



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

I Timothy 4:15

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PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION IN REGARD TO PROPHECY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MILLENNIALISM*

INTRODUCTION Hermeneutics plays a crucial role in the exegesis of Holy Scripture. If the hermeneutics is defective, the results cannot but be faulty. The term hermeneutics refers, of course, to the approach of the exegete to Scripture and his methods of ascertaining its Spirit-intended meaning. The history of Biblical interpretation is filled with illustrations of defective systems of hermeneutics and the doctrinal errors which have accompanied them.

If the *sola Scriptura* principle is to be maintained, the principles of interpretation must themselves be derived from Scripture. While it is not the intent of this paper to review all that is taught in a typical seminary course on hermeneutics, some attention will have to be given to the Scriptural validity of some of the exegetical approaches and methods which have been applied to the prophetic portions of Scripture.

The topic as assigned is very broad, and the cursory treatment in this paper may prove to be frustrating to the reader. Hopefully this very brevity will stimulate him to pursue the subject on his own. The most rewarding approach might well be a careful study of the quotations of and allusions to Old Testament prophecy by Christ and His apostles in the New Testament. How did they approach these prophecies and interpret them? If we can but adopt their methods we will surely arrive at truth in our own exegetical endeavors.

Those readers who wish to enlarge their libraries on the subject of Biblical prophecy, specifically over against the millennialistic teachings that are so prevalent in our day, are urged to secure the following books

* This paper was presented to the Wisconsin Pastoral Conference of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, held at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, October 29-30, 1981.

while they are still in print: *Prophecy and the Church* by Oswald T. Allis, *Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* by Philip Mauro, and *Eschatological Prophecies and Current Misinterpretations* by Wilbert R. Gawrisch.¹ The writer of this paper found a wealth of helpful information particularly in the book by Allis.

MILLENNIALISM Millennialism has taken on a variety of forms since its first appearance among early Christians. The division into postmillennialism and premillennialism is still valid and helpful. According to the postmillennialists Christ will return to this earth in judgment following the millennium. This millennium will consist of a golden age for the Church on earth prior to the end of time, a lengthy period (not necessarily 1000 calendar years) when large numbers of people will be converted and the world will become for the most part Christian. We find strains of postmillennialism in the hymn "The Morning Light is Breaking," written by Samuel F. Smith in 1832 under the title "Success of the Gospel":

The morning light is breaking,
 The darkness disappears;
 The sons of earth are waking
 To penitential tears.
 Each breeze that sweeps the ocean
 Brings tidings from afar
 Of nations in commotion,
 Prepared for Zion's war.

See heathen nations bending
 Before the God we love
 And thousand hearts ascending
 In gratitude above,
 While sinners, now confessing,
 The Gospel call obey
 And seek the Savior's blessing,
 A nation in a day.

(*Lutheran Hymnal*, #497)

At the beginning of the current century certain theologians with postmillennial views posited that this would be the "Christian century." Two world wars and a

host of lesser conflicts in the world have severely dampened such hopes, but a religious magazine, renamed *The Christian Century* in 1900, continues to be published as a relic of that earlier optimism. Inasmuch as postmillennial views are not nearly so widespread in our day as the premillennial, this paper will not deal with them directly. Suffice it to say that a careful reading of the New Testament will convince one that the last day will break upon a world that is largely unbelieving and materialistic, woefully unprepared to meet its Judge.

According to the premillennialists Christ will return to this earth prior to the millennium, which they understand to be a literal 1000-year period. The earth at that time, so they affirm, will be largely apostate and evil, which is just the opposite of the expectations of the postmillennialists. Some premillennialists, the ones classified as posttribulationists, teach a single advent of Christ prior to the millennium. At His coming the dead in Christ will be resurrected, and they and all the believers still living will be caught up into the air to meet Him. This is the first resurrection and the rapture. These saints will then immediately return with Him to the earth to join Him in His millennial reign. At the end of the 1000-year period, Satan will be loosed for a short time, and this in turn will be followed by a second resurrection involving all of the wicked, the last judgment, and the final consummation. The term posttribulationist is appropriate for this view, inasmuch as the Church saints who are still living will not be raptured until after the period of tribulation and will therefore have to endure it, to some extent at least, along with the ungodly.

