove our case definitively, we must be able to find an Old Testament passage that indicates that the prophecy is being fulfilled to some extent by the type, while at the same time pointing ahead to the complete fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The prophecy recorded in 2 Samuel 7:5-16 is such a **typical** prophecy.

In studying this prophecy, let us first lay out the exact words of the prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:11-16 together with its parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 17:10-14.

2 Samuel 7:11-16

11 . . . Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. 15 But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.

1 Chronicles 17:10-14

10 . . . Furthermore I tell you that the LORD will build you a house. 11 And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son;

and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. 14 And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever.

That this is a **Messianic** prophecy is clear from the way it is quoted and referred to in the New Testament. When the angel Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary that she would be the

mother of the Messiah, he spoke to her in terms that recall this prophecy in 2 Samuel 7. For this is what he said: "You will bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. . . . The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Likewise, the letter to the Hebrews establishes the superiority of the Messiah over the angels by referring to various passages in the Old Testament that make the Messiah equal to God. Among these passages is 2 Samuel 7:14: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son." The Son of the Father is a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the same time this Messianic prophecy is a **typical** prophecy, because it refers not only to our Lord Jesus Christ but also to David's son Solomon and other sons of David that followed Solomon on the throne. In particular 2 Samuel 7:13 makes reference to Solomon, for it says that David's son "shall build a house" for God's name. When Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem as the house of God, this was in fulfillment of this prophecy. But Solomon's building of the temple did not exhaust the meaning of the prophecy. Solomon in his building of the temple is a type of Jesus Christ building the temple of God, which is the Church. The temple that Solomon built was for the name of God; that is, it was built to glorify God's name. But how much more wonderful is the house built for the Lord by the Son of David, Jesus Christ! The Church is God's temple here on earth to glorify the name of God.

That the prophecy about the building of a house is not exhausted by Solomon's building of the temple in Jerusalem is clear from the form of the prophecy as it is presented in 1 Chronicles 17:10-14. The Lord says to David: "I will set your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house." *An American Translation* presents it like this: "I will set up your Descendant after you. He will come from your offspring, and I will establish His kingdom. He will build Me a temple." Since the prophecy in 1 Chronicles speaks of David's seed as being of his sons or from his offspring, it cannot apply to Solomon. For Solomon was not of David's sons, but from David himself.

But then maybe we should say with Martin Luther that the prophecy in 2 Samuel 7 does not refer to Solomon at all, or to any of his other sons, but only to Jesus Christ. "If it is conceded," said Luther, "that Scripture does not rest on one simple meaning, it loses its force. . . . This cannot be said of Solomon, still less of any other son of David. It must be the one real son of David, Messiah. . . . This house cannot be the temple of Solomon" (quoted by P. Peters in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 3, p. 103). Luther was very wary of trying to explain any prophecy as having more than one fulfillment. Since he knew the prophecy refers to Jesus Christ, he did not want to understand Solomon or the Jerusalem temple as fulfilling the prophecy in any sense whatsoever. In this understanding and interpretation Luther was followed by George Stoeckhardt (*Ausgewahlte Psalmen*, St. Louis, 1915, p. 27f.) and P. E. Kretzmann (*Popular Commentary*, Old Testament Vol. 1, p. 521).

But it seems to me there is good reason for believing Solomon to be at least a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in 2 Samuel 7. For one thing, the context indicates that David's desire was to build a house of God in Jerusalem, an earthly temple (2 Sam. 7:2). In response the Lord said that David would not build Him a house, but his seed after him, who would come from his body, should build a house for God's name. Since Solomon was David's seed and he came from David's body and he did build a house for God's name, as David had wanted to do, what is more natural than to assume that these words to David make reference to Solomon and the temple?

The Old Testament itself gives us this interpretation. For we read in 1 Kings 5 that Solomon made arrangements with King Hiram of Tyre for the cedar wood that was needed for the temple. In this connection Solomon wrote to Hiram: "Behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David, saying, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name.'" There can be no doubt that Solomon understood himself and his own building of the Jerusalem temple to be the fulfillment,

at least in part, of God's promise to his father David in 2 Samuel 7.

Solomon stated this truth even more clearly in his speech to the nation after the Jerusalem temple was completed. He said (1 Kings 8:15-20):

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled it, saying, "Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel." Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. But the Lord said to my father David, "Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son, who shall come from your loins, he shall build the house for My name." So the Lord has fulfilled His word which He spoke; and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised; and I have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.

Notice that Solomon stated that his building of the house of God was the fulfillment of God's promise to his father David in 2 Samuel 7. For this reason we must call 2 Samuel 7 a **typical** prophecy rather than a **direct** prophecy, even though such scholars as M. Luther, G. Stoeckhardt, P. E. Kretzmann, and Abraham Calov are unwilling to do so.

