



"Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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TOPICS ON THE TENSES . . .

KEEPING THE AORIST IN ITS PLACE

There are several reasons why the careful study of the tenses is a useful endeavor for any student of the Greek New Testament. The Greek tense has been described as "the most wonderful development in the history of language" — the words of A. T. Robertson, the author of the monumental *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*.¹ Surely, then, our exegetical work will be enhanced if we become more familiar with the tenses.

But there is another reason why such study is indicated. None of the tenses in the English language, or in any other Germanic tongue, for that matter, corresponds with any of the Greek tenses. The danger is ever present, therefore, that we impose our Germanic viewpoint upon the Greek, and thereby fall short of the full meaning of the holy writers in their use of verbs. A lack of knowledge of the niceties of the Greek tense led the King James translators to a variety of imprecise renditions. A failure to understand the force of the present tense, for example, resulted in the translation: "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out (σβέννυται)" (Matthew 25:8). The verse should be rendered: "... our lamps are going out." In the early part of the 19th century, the grammarian Winer found it necessary to say: "With regard to the Tenses of the verb, N.T. grammarians and expositors have been guilty of the greatest mistakes."² To this day, one of the most difficult hurdles for the student of Greek is to arrive at a correct and adequate understanding of the force of the tenses.

Further justification for a series of articles on the Greek tense system is hardly necessary. Let it be said, however, that this series does not intend to provide a thorough and comprehensive treatment of the subject, which can be found in any good grammar of New Tes-

tament Greek, such as that of Robertson. The intention of the present articles is to discuss certain topics which are of exegetical interest and usefulness, and thereby also to encourage further study of the tenses by those readers of the *Journal* who are acquainted with the Greek.

THE BIG DIFFERENCE

The beginning student of Greek does not have to sit in class long before he hears an emphatic warning from his instructor: "There is a big difference between the tenses of English and those of Greek." The word "tense" signifies "time," and in a language such as English temporal considerations are indeed prominent in the tense system. Whenever we use a verb in our native tongue, that verb clearly focuses attention on the time of the event of which we are speaking, namely, whether it be past, present, or future.

In the Greek tense, time is not the most important consideration. Except in the indicative mode the tenses are timeless, and even in the indicative time is decidedly of secondary significance.³ To the Greek mind, the kind of action is of primary importance. (The commonly used technical term for this aspect of the verb is the German word *Aktionsart*.) As Moule points out, "Generally speaking, the first question that the Greek writer seems to ask himself is not 'When did (or will) this happen?' but 'Am I conceiving of it as protracted or as virtually instantaneous?'"⁴

Most grammarians find three basic kinds of action in the tense system of Greek: 1) Action conceived of as a whole and expressed without reference to its duration or completion. This has commonly been called punctiliar (point-like) action, and is represented by a dot (·). This punctiliar viewpoint of an action is expressed in Greek by the aorist tense. 2) Linear or durative action, which is represented by a line (—). The present and imperfect tenses of the Greek express such linear action. 3) Perfect or completed action, which in its most common usage is well depicted by a dot followed by a line (— ·). The perfect and pluperfect tenses of Greek have such perfective force, expressing a com-

pleted action followed by abiding results.

THE AORIST TENSE Our interest centers in the aorist tense, and in the danger of not keeping it in its place. It is essential at the outset to recognize that the aorist tense has to do with the way in which an action is stated, and not with the action itself. The name of this tense is appropriate, for "aorist" (ἀ-όριστος) means "without boundaries" or "undefined." The aorist expresses an action in the simplest way possible (thus a dot as the symbol of the tense), without defining it as in progress, or as completed, or in any other way. The Greek students at Immanuel Lutheran College are asked to learn the following as a definition of the aorist tense: "It points to the action without describing it." It focuses the attention upon the action as such, without delineating it in any way. It is of interest that the aorist is used more frequently in the New Testament than any of the other tenses. It was the normal tense to use, unless the writer wished to define the action specifically as linear or as completed.

Unfortunately, exegetes, when interpreting the aorist tense, do not always observe the necessary distinction between the writer's manner of stating an action and the action itself. They forget that the point-like nature of the tense applies properly only to the way in which an action is stated. Carrying the force of the aorist too far, they strive to find punctiliarity in the action itself, and thus draw inferences from the tense which are not warranted. Examples of this misuse of the aorist will be given below.

Now, indeed, many actions expressed by the aorist are seen from their contexts to be in themselves punctiliar (simple, not repeated, momentary, one-of-a-kind, and such like). For such actions the writer would, of course, use the aorist, since the other tenses would not be fitting. Matthew 8:3 provides several examples of point-like actions being expressed by the aorist: "And having stretched out (ἐκτείννας) His hand, Jesus touched (ἥψατο) him, saying, 'I desire it,' be cleansed (καθαρίσθητι)." The three actions for which the aorist

is used are single or momentary, and the last might be described also as once-and-for-all. The present or imperfect would hardly have been appropriate here. When the holy writers use the aorist for such punctiliar actions, "fine and dandy."

But the aorist, since it relates only to the writer's manner of expression, can be, and is, used in the New Testament for actions which are in themselves non-punctiliar. The examples are many indeed. Consider Matthew 22:28: "Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had (ἕσχατον) her." The aorist is used for this series of actions by the various husbands, because the speaker wished to group the actions together and treat them as a single fact. Note how the aorist has to do with the manner of statement, and not with the fact itself — which constituted not a single action, but repeated actions. Compare John 2:20 for an example of an aorist used to express a linear-type action that was drawn out over a period of many years: "Forty and six years was this temple in building (οἰκοδομήθη)." How appropriate the imperfect tense would have been here, expressing as it does durative action. But the speaker chose to use the aorist, because he looked at the extended building process as a single whole, a single fact. Once again, the aorist relates to the manner of statement and not to the action itself.

The above should suffice to show that it would not be safe for an exegete to infer: "The aorist is used here for an action. Therefore the action must be in some way punctiliar." Such an exegete has not kept the aorist in its place. He has wrongly transferred its force from the statement of the fact to the fact stated. He needs to remember that the aorist means "undefined," and that it does not describe the action in any way at all. Whenever the aorist is used the context alone can indicate the nature of the action, whether it be single, momentary, linear, completed, or whatever.

THE GRAMMAR BOOKS

A number of grammarians of the New Testament, beginning with Burton and his treatise on the modes and tenses, have spoken

with reasonable care in describing the force of the aorist tense, so as to avoid the aforementioned misuse. Robertson, for example, states: "The aorist stem pre-sents action in its simplest form (α -οριστος, 'undefined'). This action is simply presented as a point by this tense. ... The terms aorist, imperfect and perfect ... are properly named from the point of view of the state of the action."⁵ [Emphasis added.] "The 'constative' aorist," he adds later, "just treats the act as a single whole entirely irrespective of the parts of time involved. If the act is a point in itself, well and good. But the aorist can be used also of an act which is not a point. ... All aorists are punctiliar in statement. ... The tense, like the mode, has nothing to do with the fact of the action, but only with the way it is stated."⁶

In his earlier work, *A Short Grammar*, Robertson puts it very directly: "The thing to bear in mind is that the aorist represents the action as a point. In itself it may have continued a long time. It is precisely the idea of the aorist (undefined action) that it does not distinguish between complete or incomplete action. It may be used of either."⁷

Some grammarians, however, have spoken less precisely, and they may be in part responsible for that misuse of the aorist which is the subject of this article. As an example, compare Turner: "The aorist stem expresses punctiliar, and the present expresses linear action. Sometimes however the aorist will not even express momentary or punctiliar action but will be noncommittal; it regards the action as a whole without respect to its duration; time is irrelevant to it."⁸ The confusion comes from stating that the aorist stem "expresses punctiliar action." It would be more precise to say that the aorist expresses an action in punctiliar fashion, and that the action itself may be of any type (momentary, punctiliar, durative, repeated, etc.). The textbooks which we have been using in the Greek classes at our college, by Davis and Chamberlain, are likewise somewhat imprecise in their treatment of the aorist. Statements like "the aorist tense expresses punctiliar action" are all too common!