The pretribulationists believe that two advents of Christ will occur prior to the millennium. They distinguish between a coming of Christ for His saints and a coming seven years later with His saints. The first of these comings, so they teach, may take place at any moment, at which time those who have died in Christ will be raised, and all the saints from the entire Church age, both Jew and Gentile, will be raptured and taken by Christ to heaven. The unbelieving world will not observe these events directly. The only evidence of this rapture

will be the sudden disappearance of the believers from their various scenes of activity in the world. Then will come the seven-year tribulation, from which the raptured saints will be spared.² During this tribulation a Jewish remnant remaining on the earth will turn many Gentiles to Christ and will restore the ancient sacrifices in a rebuilt temple on Mt. Moriah. Midway through the tribulation the Antichrist, a political demagogue who has gained power over the entire world, will be revealed and will wage warfare against the saints and cause the sacrifices in Jerusalem to cease. Gentile nations of the world will move into the Middle East to take part in a final armed confrontation centered at Armageddon (Megiddo) in the plain of Jezreel, and when mankind is at the point of self-extinction Christ will appear a second time with the previously raptured Church saints to establish His millennial reign. The saints who died on the earth during the tribulation will be raised, so that they may share in the millennial reign. During this 1000-year period the Jews will be the Lord's instrument in the conversion of additional multitudes of people.³ At the end of the millennium Satan will be loosed for a final assault against the saints. This in turn will be followed by a third resurrection involving all of the ungodly, the final judgment, and the consummation of all things.

These premillennial, pretribulational views are commonly referred to as dispensationalism. They have been promoted so effectively by Hal Lindsey,⁴ Jerry Falwell, and other sectarian preachers, that the majority of millennialists in our day are dispensationalists. The real developer of this system of interpretation was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) of the Plymouth Brethren movement in England, and its popularization is due largely to the influence of the *Scotfield Reference Bible*.⁵ What follows in this paper relates chiefly to the dispensational approach in Biblical prophecy.

THE LITERAL SENSE OF SCRIPTURE

The conclusions reached by the dispensationalists on the subject of prophecy involve a full-scale recasting of what Christians have traditionally believed on such topics as the role of the Jews in this world, the position of the Church in God's plan of salvation, and

the events which shall take place prior to and in connection with the last judgment. One is reminded of Luther's axiom that in philosophy a small fault in the beginning becomes a great and foul fault in the end, and is led to ask: Where did the dispensationalists begin to leave the pathway of legitimate grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture? The answer may well lie in their insistence upon a strictly literal interpretation of the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments.

But don't we affirm in our hermeneutics that the literal sense of Scripture is the primary and Spirit-intended sense? Of course we do, but we must recognize that this literal sense may be conveyed both by words used in their common or proper sense and by words used in their figurative or improper sense. (The reader will recognize that the terms proper and improper are here being used in a technical sense roughly equivalent to common and figurative.) When a human being is spoken of as having arms and eyes, the words arms and eyes are to be taken in their everyday sense. But when God is spoken of as having arms and eyes, the words must be taken in a figurative sense, inasmuch as "God is a spirit" (John 4:24), not possessing bodily organs. Thus the literal sense of a passage may consist of words used in their strict-literal sense or of words used in their figurative-literal sense.

The method of interpretation, now, which must be followed is to examine each passage in text and context to ascertain the intent of the divine Author. If there is no indication that a word or phrase is being employed in a figurative sense, we must assume that the common, ordinary sense is the intended sense. Thus we take the word "bread" in the Fourth Petition as a reference to physical sustenance rather than as a reference to the spiritual bread spoken of in John 6. To quote here from the *Homiletisches Reallexikon*: "Unless he has compelling reasons, a person is not to depart from the proper meaning of a word. The proper sense is always the first and the closest. The literal interpretation has the first right."⁶ But when Scripture itself indicates that the strict-literal sense of a word or phrase is not the Spirit-intended sense, then we must take such a word or phrase in a fig-

urative-literal sense. Thus we must understand the word temple in John 2:19 ("Destroy this temple") as figurative, since in vs. 21 we read that Christ was speaking, not of the physical temple in Jerusalem, but of His body. Sometimes mere inspection indicates that the figurative sense of a word is the intended sense, as when Christ calls Herod a "fox" (Luke 13:32), for it is self-evident that the king was not a four-legged animal. In summary, while it is wrong to depart from the strict-literal sense of a word or phrase without Scriptural warrant, it is equally wrong to insist on such a sense when Scripture indicates in some way that the Holy Spirit is employing figurative expressions.