But we say, of course, that Solomon's building of the temple did not exhaust the meaning of the prophecy. When the prophecy was first given, David recognized that his immediate son would not fulfill all the meaning of this prophecy. He said to the Lord in thankful prayer (2 Sam. 7:19): "You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come," yes, even forever.

When it came time for the Chronicler to record the same promise of God to David given in 2 Samuel 7, he knew Solomon's temple was not the final fulfillment. Therefore in 1 Chronicles 17:10-14 he spoke of David's seed as being from David's sons (not Solomon) and said that that still future seed would build God a house. It is generally believed that the books of Samuel and Kings were written some years earlier than the Chronicles.

One other aspect of the prophecy in 2 Samuel 7 that directs our attention to Solomon and his earthly successors rather than Christ is the Lord's statement: "If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men" (2 Sam. 7:14). The committing of iniquity is something that could be done only by Solomon and his successors on the earthly throne, not by the perfect Messiah. Perhaps this is why the later author of Chronicles, in his delivery of the promise in 1 Chronicles 17:10-14, eliminates this statement altogether. For the form of the promise in Chronicles is directed towards the future Seed of David rather than his immediate offspring.

Those who contend that 2 Samuel 7 is a direct prophecy, rather than a typical prophecy, have to explain that the Messiah's iniquity is by imputation rather than by His having committed it Himself. For example, this is how P. E. Kretzmann explains this verse in his *Popular Commentary* (Old Testament Vol. 1, p. 521): "That this is not spoken of Solomon, as most modern commentators will have it, may be seen from the fact that Solomon was a mere man, and there would have been nothing unusual in his being punished for any transgressions after the manner of men. This singular descendant of David, if found guilty of the sins of men, the implication being that the latter would be imputed to Him, would have to bear the penalty of a sinner."

But again there is evidence from the Old Testament itself that the words about the committing of iniquity and God's chastisement referred in the first place to Solomon and his successors in office and were understood in that way by the holy writers. For example, consider what David in his last days said to his son Solomon (1 Kings 2:3-4): "Keep the charge of the Lord your God . . . that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,' He said, 'you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'" The warning against

committing iniquity was thus directed to Solomon in connection with the Lord's promise to David of an everlasting kingdom. God had said that David's son, Solomon, would indeed be chastised by God through men if he turned away from the Lord. Yet even then God would not remove the kingdom altogether from David's family.

When Solomon made the decision to put his brother Adonijah to death because of his insubordination, he referred to the same promise of the Lord. He said: "Now therefore, as the Lord lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as He promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today" (1 Kings 2:24).

The Lord Himself warned Solomon in the early years of his reign against the dangers of turning away from the Lord. He said (1 Kings 6:12): "Concerning this temple, which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David." What word had God spoken to David on the subject? It was the Lord's promise in 2 Samuel 7.

When the temple was dedicated, Solomon prayed to the Lord (1 Kings 8:24-26): "You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. Therefore, Lord God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.' And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father." Since God had kept the promise about Solomon's building Him a house, Solomon was asking God to keep the other part of the promise also, the part about an everlasting kingdom, which Solomon connected according to God's own words to his own obedience and to the obedience of David's sons who would follow Solomon on the throne. See also Psalm 132.

The Lord came to Solomon after the temple was completed and warned him again in similar words (1 Kings 9:4-5): "Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep my statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'"

Sad to say, Solomon in his later years did not heed the Lord's warnings and was led into idolatry by his many heathen wives. Because of the iniquity that he committed, the Lord chastised him. The Lord said to Solomon (1 Kings 11:11-13): "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen." Surely we have here a partial fulfillment of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. Iniquity had been committed by David's son, and God sent chastisement; but God's mercy did not altogether depart from him, as had been the case with Saul. For the promise of an everlasting kingdom remained. See also God's promise to David in Psalm 89:24-37.

The Lord chastised Solomon by allowing three adversaries to rise up against him (1 Kings 11:14-40): Hadad, the Edomite, Rezon of Syria, and Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. The Lord's prophet Ahijah explained it to Jeroboam in this way: "I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand. . . . But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you — ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem. . . . And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever" (1 Kings 11:34-39).

As Solomon was chastised for his iniquity, so Solomon's son Rehoboam was chastised for **his** iniquity. God permitted Shishak of Egypt to come and take away many of the treasures of

the temple and the king's house. Nevertheless Rehoboam remained king in Jerusalem, and after his death the kingdom was passed on to his son, Abijam, whose heart was not loyal to the Lord his God. We are not told of any specific chastisement from God except that he reigned only three years. But still the kingdom remained in David's family according to the promise. "For David's sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem" (1 Kings 15:4).