THE COMMENTARIES

More than one Biblical interpreter has in his writings failed to keep the aorist in its place. Many of the pastors in our fellowship have Lenski's *Interpretation* of the books of the New Testament on their library shelves, and this commentator's writings contain numerous examples of the misuse of the aorist.⁹ Concerning the verb $\mu\eta\sigma\theta\eta\varsigma$ in Matthew 5:23 ("... and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee") he says: "... the punctiliar aorist $\mu\eta\sigma\theta\eta\varsigma$ marks the sudden remembrance." Mark 7:9 contains a present tense followed by an aorist: "Full well ye reject ($\acute{\alpha}\theta\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$) the commandment of God, that ye may keep ($\tau\eta\rho\eta\sigma\eta\tau\epsilon$) your own tradition." Lenski comments: "Even the tenses aid the contrast: they constantly nullify the divine, in order permanently to retain the human." In his discussion of John 1:51, he says that the aorists $\eta\upsilon\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\chi\theta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ in Matthew 3:16 and $\acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\mu\chi\theta\eta\nu\alpha\iota$ in Luke 3:21 indicate "one act, a momentary opening." On the phrase "but if her husband be dead ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\rho$)" in Romans 7:3, Lenski states: "aorist to indicate the single brief act." The aorist $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\eta\sigma\eta$ in I Corinthians 1:28, he says, "intensifies the completeness: 'actually abolish.'" His comments on Ephesians 4:15 and 22 contain these words: "'till we all actually arrive (aorist!) at a full-grown man"; "'That you put off or away from yourselves (middle) once and for all the old man' means a definite and permanent break. Paul's aorist views it as nothing less."

The above verses, now, may indeed contain ideas such as those underscored — permanency, oneness, momentariness, actuality, once-and-for-all-ness, etc. But, contrary to Lenski, it would not be the use of the aorist tense that would indicate them. Such ideas could be derived only from the contexts, for the aorist merely points to actions without describing them in any way.

In an unpublished commentary on Romans, an instructor in exegesis stated that $\eta\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\nu$ in Romans 3:23 is an "aorist pointing to a momentary act in the past." (Emphasis added.) This, too, is an example of carrying the aorist too far. The aorist in this passage is either gnomic: "as a general rule all sin," or, which seems more probably, it gathers together all the separate and

repeated acts of sin and focuses the attention upon the fact that "all have sinned." Burton regards it as such a "collective historical Aorist."¹⁰

Other commentators do better with the aorist tense. J. P. Meyer, in his commentary on II Corinthians, furnishes some fine examples.¹¹ On 4:4: "Ἐτύφλωσεν is an aorist, thus stressing the action as such." (p. 66) On 5:5: Κατεργασόμενος is the aorist participle, thus stressing the action as such without any further reference to time or effect." (p. 83) On 5:14: "We note that Paul here uses the aorist, thus stressing the action as such." (p. 96) On 7:1 and 2: "The verb is in the aorist; hence the stress is on the action as such. ... He uses the aorist, thus laying stress on the action as such." (pp. 141,144) On 7:3: "Συυζῆν is the present infinitive, which connotes duration; the joint living is a continued process, over against the aorist συναποθανεῖν, which merely denotes death as something which takes place, or has taken place, without any reference to duration or to result." (p. 146) On 7:9: "We must pay close attention to the tense of ἐλυπήθητε. It is the aorist, which always stresses the action as such, without any reference to duration or result." (p. 156) On 11:12: "Note that ἐκκόψω is the aorist, thus stressing the action as such, without any suggestion of duration or lasting result." (p. 268)

In several places within his commentary it may seem that Meyer has wrongly carried the punctiliar force of the aorist from the statement of the action to the action itself. On page 111 he states regarding the tenses of the participles in II Corinthians 5:19: "The whole life of Christ on earth was occupied in working out our καταλλαγῆ, His entire state of exinanition being devoted to the task. Hence the present participle, καταλλάσσων. ... The establishing of the message of the καταλλαγῆ, in contrast to the working out of the καταλλαγῆ, was a single act, completed in a moment; hence the aorist, θεμενός." But notice that Meyer does not say that the aorist expresses a single, momentary act. He states rather that because the act was single and momentary the apostle chose the aorist instead of the present. This is the proper order of things. If an act is punctiliar, the

writer of Greek will obviously select the aorist tense. It need hardly be added that the converse of this is not necessarily true. If a writer uses the aorist, it does not follow of necessity that the act he is relating is punctiliar. For the aorist could be, and was, used for actions that were distinctly nonpunctiliar.

CONCLUDING REMARKS The aorist tense was for the holy writers the normal tense to use, unless they chose to emphasize the ideas of duration or completion. Hence what Frank Stagg stated some years ago in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* is probably correct: "... departure from the aorist is exegetically more significant than the presence of the aorist."¹² We should take special note, therefore, when such tenses as the imperfect or perfect occur in a text.

Neither Stagg nor the present writer, however, would want to say that the aorist is of no exegetical significance at all. Future topics in this series on the tenses will, D.v., present examples of the exegetical usefulness of this tense.

C. Kuehne

FOOTNOTES

1. Quoted in William Hersey Davis, *Beginner's Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1923), p. viii.
2. George Benedict Winer, *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament*, 7th ed. (Andover: Draper, 1904), p. 264.
3. In the indicative of the imperfect and aorist tenses, time is conveyed through the addition of the augment and secondary endings to the stems. The stems themselves remain timeless.
4. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 5.
5. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 824f.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 832, 835.
7. A. T. Robertson, *A Short Grammar of the Greek New*

NOTES ON THE HEBREW VERB

A review of the previous *Journal* article on this subject (Vol. 15, No. 3, September, 1975) may be in order before advancing. After looking at quotations from various standard sources, and noting the uncertainty and even disagreement evident in statements made concerning the nature of the Hebrew verb, we stepped back into history to look at the development of viewpoints concerning the Hebrew verbal system.

Originally, the perfect and imperfect tenses in Hebrew had been regarded as representing the past and future, respectively. The "waw conversive," as it was then called, was thought to have the power to convert a past tense into a future tense and a future tense into a past tense. H. G. A. Ewald was primarily responsible for remodelling the theory of the Hebrew verbal system in the 19th century. Building on his work, S. R. Driver authored the classic exposition of the "aspect theory," *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*. According to this view, the tenses do not express order of time, but kind of time: the perfect tense being used to represent action as completed, and the imperfect being used to represent action as incomplete, nascent, developing. Even the consecutive constructions with waw were explained according to this principle. Thus, the imperfect with waw consecutive represents actions as continuing or developing that which came before; the perfect with waw consecutive, on the other hand, brings a previously incomplete action to completion. Other noted proponents of the aspect theory were W. R. Harper and A. B. Davidson. The Gesenius-Kautzsch grammar also accepts the aspect theory. This theory had now successfully replaced the older view.

Hans Bauer challenged the aspect theory. His researches led him to explain the peculiarities of the Hebrew verbal system as resulting from the development of the tenses in the various cognate languages. Because of the flexible nature of the original forms lying back of the later verb forms, a strange thing happened. The

same original forms (an all-tempora, and a kind of participle) which developed into the imperfect and perfect, respectively, in some of the Semitic languages, actually reversed themselves in the case of Akkadian, and, essentially, developed instead into the perfect and imperfect, respectively. Bauer considered Hebrew to be a mixed language: "The conversive tenses reflect the Akkadian usage, while the regular tenses are comparable to the use in other Semitic languages" (Sept., 1975, *Journal*, p. 14).

Another prominent opponent of the aspect theory was G. R. Driver. He developed his own theory, also on the basis of evidence from the historical development of the Semitic verbal system. The argumentation is similar to that of Bauer, but the two are not in complete agreement with each other. Bauer stressed the priority of the form lying back of the Hebrew imperfect; Driver seems to begin with the form lying back of the Hebrew perfect.

Indirectly, men such as Bauer and Driver have taken a long step back toward the older, traditional view. Once again, especially in the case of Bauer, there is more emphasis on the order of time, with the perfect representing the past and the imperfect the present or future. But whereas the older grammar viewed the "conversive" or "consecutive" constructions as simply reversing the normal tense values, Bauer and Driver regarded these puzzling constructions as remnants of an older, more flexible verbal system. To state this another way: the apparently contradictory uses made of the tenses are explained by Bauer and Driver as resulting from the nature of Hebrew as a mixed language, drawing diverse elements from the various cognate languages.