The dispensationalists begin with the presupposition that all predictive prophecies of Scripture must be understood in a strict-literal sense. Such prophecy is taken by them to be literal history written beforehand. If the Old Testament prophets, for example, refer to a glorious and eternal future for the country of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, that means that these geographical entities will at some future time be fully restored. If they speak of the people of Israel reigning forever with the Messianic King, that means that the physical descendants of Abraham will one day return to God's favor and to a position of political dominance in the world. If they point to a time when peace shall prevail over the earth, this must refer to a condition of political and social tranquility. As they carry out this approach of extreme literalism, they arrive at such conclusions as the following:

1. The prophetic sections of the Old Testament have only the Jews in view. When interpreters insist on applying some of these prophecies to the Church of the New Testament they are in fact robbing the Jews of things that belong properly to them, for the prophets of the Old Testament knew nothing about the Church.

2. The present Church age in which we are living, extending from the day of Pentecost to the rapture, is a "parenthesis," an interlude or interruption, in God's prophetic program for Israel. This interlude was made necessary when the Jews rejected the Messiah at His first

coming, at which time He originally intended to restore the kingdom of David to its ancient earthly glory. But when this interlude comes to an end, the Jews shall accept Christ as their Messiah and the Old Testament promises to the Jews will then come into fulfilment.

3. The New Testament Church constitutes a "mystery" unknown to all the holy writers except the Apostle Paul. This Church, consisting of believers from among the Jews and Gentiles, shall be raptured and removed from the world prior to the events of the great tribulation.

4. The book of Revelation in chapters 4 through 19 does not describe the vicissitudes of the Church during this present Church age, but rather details what will happen to the Jews here on earth during the seven years of the tribulation. To this period must be referred also the events of the last week of the seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 and of the Olivet discourse of Christ in Matthew 24.

5. Chapter 20 of Revelation speaks of the millennium, a 1000-year period when Christ shall rule with His saints over the world from the city of Jerusalem. The Old Testament prophecies promising a future period of glory and peace must be referred to this millennium.

These are some of the fantastic "discoveries" which dispensationalists have made in their literalistic approach to Scriptural prophecy.⁷ Their expositions of the Bible typically contain a wealth of Scripture passages and are characterized by seeming plausibility, so that they have by their "good words and fair speeches" deceived the hearts of many an unsuspecting Christian (Romans 16:17-18). Refutations of their religious system require, not brief papers, but entire books, and one could wish that more such books were currently available to expose their deviations from Scripture.⁸

But more needs to be said about their method of extreme literalism. They accuse amillennialists, such as us, of falling into the trap of medieval allegorizing when, for example, we understand "Judah" and "Israel" in some of the Old Testament prophecies as references to the

New Testament Church. But they are not really fair in this accusation, for as Bernard Ramm points out in his textbook on hermeneutics:

If we may provisionally define the spiritual as the non-literal method of the exegesis of the Old Testament we may further state that the issue is not between a completely literal or a completely spiritual system of interpretation. Amillennial writers admit that many prophecies have been literally fulfilled, and literalists admit a spiritual element to Old Testament interpretation when they find a moral application in a passage, when they find a typical meaning, or when they find a deeper meaning (such as in Ezekiel 28 with reference to the kings of Babylon and Tyre). Nobody is a strict literalist or a complete spiritualist.⁹

This is indeed true. The dispensationalists themselves resort repeatedly to the figurative sense of words and phrases in their interpretations of prophecy. If one took the word David in Jeremiah 30:9 in its strict-literal sense ("They shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them"), one would have to insist that the resurrected son of Jesse himself will someday sit upon the alleged millennial throne, yet most dispensationalists would admit that David is here a type of Christ. And where is the dispensationalist who would insist on a strict-literal interpretation for the "beast," the "whore," and the "dragon" of Revelation? One smiles to see a thoroughgoing dispensationalist like Hal Lindsey resorting repeatedly in his books to what he otherwise condemns as "allegorizing," as for example in this comment on Matthew 24:30 ("They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven"):