Abijam was followed by two good kings, Asa and Jehoshaphat, whom the Lord blessed with military victories and earthly prosperity. Jehoshaphat, however, was followed on the throne by his son Jehoram, who married King Ahab's daughter and was led into Baal worship. The Bible says "he did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 8:18), and therefore he also was chastised by Edom and Libnah, who revolted against his authority. "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah, for the sake of His servant David, as He promised him to give a lamp to him and his sons forever" (2 Kings 9:19).

Jehoram was followed on the throne of Judah by his son Ahaziah, who had a very short reign of one year before he was killed by the soldiers of Jehu, the new king of Israel. At this point in time it seemed as though God's promise would be broken, for Jehu killed the 42 brothers of Ahaziah; and Ahaziah's mother Athaliah, Jezebel's daughter, killed all the members of David's royal family and assumed the throne herself. But Ahaziah's infant son Joash escaped by God's providence and was kept hidden until he was seven years old. Then he was proclaimed king of Judah, and Athaliah was put to death. For most of the forty years of his reign Joash was faithful to the Lord. Joash was followed by his son Amaziah, who also was faithful to the Lord to some extent. Both Joash and Amaziah were assassinated. Uzziah, also known as Azariah, followed as king of David's line in Jerusalem and reigned 52 years, doing "what was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 15:3).

Uzziah was followed by Jotham, who "did what was right" (2 Kings 15:34), and Ahaz, who "did not do what was right" (2 Kings 16:1). It was Ahaz to whom Isaiah revealed the promise of the virgin-born Immanuel (Isa. 7). God chastised Ahaz by giving him enemies: Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel.

Wicked King Ahaz was followed by Hezekiah, who "trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him" (2 Kings 18:5). The Lord blessed Hezekiah's reign in great measure, delivering his kingdom from the advances of the Assyrians. The reason for God's mercies? "I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake" (2 Kings 19:34). God had not forgotten His promise of 2 Samuel 7.

Hezekiah's son was Manasseh, one of the most wicked kings in Judah's history. Because of Manasseh's wickedness the Lord now announced through His prophets: "I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies" (2 Kings 21:14). From this time on God's prophets directed the people to a future revival and kingdom that would develop after the Babylonian Captivity. Manasseh's son Amon continued in the idolatry of his father and reigned only two years before being assassinated.

Josiah then became king, and "he did was right" (2 Kings 22:2). He cast out all the open idolatry from the land. "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him. Nevertheless the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him" (2 Kings 23:25-26).

And so it was that Josiah was followed by Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, all of them unfaithful to the Lord. The Lord raised up Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to bring the dynasty of David to an end, as far as its earthly glory was concerned. But still God's promise to David was not broken, as is clear by reading the many references to David's kingdom in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The second book of Kings comes to an end

by describing how the king of Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar “released Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from prison” (2 Kings 25:27). Jehoiachin is listed in Matthew 1 as one of the ancestors of the eternal Son of David, Jesus Christ. The raising up of Jehoiachin in Babylon is God’s sign to His people that He has not forgotten His promise. Second Chronicles carries the story a bit further. This book concludes with the proclamation of Cyrus, king of Persia: “The Lord God has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!” (2 Chron. 36:23).

The history of the sons of David, as recorded in the Old Testament, thus supplies ample evidence of the partial fulfillment of God’s prophecy to David in 2 Samuel 7. Solomon, in particular, and all the sons of David after him were types of the great Son of David, Jesus Christ.

In view of the many references in the Old Testament itself to the partial fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7 we declare this Messianic prophecy to be a **typical** prophecy rather than a **direct** prophecy. We agree, therefore, with E. W. Hengstenberg, who says (*Christology of the Old Testament*, Kregel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970, p. 41): “Some interpreters have erroneously referred this promise (2 Samuel 7) **exclusively** to the Messiah. . . . Others refer it to Solomon **alone**; or . . . to Solomon and the rest of the earthly kings of the house of David. . . . Just views of it have been taken by those (Augustine, for example) who give it a double reference, first to Solomon and his successors, and also to Christ.”

Werner Franzmann, in his recently published *Bible History Commentary - Old Testament* (Board for Parish Education, WELS, Milwaukee, 1980), takes the same view of this prophecy. He asks the question concerning every verse in this prophecy (p. 389): “Does this verse speak of Solomon or Christ or both?” Again and again he sees “the same pattern: . . . first the partial, typical fulfillment in David’s son, Solomon; then complete fulfillment in Christ, the Son of David” (p. 392). He sees Solomon and his successors pictured in 2 Samuel 7:14 in the statement about iniquity and chastisement, but he also sees Christ. “We can readily see how the prophecy came true in the case of Solomon. . . . But in what sense and in what way did the Lord visit his anger upon the divine Son of David through the instrumentality of men? We New Testament believers know the answer. God used the earthly enemies of Jesus Christ to bring about his sufferings and death, the perfect sacrifice for the sins of men” (p. 392).