Where does this leave us? Very likely our readers have been trained in the aspect theory. In one way, this theory appears attractive, consistent, logical. Even the apparently recalcitrant consecutive constructions are made to fit nicely into the scheme. But is logic larger than life? Does the aspect theory fit all the facts? For that matter, is the aspect theory, upon closer examination, really all that logical in its ap-

plication? The grammarian we shall look at below (Blake) believes the working out of the aspect theory has resulted in confusion.

On the other hand, are we perhaps to follow the new class of grammarians who have turned from the aspect theory? There seems to be no objection, in principle, to the arguments from the historical development of the Semitic languages advanced by these grammarians. If we accept such arguments, it would mean an end to the attempt to wrestle the consecutive forms into some logical framework. We would simply recognize the diversity of elements in Hebrew, and treat them for what they are: the imperfect with waw consecutive as essentially a preterite tense, and the perfect with waw consecutive as some kind of imperfect or future.

Not so readily solved yet, however, is the question of the thrust of the ordinary imperfect and perfect. Is the stress predominantly on the order of time, or is there still a significant degree of emphasis on the kind of time? On this point Bauer seems to express himself more clearly and emphatically than Driver. Bauer argued "that the two verb forms of Semitic, as is normally the case in many languages, are primarily employed to denote difference in time point (tense) and not time continuance (aspect, *Aktionsart*)." (Sept., 1975, *Journal*, p. 13) Whether Driver, on the other hand, has distanced himself quite so far from the aspect theory, is possibly open to question. He does state on page 83 of his *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System* that לִּפְעֻלָּה "became a pure tense, restricted almost entirely to past time." But he also writes: "Hebrew, then, having a perfect, had no great need of a separate preterite tense but only of one describing the reverse of completed, i.e., incomplete, action." (Our underlining; Sept., 1975, *Journal*, p. 16.) In his note on page 253 of Weingreen, he translates the imperfect, לֹּחֵטֵף , "he kills, was killing, will kill." But then that is probably a point on which even the most energetic opponents of the aspect theory would agree. At any rate, the relative weight to be assigned to aspect and time is an issue which continues to divide grammarians.

Such are the basic issues for our consideration. In continuing these notes, we are merely going into a little more detail, offering summaries of the thoughts of some other writers on Hebrew grammar.

F. R. Blake

1. "The Hebrew Waw Conversive," F. R. Blake, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 63, No. 3, 1944, pp. 271-295.

Blake was unsatisfied with current explanations of the consecutive constructions, believing that they did not take account of all the relevant data, such as the difference in the vocalization of the conjunction and the accent shift in different directions in the two consecutive forms. He rejects the supposition that the doubling of the initial consonant of the imperfect form when used with the waw consecutive (וַיְ) conceals some particle responsible for the past meaning.* In regard to the perfect with the waw consecutive (וַיְ), he rejects the explanation that this construction is the result of "so called 'polarity' or inverse analogy." (p. 271)

"Both tense forms may apparently be used for any time, past, present, or future, and it is difficult to assign any single principle which differentiates their uses in all cases." (p. 273) Blake notes that the aspect theory has been the chief attempt to establish one such principle of differentiation, but dismisses it with these statements: "A priori it is unlikely that such an exclusively aspectual distinction should be made by any language, with a complete disregard of the simpler and more obvious tense distinctions. The Slavic languages, which are particularly sensitive to aspectual distinc-

* Confer, for example, the Gesenius-Tregelles lexicon, 1949, under "וַיְ" (p. 235, right column), where Gesenius explains that this form of the waw is a contraction from the verb substantive וַיְ וַיְ. (Note that here Gesenius calls the imperfect the "future" and regards this "Waw conversive" as changing the "future" to an "imperfect" - "he was killing.")

tions, present these always combined with distinctions based on point of time." (p. 273) He concludes that the effort to find a single principle of division is a vain one.

Following Bauer and G. R. Driver, Blake then launches into a discussion of the development of the verb forms in the Semitic languages. The evidence, according to him, indicates that the imperfect was the original Semitic verb form. In this he agrees with Hans Bauer. (In support of the priority of the imperfect is the fact that the imperative, most likely one of the most primitive of all verb forms, belongs to the imperfect system.) The imperfect was originally an omnitemporal form, denoting with equal facility the past, the present, or the future. The originally stative perfect developed a past significance, whereupon the imperfect was principally confined to a "present-future-modal meaning." (p. 277)

But vestiges of the past significance of the imperfect remained. Here Blake points out that the imperfect has a past meaning, not only with the "waw conversive" (a term, by the way, which Blake uses consistently, as one could guess from the title of this article), but also with several other words (וָ , $\text{וּ$, וֹ , וֵ) (p. 277)

Blake then advances and discusses the hypothesis that "wa with a vocalization (וָ) implies a past meaning, and we with e vocalization (וֵ), an imperfect meaning." (p. 279) He proceeds to treat various morphological features of forms with waw conversive (again, Blake's term) which must be capable of explanation on this basis. Here are the six features he discusses:

- a) the vocalization a with ו and imperfect (in general)
- b) the doubling of the consonant after wa
- c) the vocalization \bar{a} with ו in the 1. sg. imperfect (with past meaning)
- d) the vocalization \bar{a} with monosyllabic perfects (with imperfect meaning), and a before וֹ of perfect Hiphil
- e) the recessive accent of the imperfect

f) the progressive accent of the perfect."

Some fifteen pages follow in which these points are discussed in turn. At the end of the entire article, Blake sets down the conclusions regarding the imperfect and perfect with "waw conversive" which he believes to be probable. In these conclusions he also summarizes the points he made in regard to the six morphological features listed above. It seems best to let Blake speak for himself here. We therefore quote directly the last two pages of the article, placing our own comments in parentheses.

"The following conclusions, therefore, with regard to the imperfect and perfect with waw conversive may be set down as probable, viz.:

- "a) the past meaning of the imperfect with ʾ is a survival of an original past meaning of an omnitemporal verb form, preserved after certain conjunctions and adverbs, including ʾ ;
- "b) the vocalization a is a preservation of the original vocalization of ʾ, and the Daghesh in the following consonant represents an orthographic doubling; (The first half of the above statement in point b) answers to point a) in the previously quoted list of six morphological features. The second half of the above statement answers to point b). The orthographic doubling is necessary because Masoretic rules required a short full vowel a to stand in a closed syllable, rather than an open syllable.)
- "c) imperfect forms with ʾ have the present-future-modal meaning to which the imperfect was for the most part confined after the development of the perfect into a past tense;
- "d) the opposition of ʾ (present-future-modal) and ʾ (past) led to the feeling that the temporal meaning lay in the vowel of the conjunction, as otherwise the two forms were identical, i.e., wa becomes the sign of a past tense, and we, of a present-future-modal;
- "e) the present-future-modal meaning thus developed in we infects the perfect preceded by we with its present-future-modal meaning; though the possibility of employing a perfect with we in a perfect meaning

after another perfect or imperfect with *wa* seems always to have been preserved (dialectally?);

- "f) the imperfect with *wa* becomes the regular form of an additive past tense after another past tense;
- "g) the present-future-modal meaning after *we* following an imperfect might be expressed by either imperfect or perfect with *we*; the perfect with *we* becomes the preferred form in this construction perhaps through an apparent polar analogy; (The alert reader will wonder about this reference to "an apparent polar analogy," when it has been previously stated that Blake rejected "polarity" or "inverse analogy." There is a footnote on pp. 271-272 which comments on polarity and analogical change in more detail.

Simple kinds of analogical change in language are not rejected: "kill:killed::buy: ? (? = buyed)." (p. 272) But polar or inverse analogy as an independent principle is rejected, since it requires mental gymnastics through which the human mind (according to Blake) does not go in cases of linguistic change. Here is a description of polar analogy: "If a form *x* has a meaning *x'* and a form *y* a meaning *y'*, a change in *x* producing the meaning of *y*, viz. *y'*, will produce when applied to *y* the meaning of *x*, viz. *x'*." (p. 272)

- "h) the recessive accent in the imperfect with *wa* seems to be based on $\zeta\eta\pi\kappa^s \lambda\iota\theta\jmath$;

(This answers to point e) above. Cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, 2nd English edition, 1910, 29 e (also 3 b), p. 95. When a word with accent on the ultima is followed by a monosyllable or a word with the accent on the first syllable, the accent on the first of the two words recedes to the penultima, "to avoid the concurrence of two tone-syllables." ($\zeta\eta\pi\kappa^s \lambda\iota\theta\jmath$ means "receding.") Blake believes that the shift of accent in the *waw* consecutive imperfect which naturally took place under these circumstances was soon extended to cases where the word following did not have an initial accented syllable.)

- "i) the progressive accent in the perfect with *we* seems to be due to the analogy of the accentuation of the equivalent imperfect with *we*; the numerous exceptions to the rule of progressive accent are due to interferences with this analogy, and in most cases

of interference, explanations seem possible; (This answers to point f) in our above list. The problem here is one of considerable complexity, and it has enormously engaged scholars. It is treated in some detail in this article.)

- "j) 1. sg. imperfects after *wa* retained their past meaning, being regarded as the regular equivalent of a + originally doubled w^{h} ; (This answers to point c) above.)
- "k) in perfects preceded by w^{a} (those with accent on the first syllable like $\text{w}^{\text{a}}\text{h}^{\text{a}}$, $\text{w}^{\text{a}}\text{h}^{\text{a}}$) the w^{a} was not felt as a past sign but as a secondary mark of emphasis before an accented syllable; in Hiphil perfects with initial w^{a} w^{a} was regarded not as a past sign but as the regular form of *we* before a laryngeal; in other words any form of w^{a} (w^{e} , u^{a} , w^{a} , *wa*) immediately before a perfect came to function as an imperfect sign." (This answers to point d) above.)

Such is the substance of this article. In a lengthy footnote (pp. 280-282) we are treated to an explanation of how the *waw* consecutive constructions finally disappeared. The use of the *waw* consecutive with perfect was apparently never fully established; that is, perfect forms with *we* with a preserved perfect meaning were never totally displaced. The presence of these forms acted as a brake on the complete dominance of the *waw* consecutive construction with the perfect. Gradually, this latter construction began to recede. When the normal past meaning of the perfect with *we* was restored, a competition resulted between the two past forms: a perfect with *we* on the one hand, and an imperfect with *wa* on the other hand. The more logical perfect with *we* won out, and thus even the *waw* consecutive with imperfect was lost. This final state of development without any consecutive constructions is seen in the Mishna.

2. *A Resurvey of Hebrew Tenses*, 1951 (now out of print).

In the introduction to this book, Blake explains that his purpose is to take another look at the complexities of Hebrew tense usage, and to do this, in general, on the basis of the tense theory advocated by Bauer.

Having rejected the aspect theory, he reorganizes much of the grammatical material in Gesenius-Kautzsch and S. R. Driver. Many of the thoughts of Bauer's earlier article (surveyed above) are presented also in this book. We bring two additional quotations: one on the weakness of the aspect theory, the other on the predominance of tense over aspect in the Hebrew verb.

a. "The detailed working out of this aspect theory ... has resulted in a hopeless confusion of forms and meanings, and to many fanciful explanations to account for differences in form. The whole treatment presents a picture strongly characterized by complexity, obscurity and artificiality, a system by which it is difficult to imagine as developing and existing in the minds of any language group." (p. 1)

b. "Moreover all the peculiarities of meaning presented by the Semitic verbal forms are capable of a clear and reasonable explanation based on tense, without regard to fundamental aspect theory. It is true that aspect is also indicated by the Semitic verbal forms, e.g. the imperfect as a general present or a progressive past (imperfect proper) indicates incomplete action or continuance, and the perfect as a simple past indicates completed action, but these aspectual meanings are always accompanied by and are subordinate to the time point meaning of tense." (p. 2)

With Bauer, then, Blake looks to history rather than to a set logical framework for an explanation of the consecutive constructions. Likewise, the two agree in consistently subordinating aspect to time in the Hebrew verbal system.

R. E. Wehrwein



THE CHRISTIAN KNOWS ALL THINGS SPIRITUAL,
YET CONTINUES TO GROW IN KNOWLEDGE

How can one know all things and yet grow in knowledge? This is not a contradiction, but a paradox that is true because of the dual nature, the spirit/flesh make-up of each Christian.

WORK OF THE SPIRIT In the Upper Room and on the way to Gethsemane on that night of His betrayal our Lord spoke to His disciples most solemnly of the coming and work of the Holy Ghost. He promised:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14: 16)

The Holy Ghost functions as Teacher. He teaches all things and therefore is the sole Teacher of the New Testament Church. He is also the necessary Teacher, without whom there is and can be no learning of things spiritual, for St. Paul teaches us that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). Our Lord also indicated the Spirit's method of teaching, namely, by bringing all things to one's remembrance. In the case of the apostles whom the Lord taught personally for more than three years, the Spirit's teaching consisted in recalling the words of the Lord and enlightening the understanding of the apostles in regard to those words. The Spirit in conversion establishes an imprint of Christ in the heart and mind of the believer, for in that moment the Spirit makes Christ Jesus unto the believer "wisdom" (I Cor. 1:30). Therefore all the teaching of the Spirit is a recalling and an understanding of Christ.

THE UNCTION OR
ANOINTMENT

In the second chapter of his first epistle St. John warns against the coming of antichrist and antichrists

who shall arise from the midst of the Christian congregations. In contrast to these people who go out from the congregations while never actually being a part of the congregations, John says of believers:

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ... But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (I John 2:20,27).

These statements contain some bold thoughts. John speaks of believers as having an unction, an anointment, from the Holy One. That descriptive term takes us back to Old Testament times when prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with olive oil and so consecrated and equipped spiritually for their offices. The oil symbolized the Holy Spirit. Our Lord was anointed not with a symbol of the Spirit, but with the Spirit personally, already in His mother's womb and also at the beginning of His public ministry when the Spirit descended upon Him and remained on Him. When He, in turn, sent the Spirit on Pentecost day, the Spirit anointed men, women, and children. That anointing takes place the moment the Spirit teaches a sin-terrified and burdened person to find pardon and peace in Christ Jesus, the Savior from sin.

St. John specifically mentions one effect of that anointing: "And ye know all things!" That thought is so daring and so bold that it appears some scribes changed the Greek text, the πάντα to πάντες so that the thought would be "and ye all know," rather than "and ye know all things." But the daring thought is repeated a few verses later when John writes that the believer has no need of a teacher because the anointing teaches him all things. And it is a reliable and sure teacher and guide, for it "is truth, and is no lie." Notice, however, that the anointing functions as an effective teacher only as long

as and inasfar as the person abides in the Lord.

St. John teaches that when the Holy Spirit anoints an individual, He gives that individual Christ Jesus as the Savior from sin and also the knowledge of all spiritual truth and so the answer to every spiritual question. Jesus Christ is both the Truth and the capsulation of all truths!

JESUS CHRIST = St. John testified and repeated the
ALL WISDOM testimony that the believer, as one
who has been anointed by the Holy
One, knows all things, i.e., spiritual things. That is
both possible and fact, for in anointing anyone the Holy
One gives that individual Christ as Wisdom (I Cor. 1:30).

How does this grand truth jibe with our personal experience and observation? In answering this question we do well to begin by asking whether we understand St. John as he wanted to be understood when he wrote that anyone having the unction of the Holy One knows all things. We are conditioned by academic and religious training from earliest youth to think of knowledge as divided and subdivided, carefully organized and arranged according to some scheme that satisfies the intellect. When we think of knowing all things in the religious field, we may think of knowing all the stories in the Bible history, then knowing Luther's Small Catechism, next the much longer explanation of Luther's Small Catechism with all the questions and answers. On the professional level we may think of mastering the three volumes of Pieper's Dogmatics. Quite obviously a baptized child, who has thereby been anointed by the Holy Spirit, does not thereby also have the six chief parts of the catechism impressed on its memory. That takes years of study. Even on the day of examination or confirmation many of the answers to the questions and proof passages elude the student. How many mature Christians can answer specific questions in regard to Christian doctrine? How many pastors have a grasp of the finer points of dogmatics and are able to lay these things out to others upon request? It would appear as though our own experience and observations are in discord with John's testimony that anyone having an unction

of the Holy One knows all things.