A Study of 2 Corinthians 5:11-21:

Christ’s Compelling Love —Our Compelling Ministry *

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Paul Fleischer

Overview

The Christian ministry then, as now, had fallen on rough times, both inside and outside the churches. In the first chapters of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he defended the ministry against internal factions. He did this, for example, by calling attention to the divine perspective that “neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers . . .” (1 Cor. 3:7ff.). Paul

had come to preach "Christ crucified" and nothing else (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2), for therein is true wisdom. He was called, and so are we, to be "servants of Christ" (1 Cor. 4:1) and, hand in hand with this, "fools for Christ" (1 Cor. 4:10).

The centrality of Christ's Gospel and its application to congregational and individual Christian living comes through in all the practical pastoral problems the apostle addresses in the closing chapters of 1 Corinthians, culminating with the glorious resurrection chapter and its closing encouragement: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Likewise, in the second epistle, also, Paul finds it necessary to defend the Christian ministry as a whole, as well as his own. He says, for example: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ . . . to the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life." And he proceeds to ask: "Who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God" (2 Cor. 2:14ff.). He says we "have renounced secret and shameful ways"; we do not "use deception"; we do not "distort the word of God." All this is the case because "we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord," recognizing that "we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:2ff.).

Pray God, you and I are among the "we" here! The world, now as then, does not need any more "super apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5) who preach "another Jesus" (11:4), who are "false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ" (11:13). Pray God, we are faithful to our calling in our respective niches in the Kingdom—faithful so that, unlike the many "super apostles" in our televangelist day and age, we do not presume to "boast about work already done in another man's territory" (2 Cor. 10:16). Pray God "we do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves." For "when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves," says the apostle, "they are not wise" (10:12). In a word, may we remain "fools for Christ," for therein is wisdom in the exercise of this high calling, this holy and compelling ministry.

2 Corinthians 5:11-13

Our assignment from God is τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς - "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). In this διακονία we are no more and no less than "ambassadors for Christ" (ὑπερὸ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν). What a privilege! What an honor!

Reconciliation implies the existence of a separation and/or estrangement, and thus an absence of peace. Here it refers to mankind's estrangement from God because of the sin problem. Sin exists! It exists as "the transgression of the law." It condemns all transgressors to death—temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Without reconciliation mankind, *en toto*, would remain under the just wrath of the holy God and receive the due reward of their sin. This is horrible to contemplate, for "it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31), who is "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). The day of judgment awaits, when all sinners will stand before God to whom each is accountable (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

Authentic ambassadors for Christ ever retain this note of urgency in their calling. They know what it is to “fear the Lord” (v. 11). Thus they are compelled to “persuade” (πειθω) men who are tempted to ignore this perspective of life. It is to God that all men are accountable—including His ambassadors! Ambassadors are called into this work not to “seek to please” men, but to save men from the wrath to come.

In the exercise of our ambassadorship we do not, therefore, look for “letters of recommendation” (2 Cor. 3:1) from those to whom we deliver the message, but seek only to know that it is “plain to God” (Θεῷ δὲ πεφανερώμεθα) that we take our work as seriously as He does! We pray that those to whom we are ambassadors “will come to understand fully” (2 Cor. 1:14) that our boast in the day of the Lord Jesus is that we have been faithful—faithful in delivering the message entrusted to us by Him to Whom we must one day give answer.

In Paul’s day, as in our own, there were many who are not authentic ambassadors. A chief mark of such is their taking pride “in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart” (τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους καὶ οὐ καρδίᾳ). False ambassadors are in the work of διακονία for what they can get out of it—be that money, worldly renown and popularity, or an exalted sense of self-importance. On the other hand, authentic ambassadors give the recipients of their message ample reason to rejoice—to rejoice in the true and deep spirituality of those who claim to speak to them of God and for God.

Authentic (human) ambassadors must know that they open themselves up to the charge of being human beings who are “beside themselves” if not, in fact, “out of their minds” for God’s sake (ἐξίστημι). Paul’s own conversion experience was passed off by his opponents as being a form of insanity. May his hearers in Corinth not be misled: “Let no one take me for a fool . . .” (2 Cor. 11:16-17); “. . . I am not in the least inferior to the ‘super-apostles’ even though I am nothing” (2 Cor. 12:11). Let those who will attach labels to him! It will not dissuade Paul, nor should his hearers be influenced negatively against him. Regardless of what some may charge, in Paul’s manner of presenting the gospel he was a humble, reverent, sensible, and soberminded ambassador. “I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words . . .” (2 Cor. 2:3f.). It is not rhetoric or sensationalism which should matter—whether to the ambassador himself or to those who hear his message! What matters is but a soberminded “demonstration of the Spirit’s power.”