Nonetheless, John's testimony must stand, for it is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. John must mean something other than an intellectual compartmentalization of biblical doctrines according to the rules of logic developed by the heathen Greek, Aristotle, for Scripture teaches us that to know Jesus Christ is to know all things.

HOW SCRIPTURE SPEAKS No less than four times in the book of Revelation, which is the revelation of none other than Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus introduces Himself in this way, "I am Alpha and Omega" (1:8.11; 21:6; 22:13). What does that self-designation mean other than that our Lord testifies that He is the beginning and end of all Scriptures and of all revelation? He is the capsulation of all revelation and Scriptures and so the one exclusive key to the unlocking of all spiritual knowledge, all spiritual mysteries, all spiritual wisdom. To know Jesus Christ is to possess the content of all wisdom and the key to all understanding of things spiritual.

Our Lord testified to this fact on various occasions and with different words. To the unbelieving Jews our Lord said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). If all Scriptures testify of the Lord Jesus, then He is both the content and key to understanding the Scriptures.

In one of His lectures delivered to His disciples during their post-graduate session between Easter and Ascension, our Lord instructed His disciples that "all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." The Lord testified that He is the heart and core of the writings of all the Old Testament prophets. He is their content. Then our Lord continued by "opening their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45). Since He is the content of Scriptures, He is also the key to the understanding of Scriptures and so of all truth. If one knows Jesus

Christ, he possesses the content of all spiritual truth and the key to all spiritual understanding.

St. Paul was taught this truth when he was anointed by the Holy Spirit. That is why when he began work in the city of Corinth, which had a long and rich tradition of human knowledge, philosophy, and wisdom, he "determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). St. Paul knew what St. John knew — that knowing Christ means knowing all things!

KNOWING CHRIST = Knowing Christ as Lord and Savior is THE ROCK knowing it all. Recall the incident (Matthew 16) when our Lord took His disciples into the area of Caesarea Philippi. He had asked them about the popular opinions concerning Himself, but the Lord was not interested in an opinion poll. He was concerned about the spirit life of His disciples, the Twelve and those of all time. So He asked the pointed question, "But whom say ye that I am?" Quite expectedly Simon Peter answered for himself and in behalf of the others: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." For that answer Peter scored the highest grade possible, for the Lord called him "blessed." But Peter was to understand clearly that his answer was not the product of either native intelligence or innate spirituality: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." It had taken a spiritual flash from God Himself to impress upon the mind and heart of Peter that this Man with whom he had been associating on such intimate terms day in and day out was the eternal Son of God, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

If divine illumination was necessary for perceiving this truth, then this truth must be basic, a capsulation of and key to all truth, and instrumental in achieving and working out God's purpose among men. This is precisely what our Lord continued to tell Peter: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon THIS ROCK I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." THIS ROCK is not the confessor, but rather his confession, revealed to him by God Him-

self! All those called out of darkness into the glorious light of grace would share with Peter and all other members of the Church this same truth that Jesus, born of Mary in Bethlehem, living in Nazareth, and dying outside Jerusalem, is the Son of the living God, the promised Messiah-Savior of His people. Whenever the Holy One anoints a man, woman, or child, He impresses this truth into the mind and heart of that individual. In so doing He makes that person a part of a glorious living organism, the Holy Christian Church, which all the fury of hell cannot destroy.

KNOWING CHRIST — 'Twas a fascinating conversation
 THE WOMAN AT THE WELL (John 4) that our Lord had with this unnamed sinner/saint at Jacob's well. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is ..." "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" The interchange was becoming more intense. The Lord had what this woman wanted — water that would permanently quench her thirst, but she wasn't ready for it. She was jolted when Jesus told her to call her husband. How did He know, unless He were a prophet? She was groping: Who was right about the proper place to worship? It's not the place, but the manner — "in spirit and truth," came the answer. "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ!" "I that speak unto thee am He." Then the disciples came and interrupted the intense exchange, but the woman had all she needed. She had by one stroke of the Spirit been made saint, theologian, and witness extraordinary. In an instant she knew it all — something most of the Jewish scribes and Pharisees never achieved even after a lifetime of concentrated study.

KNOWING CHRIST — He had been born blind — poor fellow!
 THE BLIND MAN Then one day a Man came along,
 (John 9) spit on the ground, made some mud, rubbed it on his eyes, and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He did and was able to see!

Then the blind man who could see was confronted with seeing men who were blind. He had to fight the entrenched ecclesiastical bureaucrats. Again and again they asked him how he had received his sight. Over and over a-

gain he told them, but they couldn't see it. His parents put on the dumb act; they didn't want to get involved. This unlearned and unschooled man gradually became the teacher of the seeing, knowing intellectuals, who knew/saw nothing of things spiritual. In exasperation they threw him out. Jesus found him and asked him: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is he, Lord?" "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." "Lord, I believe!" He had it — spiritual insight and understanding — something that eluded his blind, unspiritual leaders. What was there left for him to do? "And he worshipped him."

TESTING — "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (I John 2:20). "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits whether they are of God" (I John 4:1).' The latter presupposes the former, or the former is the basis for the latter. John exhorts all believers to try or to test the spirits, that is, all preachers and teachers in the church to determine from what spirit they speak, either the Spirit of Truth or the spirit of lies.

The word for testing, δοκιμάζειν, is used quite frequently in the New Testament and was necessary in all commercial dealings in those days because the coinage was not standardized. Coins had to be tested for both purity and weight to determine whether they were of the designated value. St. John used this common practice and term when urging believers to test and continue to test all preachers and teachers in the church. The call for such testing presupposes that those who are to do the testing are capable of such testing. Are believers qualified to do such testing of their teachers? If they were not, then John would be calling upon them to do what they were spiritually unqualified to do. But each believer is qualified to test the spirits, for he has been anointed and so knows all things. This does not mean that all believers are equally qualified to test the spirits, for the Lord, in addition to the basic gift of the anointing, distributes special spiritual insight to detect a false spirit propagating a subtle error. Such an one is to serve his brethren in testing

ST. PAUL — St. John uses the word to test only
 TESTING once, in the passage cited. St. Paul
 uses the word more often. In Romans
 12:2 St. Paul urges all believers not to be "conformed to
 this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of
 your mind, that ye may prove (test) what is that good,
 and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." By virtue of
 the anointing of the Holy One, as St. John puts it, or
 the indwelling of the Spirit, as St. Paul puts it (Rom-
 ans 8:11), the believer is spiritually equipped to test
 and so determine what the will of God is in a certain
 situation. St. Paul repeated this thought in his letter
 to the Ephesians, where he names "proving (testing) what
 is acceptable unto the Lord" (5:10) as one of the fruits
 of the Spirit.

St. John had warned of the antichrist and anti-
 christs. He had urged his readers to test the spirits.
 St. Paul brought his first letter to the Thessalonians
 to a conclusion with a series of exhortations, among
 which is the command to "prove (test) all things; hold
 fast to that which is good" (5:21). The Christian is
 not only to test preachers and teachers to determine
 what spirit is the source of their teaching, but is also
 obligated to test things, situations, customs, traditions,
 institutions, etc. This is a tremendous responsibility,
 but the Christian is in a position to carry it out be-
 cause he had been spiritually equipped for such testing
 by none other than the Holy Spirit Himself.

TESTING — The Spirit anoints and so gives
 THE WORD Christ Jesus as the capsulation of
 all Truth and the key to it. There-
 by the believer is enabled to test all spirits and things.
 But none of this is worked or achieved in the believer
 apart from the Word. In his preface St. John emphasized
 that all the apostles declared that which they had per-
 sonally witnessed (I:1-3). Faith only can come by hear-
 ing the Word (Rom. 10:17). St. John emphasizes the com-
 mandments and the Word and keeping them. Apart from the
 Word no one is able to know or to believe in Jesus Christ.
 The Holy One never bypasses the Word when He anoints an
 individual. When He teaches a person to know all things,
 He does that through the Word. Consequently the believ-

ers know all things and test all things on the basis of the Word. The Holy One drives to despair through the word of the Law, creates faith in Christ Jesus through the word of the Gospel, and in that same instant writes the word of the Law in the heart of the believer. This spiritual activity goes on within the individual, completely unnoticed by the casual observer and beyond analytic observation by the keenest observer, for "the wind bloweth where it listeth" (John 3:8). Yet this anointing is a spiritual illumination superior even to the calling into being of the primeval light (II Cor. 4:6).

LEARNING — In writing his first epistle to his
KNOWING spiritual children St. John is con-
 tinually teaching while at the same
time presupposing that those who will hear his letter read know what he is teaching or have the spiritual capability of responding affirmatively to what is being taught.

In his brief introduction John testifies of the pre-existence of the second Person of the Trinity and His incarnation in the Person of Jesus, who is the promised Messiah, the Christ, who became incarnate for the purpose of restoring fellowship with the Father and among men. This is the theme of John's letter — restored fellowship with an estranged God through the incarnation of the preexistent Son, who was the promised Christ. In the body of his letter John develops various facets of this basic truth, which are recognizable as truth by all of God's children.

In the first section (1:5-2:2) John stresses the concept of fellowship. That which threatens fellowship with God is sin. But our Father has provided for the continual removal of that barrier and threat to fellowship through His Son, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The second section (2:3-17) reveals the implications of fellowship — that those in fellowship with the Father know His Son and keep His commandments or words. Two examples are given, the incompatibility of hating one's brother and loving the world. Both destroy fellowship with the Father through the Son, as every child

of God will acknowledge and confirm.

The third section (2:18-28) deals with the immediate problem facing this particular group of believers. Their fellowship with the Father through the Son was being threatened by the appearance of antichrists in advance of the antichrist. The antichrists were threatening the fundamental truth of the incarnation of the preexistent Son of God, come to restore fellowship with the Father. John appealed to the original anointing of his readers, whereby they are expected to be able to perceive that such a heresy destroys everything that they knew and had received when they were originally brought to faith. The word "remain" or "abide" sounds forth again and again. Remain in the basic, key truth that was impressed upon your souls when the Spirit anointed you by bringing you to faith in Christ Jesus and so restoring you to the fellowship of your God.

The fourth section (2:19-3:24) lays out the implications of the anointing by the Spirit in terms of being born of God. John sets forth these truths in the form of generalities that are freely acknowledged by all believers — that all who are born again purify themselves, that any and all who commit sin transgress the law and are of the devil, and so on.

The fifth section (4:1-6) urges the reborn to keep on testing the prophets on the basis of their confession in regard to the incarnation of the preexistent Son of God who is the Christ of Scriptures.

The sixth section (4:7-5:3) revolves about the dominant attribute of our God — love! It was God's love that moved Him to send His Son to restore fellowship between God and man and to enable man once again to respond to the love of God by returning that love, for fellowship between God and man is to exist in the atmosphere of love.

The final section (5:4-17) describes those in fellowship with their God as ones who testify, who have faith, and so as those who possess life that is more than the sum of its physical manifestations, but life

that lives from and within the fountainhead of life, the Lord Jesus.

No matter where one begins reading or rereading a portion of this epistle of St. John, one is struck by two features: John is always instructing, making inferences, drawing conclusions, giving examples, warning, exhorting, but always on the basis of knowledge that he presupposes as being the common possession of all his readers. He has nothing new to add; yet they have something new to learn, but what they are to learn they already know. So it is that John writes to people who know all things spiritual, for they have been anointed by the Spirit of God, yet they have the need to and do in fact continue to grow in that knowledge. The mystery of this paradox lies hidden in the spirit/flesh make-up of each Christian.

EVER KNOWING —
EVER LEARNING

The moment the Spirit of God brings an individual sinner to faith in Christ Jesus, that person knows all spiritual truth in the sense that he possesses the capsulation and key to both law and gospel. All that our Savior-God planned for our salvation from eternity, worked out in time for our salvation, and distributes to us day by day is wrapped up in Christ Jesus. To know Jesus Christ is to have eternal life. Faith in Christ simultaneously recognizes God as the highest good and all mankind as equally dependent upon Him and as equal beneficiaries. In other words, faith in Christ puts God first and all our fellowmen on the same standing with us. This is the answer to the requirement of the law — love to God above all things and love to our fellowmen in the same degree as love to ourselves.

If Jesus Christ is both the capsulation and key, as well as the sum of all spiritual knowledge, why does the Spirit in the Holy Scriptures keep on laying out the gospel as a brilliant diamond which glitters when slowly turned in the light, and why does He keep on applying the law of love to endless situations and relationships in life? It is because indwelling sin, lodged in the flesh, unceasingly attempts to condition the love of God in Christ by some efforts, exertion, assistance,

or contribution of man and that attempts to distort or limit the demands of the law of love so that they are within the capabilities of natural man.

St. Peter urges all Christians to be and remain as newborn babes in this sense that they "long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (I Peter 2:2, NASB). Peter concludes his second epistle with the exhortation, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). It's a very rare Christian who hasn't memorized and can't recite John 3:16; yet the greatest theologian that ever lived can't even begin to understand the love of God that sent His Son. We all should spend a lifetime studying and marveling and worshipping while studying the love of our God in Christ as He planned our salvation in eternity, revealed it in history and in the form of prophecy, worked it out in the life of our Savior, explained its meaning in the epistles, and will bring it all to its final consummation at the end of time.

So also with the law, which is the reflection of our God's holiness and the verbalization of His character. God once wrote that law in man's heart. But that natural knowledge did not escape the devastating effects of sin. Man still retains a natural knowledge of some works of the law, as is evidenced by the conduct of the heathen, but these are external works far from the spirit of the law. In the moment of conversion the Spirit of God writes the law anew in the heart of the Christian. He is simultaneously shielded from the curse of the law and stimulated to reflect upon that law so that he can more faithfully reflect the character of His holy God in all the many situations and interrelationships of life. So it is that the Christian is urged to constantly prove, that is, test "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Because of his flesh which affects his thinking and understanding, attempting to reduce the demands of holiness, make exceptions, stretch a point, rationalize a failure, and so on and on, the Christian needs instruction and guidance in godly living. And the Spirit graciously furnishes such guidance in abundance. Furthermore the Spirit

moves the Christian to "delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22). That is no new activity of the Spirit, for the same Spirit described the Old Testament believer as one whose delight is in the law of the Lord — both the ethical commands that reflect the character of our God and the activity and promises of God in history for the salvation of His people — and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psalm 1:2).

In this lifetime we know and learn. The woeful consequences of refusing to continue to learn soon become not knowing. But we neither know it all or learn it all here in time, for "we know in part, and we prophesy in part. ...For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Cor. 13:9,12). Paul, who wrote these words, doubtlessly studied his own epistles, as the prophets before him studied their prophecies, and as Luther studied his catechism, for we know and yet always learn. If we fail to learn, we shall soon not know.

Paul F. Nolting



U P D A T I N G R O M A N C A T H O L I C I S M

(Continued)

In previous articles of this series, we have discussed the doctrine of the Church, as held by the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the authority which it claims for itself. We now go on to consider how it makes use of this authority.

For many years the issue of mixed marriages has frequently arisen. Usually this issue has generated much fire and heat among families involved. The trouble has stemmed from the insistence of the Roman Catholic Church that the non-Catholic party entering into a contract of marriage must guarantee, in writing or orally, that the faith and practice of the Catholic partner will be safeguarded and freely practiced without interference from the non-Catholic party, and that their children will receive a Catholic education. Let us bring ourselves up-to-date on this issue, on the basis of material that is available to us.