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Paul has been defending the ministry. He is working up to an elaboration of the glorious content of the ambassador’s διακονία τῆς καταλλαγῆς, starting at verse 18. The transitional verses set forth that that which makes the ministry of authentic ambassadors compelling is Christ’s compelling love.

ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς: “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (KJV); “For Christ’s love compels us” (AAT); “The Love of Christ controls us” (NASB); “For Christ’s love compels us” (NIV). Any of these may be acceptable translations. But the phrase raises

questions (questions which perhaps cannot be answered decisively). Is the τοῦ Χριστοῦ subjective or objective genitive? Does it refer subjectively to the love which Christ has for us, or objectively to a love of believers for Christ? Or is it something else again?

The writer appreciates the following remark: "The remark that (Paul) is motivated by his general love for Christ seems too banal for so serious a discussion. Something more pithy, more directly to the point, seems to be required" (*Ministers of Christ*, J. P. Meyer, p. 94). Subsequently the τοῦ Χριστοῦ is described as being a "qualifying genitive" to the ἀγάπη —a Christlike love.

The following is likely worth a special study in itself. But is it not true that the term ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ "love of God" in Paul's usage is "habitually . . . the love which proceeds from and is manifested by God . . ." (*Word Studies in the NT*, M. R. Vincent, Vol. 1, p. 526)? LOVE is the very nature of our God (1 John 4:8,16). "He first loved us" comes before "we love him" (1 John 4:19).

This, of course, hardly excludes man's love to God. "Love in its very essence is reciprocal. Its perfect ideal requires two parties. It is not enough to tell us, as a bare, abstract truth, that God is love. The truth must be rounded and filled out for us by the appreciable exertion of divine love upon an object, and by the response of the object . . . When man loves perfectly his love is the love of God shed abroad in his heart. His love owes both its origin and its nature to the love of God" (Vincent, p. 527).

Granted, then ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ and/or ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ are reciprocal, whether subjective, objective, or qualifying genitives. Yet in this writer's view there is the crucial matter of emphasis in our preaching and teaching. As Paul elaborates upon his expression ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς, it seems that in his serious discussion here we have much more than a handy phrase easily lifted out of context to lend motivation to various biblical imperatives. Paul is here giving expression to his (and every believer's) position—vantage point—as an ambassador for Christ. And let it be noted that συνέχει is in the indicative rather than the imperative. It is not that the ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ "must," "should," "ought to," be the compelling factor in his ministry (or Christian life). Rather Paul says that, in fact, ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ is such a compelling factor.

How and why it is this is brought out by the thrust of συνέχω. The verb means "to constrain" in the sense of "hold together, confine, secure, hold fast"; the verb is used of the effect of the word of the Lord upon Paul (Acts 18:5); this meaning is tied to being taken with a disease (Matt. 4:24; Luke 4:38; Acts 28:8); or being taken with fear (Luke 8:37); it is used of thronging or holding in a person (Luke 8:45), of being straitened (Luke 12:50), of keeping a city in on every side (Luke 19:43), of keeping a tight hold on a person (Christ being seized, Luke 22:63), or of stopping the ears in refusal to listen (Acts 7:57). Note that Luke uses the word 9 of the 12 times it appears in scripture (*An Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, W. E. Vine, p. 231f. is to be credited for this summary of συνέχω and its uses).

Not mentioned thus far are Paul's two uses of the verb. There is the interesting use of

συνέχω in Philippians 1:23. Paul says that he was “pressed” (συνέχομαι), “straitened,” held fast between the desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better, or to remain in the flesh for the sake of the Philippians. The other place συνέχω appears in Paul’s writings is here in our text, where Paul refers to the effect of Christ’s love upon believers.

In his *Theological Dictionary* Kittle refers to Paul’s two uses of the word and explains that the sense is that he is “totally claimed” by the task of preaching. Christ’s love “completely dominates” Paul so that on the basis of Christ’s death “the only natural decision [our emphasis] for him is no longer to live for self, but for Christ.” It is said that “Christ’s love claims him in such a way that in relation to others he can no longer exist for himself” and this in contrast to his opponents who boast that they are religious and spiritual.

Other commentaries speak along the line of Christ’s compelling love being “an irresistible power (which) limits us to the one great object to the exclusion of other considerations” (Jamison, Faussett, and Brown). It is said that “the Greek implies to compress forcibly the energies into one channel.” With this Vincent agrees: “shutting up to one line and purpose as in a narrow, walled road.” And, interestingly, this description of the thrust of συνέχω is prefaced with the observation that “the idea is not urging or driving . . .!” (Our emphasis).