CATHOLIC
MARRIAGE
LAWS

We have pointed out earlier in these studies that the Roman Catholic Church continues to hold that it is the only Church established and commissioned by Christ to provide and administer the means of salvation to all people. It does this through the Sacraments which are administered by its priests. The Roman Church maintains that marriage is one of seven Sacraments. This teaching seems to rest, at least in part, upon the Vulgate translation of Ephesians 5:32. Having spoken of marital duties and obligations in the previous verses, the apostle Paul goes on to say, "τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν." Our King James Version translates: "This is a great mystery." But the Vulgate translates: "*Sacramentum hoc magnum est!*" ("This is a great sacrament!")

For a more complete understanding of the teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage, our readers will

wish to read the 24th Session of the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Canon I of that Session reads:

"If anyone says that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by Christ the Lord, but has been devised by men in the Church and does not confer grace, let him be anathema."¹

In response to this Canon, we would say that holy matrimony cannot be a sacrament instituted by Christ, nor can it confer grace. Marriage was a natural ordinance established by God at the time of creation. It exists outside of the Christian Church among all people. The holy writer says: "Marriage is honorable in all" (Heb. 13:4). Since marriage is thus called honorable also among those who are outside of the Church, therefore marriage cannot be a means of grace because there is no grace outside of the Church.

While the Roman Catholic Church readily acknowledges the existence of marriage before the time of Christ, it says that at some time during His ministry He made it into a sacrament. The change which then took place is brought out in an instruction-by-correspondence book which the undersigned sent for some years ago, entitled *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*. In connection with the Nuptial Mass, the conversation goes as follows:

"Father Smith: Not only is the couple present at Mass, but the Mass is offered for them, and whilst Jesus is personally present on the Altar, He is implored to bless the union and make it enduring and happy. Moreover, the bride and groom are fasting and receive Jesus as their first food that morning.

"Mr. Jackson: That kind of wedding surely resembles the marriage of Cana, which was blessed by Jesus.

"Father Smith: It surpasses the marriage of Cana, for Christ had not yet elevated marriage to a Sacrament, nor did He nourish that couple with the Eucharist. The Catholic couple is married when they

are in the state of grace, and the Sacrament increases Sanctifying Grace and imparts special helps for husband and wife to love each other faithfully, to bear with each other's faults, and to bring up their children properly.

"Mr. Jackson: It could not be improved on, Father. I surely would not wish to be married in any other way."²

Since marriage is a sacrament, according to Roman Catholic dogma, the Roman Church therefore maintains that it exercises a legitimate legal and spiritual authority over both husband and wife. *The New Catechism of the Catholic Faith for Adults* explains it as follows:

"In canon law what counts is whether or not one belongs to the Catholic Church. For the faith lives in a fellowship which ... is wider than that of the family. It is by this fellowship that faith at home is given its concrete form — in the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacraments, the recognition of a mission from Christ, and so on. If a man and woman do not agree on these points, it is here ... where their longing for deep unity causes an almost unbearable tension."³

But if the non-Catholic insists that the Catholic partner should agree to become a member of his non-Catholic church, so that in the fellowship of that congregation they might find the same deep unity, the Catechism replies that:

"... in this case there is the difficulty that the Catholic party does not impart his own faith to the children, and this can be a still greater difficulty than elsewhere because the Catholic Church admits practically all that the Reformation believes, while the opposite is not true."⁴

This explanation requires careful thought. It is indeed true that the churches of the Reformation do not admit all that the Catholic Church professes. After all, the Catholic Church contends that it alone possesses the

full means of salvation, and that only through a full identification with it can people enjoy salvation complete and entire. As Lutherans, we find salvation through faith in Christ alone, and we are built up in our faith by Scripture alone as we are instructed by the Holy Spirit. And we can only wonder how it can be said that "the Catholic Church admits practically all that the Reformation believes," especially when we read the hundreds of times that the expression "Let him be anathema," is directed at the reformers and their followers in the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*.

It is clear, then, that since the marriage of the Catholic is held to be a sacrament of the Church, therefore the Church assumes the right to intervene in it. It can make a declaration of incompatibility with the performance of a mixed marriage if that marriage is really in conflict with the doctrines of the Church. Hence not only the Catholic party, but the non-Catholic partner also, is required to respect whatever laws the Church has established concerning their marriage. The non-Catholic must submit to prescribed formalities as required by the Catholic Church before permission can be granted for the marriage ceremony. These formalities include instruction in the essential doctrines of Catholicism, counseling classes on the moral aspects of marriage as taught by the Church, and finally the signing of a promise that he will not interfere with his Catholic mate in the practice of her faith nor in her determination to raise their children in the Catholic faith. If the non-Catholic could not in good conscience submit to these requirements of Catholic law, the couple must then apply to the local bishop (and in certain cases to Rome) for a special permit to consummate their marriage.

MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT

It is interesting to note the reasoning that takes place in the Roman Church in connection with marriage as a sacrament. Their teaching carefully explains that marriage is a sacrament administered by the man and the woman in the presence of a priest-witness and two other witnesses. In this respect it differs from all of the other sacraments, which are administered by the priest alone. This can again be seen from the conversation be-

tween Father Smith and Mr. Jackson:

"Father Smith: The Church legislates only for her own members. For them marriage is a Sacrament, and hence should be contracted before the priest, who is the proper person to witness a sacramental marriage.

"Mr. Jackson: Why do you say the priest 'witnesses' the marriage?

"Father Smith: Because he is not the minister of the Sacrament, but only the Church's official witness. The bride and groom minister this Sacrament to each other."⁵

So also the *New Catechism* says:

"After the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, precise legal forms were instituted for marriage in canon law. It was laid down that marriage must be contracted before the parish priest and two witnesses. This juridical form was a condition for the validity of the marriage. But even in the solemnization of the marriage, the Sacrament itself remains the mutual consent of the man and the woman. The parish priest does not marry them. They marry each other before the priest when they say, 'I will.'"⁶

Since marriage, then, is for the Catholic a sacrament performed by the man and the woman, not by the priest, it has become a rather common practice to invite non-Catholic ministers to not only attend mixed marriage ceremonies, but also to share in the service itself in a so-called ecumenical manner. This is dependent, of course, upon the bishop's approval and upon the invitation of the parish priest. And here there seems to be no uniformity of practice from one parish to another. In some cases the non-Catholic minister acts only as a witness to the vows of both the man and the woman. Or if he gives the blessing at the wedding, he "emphasizes the fact that it is a promise or marriage that is in the Lord."⁷

By the same token, a mixed marriage can be solemnized in a non-Catholic Church, and still be viewed as fulfilling the letter of the law of the Catholic Church. Last year the undersigned declined to be a participant in an ecumenical type of mixed marriage ceremony. In the end, he was the sole officiant at the wedding. In the eyes of the Roman Church, the letter of their law can still be fulfilled by simply having a Roman Catholic priest present at such a ceremony. In that case, too, they hold that the minister does not marry them, and their sacramental vows are "before" the priest, even though he is sitting among the invited guests. He has simply to record in his Church records that he was witness to their sacramental vows. And it seems that this point has been stretched even a little farther, that the priest need only be invited to attend such a wedding, and it may then be recorded even if he himself was not personally present. In this area, we shall not pretend to comprehend all of the reasoning that takes place in order to justify their position.

DOCUMENTS
REQUIRED

In March of 1966 the Catholic Church, through its Sacred Doctrinal Congregation, issued a document entitled *Matrimonii Sacramentum*, repealing the law of excommunication against Catholics married before non-Catholic ministers. The ruling was retroactive to cover marriages performed before the ruling was published. The same document also made public the changes in attitude toward mixed marriage since Vatican Council II in the following paragraph:

"Hence the pastoral solicitude of the Church demands with even greater urgency that also in mixed marriages, the sanctity of marriage according to Catholic doctrine and the faith of the Catholic party be absolutely safeguarded, and that the Catholic education of the children be attended to with the greatest possible care and effectiveness. Moreover, in this connection it is important to remember the very attitude which Catholics must now cultivate toward their brethren who are separated from the Catholic Church, as was solemnly proclaimed by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican in the

'Decree on Ecumenism.' This seems to make it advisable that the rigor of the present law on mixed marriages be mitigated, not, of course, in anything touching the Divine law, but in certain regulations that have come through ecclesiastical law and which our separated friends find offensive."⁸

The regulation requiring the non-Catholic party to the marriage to sign legal papers which guaranteed non-interference with his mate's faith and the Catholic education of his children, according to the above statement, were subject to drastic change. The Canon Law Society in America appointed a committee to study the types of documents non-Catholics were expected to sign and to make recommendations for the drawing up of new contracts and procedures. The chairman of this committee, Dr. John T. Catoir, presented some examples of abuses found in the marriage contracts. In order to correct these abuses, the Canon Law Society recommended some new forms to maintain fidelity to both the letter and spirit of the church law. In addition to the forms to be signed, they recommended a letter to be sent by the bishop, along with a form which they were to fill out and return to his office.