We will not be surprised to note that, of the sources available for our checking, it is Matthew Henry who comes across as speaking of ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ here as being an objective genitive. Our love for Christ, he says, “has a constraining virtue to excite ministers and private Christians in their duty. Our love to Christ will have this virtue, and Christ’s love to us will have this effect upon us . . . then do we live as we ought to live when we live to Christ who died for us.” Is it not indicative of the Calvinistic thrust and emphasis to use our phrase along these lines, effectively ignoring the indicative in favor of “the idea of urging and driving”—of exciting Christians to “do their duty”?

The compulsion of Christ’s love kept Paul completely, irresistibly faithful to his calling. He was totally dominated by, locked and shut up to, Christ’s compelling love as far as his ministry was concerned—regardless of what people thought of him.

Paul proceeds to elaborate on the effect of Christ’s compelling love in a manner that is far from dull and trite. κριναντας — “We are convinced” that one died for all and therefore all died. It is a judgment of faith that Christ’s death was a substitutionary death for all sinners. ἀπέθανεν — “All died” when Christ did! Ambassadors for Christ are called to proclaim this blessed reality, so that sinners might be brought into possession of it through Spirit-wrought faith (Cf. Rom. 6:6-7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3). Christ’s death was an all-sufficient ransom price for the sins of the world. Christ’s subsequent resurrection was the Father’s seal of complete redemption. By faith in Christ, then, whether we live, or die, we are the Lord’s (Cf. Rom 14:7-9). “He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

The proclamation of this message has a “world-shattering” effect on both the ambassador and his hearers. That is, this message shatters the tendency to view Jesus purely κατὰ σάρκα (as, for example, just another in a line of religious teachers; cf. Saul’s pre-conversion query: “Who art Thou, Lord?” Acts 9:5), but as the Christ of God—the long-promised, now arrived,

Redeemer of sinners!

We now view Christ spiritually—to a profound effect! Now to be ἐν Χριστῷ makes one a καινὴ κτίσις because τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονε καινὰ τὰ πάντα. To be “in Christ” now means to be united with Him by faith and commitment. No sinner can, or need endeavor to, place himself in that position. This is effected entirely through the work of God the Holy Spirit through the new birth in Holy Baptism (John 3:3,7). If sinners are thus “in Christ” they are no longer children born of natural descent or of human decision but are “born of God” (John 1:13). “In his great mercy he has given us a new birth through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . .” (1 Pet. 1:3). There is no hint of, nor place for, the cooperation of the sinner in effecting this καινὴ κτίσις. By himself the sinner is “utterly unable . . . to understand, believe, accept, think, will, begin, effect, do, work, or concur in working anything” (FC, TD, II. Of Free Will, pp. 881f.) toward his being made this καινὴ κτίσις. “This only the Holy Ghost effects.” It is totally God’s doing, as Paul puts it succinctly in the first words of our 18th verse: τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

It is quite natural that the question as to the “cooperation” of the “new man”— καινὸς ἄνθρωπος (Eph. 4:24)—would arise in this connection. (Note: καινὸς generally refers to that which is “new” in quality and character, whereas meo@ refers to being “new” from the standpoint of time.) Some indeed would suggest that the ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ is all that is necessary to “motivate” the καινὴ κτίσις into action—into the performance of this or that “good work.” Is this how Paul wants to be understood, either here, or elsewhere?

This writer prefers to believe that the καινὴ κτίσις is reference to the Christian who, though he is indeed a καινὴ κτίσις, remains saddled with the old self, the flesh. That which makes the Christian (as καινὴ κτίσις) different from the unbeliever is that, through the hearing of the Gospel, the Spirit of God works faith in the heart. The Spirit empowers the καινὴ κτίσις to daily put off the old man, and to put on the καινὸς ἄνθρωπος.

In the καινὴ κτίσις which is the Christian the καινὸς ἄνθρωπος is in control, enabling him to live a life pleasing to God in all respects. It is because of the barnacles of the flesh adhering, and for this reason only, that the καινὴ κτίσις needs the law of God.

Looking at this from a slightly different angle, we might ask, whence then come good works? The answer is that sanctification in the narrow sense (sanctified Christian living) stems most basically from the root, not from the branch! “I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). The “energy” for a life of good works comes from the source—the vine—rather than from the branch. When one is, by faith, connected to Christ—when one is ἐν Χριστῷ

—good works flow freely and spontaneously.

The essayist suggests that such truths need to be kept in mind in connection with a discussion of the phrase ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς. Care must be taken lest the impression is left that the καινὴ κτίσις is an “internal source of energy” which only needs to be activated for service to God—and this by using the “motivation” of the ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The καινὴ κτίσις is but the instrument of God in Christ. He is no more and no less than a branch on the Vine which is Christ. With Paul we proclaim that “it is God (not καινὸς ἄνθρωπος) which worketh in you (καινὴ κτίσις) both to will and to do of his pleasure “ (Phil. 2:13).

A proper proclamation of the doctrine of Christian sanctification begins with a clear and unqualified proclamation of the Gospel indicatives! The Christian believer who has been brought to know the compelling love of God will, surely, be open to instruction—instruction which will include any and all of the imperatives in scripture. Indeed, one who knows that by faith he is a καινὴ κτίσις, who knows by faith he “has been raised with Christ”—who knows by faith that he “died”—who knows by faith that he “has taken off the old self”—who knows by faith that he “has put on the new self” will be open and eager to put to death the earthly nature and to rid himself of the practices of the unregenerate flesh (Cf. Col. 3:1ff.). Such an individual will be open to, yea, eager to, make use of the means of God’s grace which are his source of daily forgiveness and renewal. Indicatively speaking: ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς!

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

All of what God has done for us is ἐν Χριστῷ and διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. In His mercy and grace God has in and by Jesus Christ taken us out of our position as lost and condemned sinners. He has covered us with Christ’s righteousness, thus effecting our reconciliation to Himself. “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom. 5:10f.).

“Blessed is the man whose sins the Lord will never count against him” (Rom. 4:8). When Christ died, God’s justice was satisfied, His anger appeased. God was reconciled to the world, no sinner being excepted. God did it, changing our status from being under His wrath and damnation, from being His enemies, to being those who are recipients and beneficiaries of His surpassing love in Christ Jesus.

It is left to us now to herald abroad this message: θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. As Christ’s ambassadors we will be careful not to add to or subtract from God’s perfect work. We will be “constrained”—“held fast” by Christ’s compelling love to administer the blood-bought reconciliation to the glory of God. God invites one and all without exception to enjoy His loving-kindness. Through us God would implore, beg, plead with all the world in Christ’s behalf

(ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ): Be reconciled to God (καταλλάγητε τῷ Θεῷ)!

This is our compelling ministry! God has brought about, by a marvelous exchange, the redemption of sinners. Christ, the “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26) Savior, was made the embodiment of sin for us, that by His doing and dying we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Not what God has done in us, but for us ἐν Χριστῷ, remains the basis for the sinners’ hope and comfort. By the initiative of God’s grace alone we stand accepted by God in connection with Christ.

Thus Christ’s compelling love remains the basis for our compelling ministry: “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore as it is written: Let him who boasts boast in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:30).

PAIDEIA

From a Pastor’s and Professor’s Notebook

Roland A. Gurgel

XIV

Isaiah

Perfect Peace in an Imperfect World!

The Lord is never caught unprepared nor has He ever left His people unprepared for events they must face. The future is as clear in every detail as was the past and the present to the omniscient Creator of heaven and earth. Although His knowledge of events to come does not necessarily cause those events, yet every one of them is clearly foreseen by Him. Since all things are clearly in His grasp, He is capable of preparing His people in advance (out of love, mercy, and grace) for those things that will transpire in their life time.

The last 27 chapters of Isaiah are an example of the Lord’s knowledge of things to come and His preparing His people, the remnant referred to in chapter 6:13, for events they would face. One hundred and more years in advance of the Babylonian captivity, 700 years before the birth of Jesus, and thousands of years in advance of Jesus’ second coming at the end of time, the Lord provided that which would serve His children. Indeed, there is definite preparation in these chapters for those descendants of Abraham according to the flesh and the spirit who would live through the years of exile in Babylon; but to limit these chapters to the people of that time and that temporal event would be to miss much of what the Lord has to say and the preparation He has to give for people of other times and other places. The point we would make is that through the pen of Isaiah the Lord was already preparing us for our “Babylonian exile,” our life as

pilgrims, and our years as strangers in this world, while we wait for that eternal city made without hands, for that mansion where we will know perfect peace in a perfect world.

But let us zero in on the more immediate preparation the Lord provided through Isaiah's pen. From the days of Isaiah and Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, down through the days of the prophets Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and finally Jeremiah, the Lord dealt with a people in Judah that for the most part had lost sight of the purpose they were to serve and for which the Lord had in grace and mercy called them to be His people and His oracle to the world of their time. Through the pens of these prophets came a constant warning to see themselves as they were and to be fully aware that, unless there would be a change of heart, "the day of the Lord" would come upon them—not as a day of rejoicing but as a day of woe and temporal disaster. There would come what Isaiah spoke of in chapter 6:11-12, ". . . cities be wasted without inhabitant . . . land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away . . ." In short, the kingdom of Judah would be plundered and its inhabitants either killed or led away into a foreign land. Through all the years of warning the earnest cry of the Lord is for the people to return to Him and find peace in the midst of an imperfect world. Recall the words of Jeremiah uttered in the days just before the coming of the Chaldeans: "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion . . ." (3:14ff.).