Shortly after the U.S. Canon Law Society made its recommendations, Pope Paul VI in 1970 released on his own initiative a carefully worded document on mixed marriages. After having noted that "even the canonical discipline on mixed marriages cannot be uniform," he explained that the questions pertaining thereto were examined by "a special Commission of Cardinals which, after diligent consideration, presented us (the Pope) with its conclusions." On the basis of this Commission's conclusions, the pope promulgated 17 norms which are to be observed in granting permission for all mixed marriages. To our knowledge, this is the most recent word on the subject which has come from the pope, and his word should therefore stand as law. Thinking that our readers may wish to have this official word, we shall reprint the following from his 17 norms:

1. A marriage between two baptized persons, of whom one is a Catholic, while the other is a non-Catho-

lic, may not licitly be contracted without the previous dispensation of the local Ordinary, since such a marriage is by its nature an obstacle to the full spiritual communion of the married parties.

2. A marriage between two persons, of whom one has been baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it, while the other is unbaptized, entered into without previous dispensation by the local Ordinary, is invalid.

3. The Church, taking into account the nature and circumstances of times, places and persons, is prepared to dispense from both impediments, provided there is a just cause.

4. To obtain from the local Ordinary dispensation from an impediment, the Catholic party shall declare that he is ready to remove dangers of falling away from the faith. He is also gravely bound to make a sincere promise to do all in his power to have all the children baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church.

5. At an opportune time the non-Catholic party must be informed of these promises which the Catholic party has to make, so that it is clear that he is cognizant of the promise and obligation on the part of the Catholic.

6. Both parties are to be clearly instructed on the ends and essential properties of marriage, not to be excluded by either party.

7. Within its own territorial competence, it is for the Bishops' Conference to determine the way in which these declarations and promises, which are always required, shall be made: whether by word of mouth alone, in writing, or before witnesses; and also to determine what proof there should be in the external forum, and how they are to be brought to the knowledge of the non-Catholic party, as well as to lay down whatever other requirements may be opportune.

8. The canonical form is to be used for contracting mixed marriages, and is required for validity, without prejudice, however, to the provisions of the Decree, "Crescens Matrimoniorum," published by the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches on 22nd February, 1967.

9. If serious difficulties stand in the way of observing the canonical form, local Ordinaries have the right to dispense from the canonical form in any mixed marriage; but the Bishops' Conference is to determine norms according to which the said dispensation may be granted licitly and uniformly within the region or territory of the Conference, with the provision that there should always be some public form of ceremony.

10. Arrangements must be made that all validly contracted marriages be diligently entered into the books prescribed by canon law. Priests responsible should make sure that non-Catholic ministers also assist in recording in their books the fact of a marriage with a Catholic. ...

13. The celebration of marriage before a Catholic priest or deacon and a non-Catholic minister, performing their respective rites together, is forbidden; nor is it permitted to have another religious marriage ceremony before or after the Catholic ceremony, for the purpose of giving or renewing matrimonial consent.

14. Local Ordinaries and parish priests shall see to it that the Catholic husband or wife and the children born of a mixed marriage do not lack spiritual assistance in fulfilling their duties of conscience. They shall encourage the Catholic husband or wife to keep ever in mind the divine gift of the Catholic faith and to bear witness to it in gentleness and reverence, and with a clear conscience. They are to aid the married couple to foster the unity of their conjugal and family life, a unity which, in the case of Christians, is based on their baptism too. To these ends it is to be desired that those

pastors should establish relationships of sincere openness and enlightened confidence with ministers of other religious communities.

15. The penalties decreed by canon 2319 of the Code of Canon Law are all abrogated. For those who have already incurred them the effects of those penalties cease, without prejudice to the obligations mentioned in No. 4 of these norms.

(It might be noted here that Canon 2319 decreed excommunication for Catholics who: 1) marry before a non-Catholic minister; 2) agree to educate all or any of their children outside the Catholic Church; or 3) have their children baptized by a non-Catholic minister. The penalty was also decreed for Catholic parents or their substitutes who have their children raised or educated in a non-Catholic religion.)

16. The local Ordinary is able to give a "sanatio in radice" of a mixed marriage, when the conditions spoken of in Nos. 4 and 5 of these norms have been fulfilled, and provided that the conditions of law are observed.

17. In the case of a particular difficulty or doubt with regard to the application of these norms, recourse is to be made to the Holy See.

This document by the pope on mixed marriages then closes with the following solemn words:

"We order that what we have decreed in this Letter, given in the form of 'Motu Proprio' be regarded as established and ratified, notwithstanding any measure to the contrary, and is to take effect from the first day of October of this year. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's the thirty-first day of March in the year 1970, the seventh of our pontificate."⁹

On January 1, 1971, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued their "Statement on the Implementation of the Apostolic Letter on Mixed Marriages." This,

too, is available in pamphlet form and is 15 pages in length. Presumably, a person who is interested could obtain a copy of these pamphlets from any local Catholic priest. In general, this pamphlet by the bishops speaks concerning: Introductory Principles; Specific Norms; Pastoral Responsibility; Declaration and Promise; Form of Marriage; Recording Marriages; Celebration of Marriages between Catholics and Non-Catholics; Place of Marriage; and Conclusion.

Surely it is no less important today than it has ever been, that we continue to hold before our young people the great blessings of a truly Christian marriage and home, one which is free from countless legalistic regulations and which is based rather on mutual, heartfelt love of the Savior and His holy Word. Let us read and study with our young people such passages as Psalms 127 and 128, Proverbs 31, John 2:1-11, and Ephesians 5. For our own strengthening, we would do well to read also what our confessional writings have to say concerning marriage. We are thinking particularly of Article 23 of the Augsburg Confession, together with the same Article in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession.

In closing, we might be reminded that Luther includes "a pious spouse" in the list of things we pray for every time we say the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer. It was along the same line that Luther wrote the following words:

"Young folks are brought up in such a way that a girl is ashamed to ask God for a boy, and a boy is ashamed to ask God for a girl. They imagine that asking God for this is a very foolish thing and that they must plunge into this matter of their own accord.

"That is why marriage so rarely turns out well. Should not a girl in all seriousness be taught to step before God and say with all confidence: Behold, dear God, I have now come to those years in my life when I would like to become married. Be Thou my Father, and let me be Thy child. Give me a pious boy, and graciously help me enter the married estate; or, if it please Thee, give me the spirit to remain chaste.

"In this way a boy, too, ought to pray for a girl and should not begin everything of his own accord, but pray God to begin it and lay the first stone. Such young people are real children of God. They begin nothing, no matter how trivial it may be, without first paying their respects to God in the matter."¹⁰

A. Schulz

FOOTNOTES

1. Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O.P., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co.) p. 181.
2. *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, printed by Our Sunday Visitor Press of Huntington, Indiana; distributed by the Religious Information Bureau of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, St. Louis, Mo., p. 195.
3. *The New Catechism of the Catholic Faith for Adults*, prepared by the Higher Catechetical Institute of Nijmegen (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), p. 399.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 393.
5. *Op. cit.*, p. 194.
6. *Op. cit.*, p. 393.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 393.
8. *Matrimonii Sacramentum*, March 18, 1966, Sacred Doctrinal Congregation, p. 235f.
9. *An Apostolic Letter Issued "Motu Proprio" Determining Norms for Mixed Marriages*, March 31, 1970, by Pope Paul VI, presented by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C., pp. 4-7.
10. St. Louis Ed. XI: 426f.