Knowing full well that Judah would not heed His gracious and earnest warnings, the Lord God looked down to the years of exile the remnant would experience in Babylon. He knew full well the fear, terror, despair, and consternation that would surround His people as they saw the armies descending on Jerusalem, entering the city, killing, plundering, and destroying on every hand. He knew full well the natural reaction of those who would be led out, surrounded by hostile soldiers. He foresaw the anguish that could engulf the hearts and minds of exiles living in a strange land, surrounded by strange customs and heathen religions. To prepare His children yet unborn for these events yet to come, to prepare them for those days of seeming hopelessness and despair, He gave to their fathers and grandfathers the words of Isaiah found in chapters 40-66, words well summed up in chapter 40:1-2: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

"Warfare accomplished" before the battle was begun! "Iniquity pardoned" before sins were committed! "She has received two-fold for all her chastisement" (Pieper's translation), ("In the elaboration of this clause in chapters 58-66 the future glorification of Jerusalem is consistently and emphatically referred to not only as requital but even as double requital for earlier chastisement. Cf. 60:15ff.; 61:7; 62:8ff.; 66:12; with 65:8ff." — Pieper.) "Received of the Lord's hands double" before the chastisement began!

Don't you see how the Lord prepared His people far in advance to view the Babylonian captivity not as a disaster, robbing them of all peace, but as an event to be lived through by them in perfect peace, "with their minds stayed on their Lord"; to be lived through, comforted in the certainty that deliverance was assured them; to be lived through, knowing that the cause for this exile, their sins, was done away with; and there awaited them not only a return to an earthly promised land, Palestine, but also a far better promised land, "the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed, and your name remain" (Isa. 66:22).

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." That was God's charge to Isaiah in connection with the Babylonian captivity. That was God's charge to fathers and mothers in

relationship to their children. Prepare in advance the coming generations for the events they must live through; prepare with the insight the Lord gives in His Word, that the future generations may meet the events of their day with the comfort and assurance that indeed battles yet unfought have been won, sins yet uncommitted have been forgiven, blessings of grace have already been provided for time and eternity.

“Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” Perfect peace in the midst of a very imperfect world. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”

BOOK REVIEW

Luther: Man Between God and the Devil, by Heiko A. Oberman. Translated by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. 380 pages, hard cover, \$29.95.

Heiko A. Oberman is one of the foremost Luther scholars of our day. He has taught at major universities both in the United States and Europe. Presently he teaches at the University of Arizona. He has authored a number of books on the late medieval and Reformation periods.

In his preface to the English edition Oberman states that Luther can only be understood by those who see him as a “late medieval man for whom Satan is as real as God.” He challenges his readers, who he assumes have relegated the concept of Satan to the “dark myths of the past” to judge Luther on the basis of 16th century and not 20th century standards. Oberman’s primary thesis is that Luther, who viewed the intense opposition of his day to the Gospel as the work of Satan, believed that the end of time was near. He saw the world as a battleground between God and Satan, in which it was imperative that he and all believers hold fast to and boldly proclaim the gospel as they awaited the great “reformation” of God on judgment day. The vast majority of our readers, who likewise accept the reality of Satan, will find themselves comfortable with Oberman’s presentation, with the exception of his frequent reminders that “enlightened” people no longer accept this.

Of special interest to this reviewer were the sections dealing with Luther’s family background, his early monastic career, and his married life. In each of these sections Oberman presents details which are not commonly found in Luther biographies. For instance, he relates that Luther’s mother, Margaret, came from a rather prominent Eisenach family, which had ties to the University of Erfurt, thus explaining his father’s business success and Luther’s later choice of schools.

Oberman does an excellent job of demonstrating the importance of Scripture to Luther in his search for certainty in connection with his eternal salvation. However, this reviewer would have to object to Oberman’s comments with regard to the application of the principle of *sola scriptura* in the 20th century. He states, “It (the Scriptures) has in fact been responsible for a multiplicity of explanations and interpretations that seem to render absurd any dependence on the clarity of the Scriptures” (p. 220). It is not the Scriptures that are to be blamed, but rather sinful human beings who refuse to bow to the Scriptures. Likewise, this reviewer must reject Oberman’s acceptance of modern biblical criticism, which suggests that the Great Commission was added to Matthew’s Gospel at a later date (p. 231). In addition, Oberman’s discussion and criticisms of the modern Protestant conception of church as opposed to that of Luther were confusing at best.

The book is a translation from the original German, which perhaps explains some of the confusion mentioned above. Over all, however, the translator has provided a very readable work. While there are other biographies which this reviewer would suggest for a Luther novice, Oberman has certainly contributed a work which the Luther enthusiast, whether in the parsonage or on the front porch, will want to read.

Paul D. Nolting