We believe that the clouds refer to the myriads of believers who return in white robes with Jesus. Believers are referred to as "a cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1. The clouds then would be all of the church age believers, you and I, returning in immortal glorified bodies, having been previously caught up to meet Christ in the air in "the ultimate trip," prior to the seven years of Tribulation on

earth, and the resurrected saints of the Old Testament (Revelation 19:14).¹⁰

Allis suggests three reasons why a thoroughly literal interpretation of Scripture is impossible:

(1) The language of the Bible often contains figures of speech. This is especially true of its poetry. ... In the poetry of the Psalms, in the elevated style of prophecy, and even in simple historical narration, figures of speech appear which quite obviously are not meant to be and cannot be understood literally.

(2) The great theme of the Bible is, God and His redemptive dealings with mankind. God is a Spirit; the most precious teachings of the Bible are spiritual; and these spiritual and heavenly realities are often set forth under the form of earthly objects and human relationships. ...

(3) The fact that the Old Testament is both preliminary and preparatory to the New Testament is too obvious to require proof. In referring the Corinthian Christians by way of warning and admonition to the events of the Exodus, the apostle Paul declared that these things were "ensamples" (types). That is, they prefigured things to come. This gives to much that is in the Old Testament a special significance and importance. ... Such an interpretation recognizes, in the light of New Testament fulfilment, a deeper and far more wonderful meaning in the words of many an Old Testament passage than, taken in their Old Testament context and connection, they seem to contain.¹¹

It must surely be recognized that the balance in prophetic interpretation between the literal and the figurative is not always easy to attain. This is especially true with those prophecies that deal with things that lie in the future. We remember here Peter's words regarding the Old Testament prophets and their meditation upon the very words which had been given to them by inspiration: "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of

Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I Peter 1:11). When we are unable to find in Scripture itself the guidance which we need in the interpretation of a specific prophecy, we do well to put our finger to our lips and wait for the light of fulfilment to supply the answer.

But we must insist over against the dispensationalists that much of Old Testament prophecy has a spiritual significance which goes beyond the strict-literal meaning of the words. This is true of the very first prophecy in the Old Testament and of the very last. Surely Genesis 3:15 is speaking of something far higher than this, that there will be a continuing enmity between men and literal snakes, manifested whenever a snake bites a man in the leg or whenever a man crushes the head of a snake. And Christ Himself finds a figurative element in the words of Malachi 4:5f. (we won't bother even to discuss the dispensational twisting of Christ's meaning!): "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD," when He applies this prophecy to the forerunner, John the Baptist (Matthew 11:7-11).

Allis, after spending many pages in a discussion of the dispensational system, concludes that it "has its source in a faulty and unscriptural literalism which, in the important field of prophecy, ignores the typical and preparatory character of the Old Testament dispensation."¹² The first faulty premise that Israel always means literal, physical Israel leads step by step to the entire gamut of dispensational errors!

SCRIPTURE IS ITS
OWN INTERPRETER

Augustine said it well: "In the Old Testament the New is concealed; in the New the Old is revealed." We cannot err if we turn to Christ and His apostles for an authoritative interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. The New Testament provides us with an inspired interpretation of these prophecies in the light of fulfilment, and as Prof. G. Lillegard affirmed: "The report of the fulfilment is decisive for the understanding and interpretation of the prophecy."¹³

The dispensationalists as a general rule do not look to the New Testament for the interpretation of Old Testament prophecies, at least with regard to those prophecies which in their opinion deal with the Jewish people. In fact, they automatically exclude much of the New Testament from such interpretation by assuming that sizable portions of it treat, not the prophetic program for Israel, but the parenthesis Church which began on Pentecost and shall be removed from the world at the time of the rapture. Thus, so they affirm, when Paul speaks of the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile being broken down in Christ (Ephesians 2:14) and of the fact that there is no distinction any longer between Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:28), he is referring only to the situation in the parenthesis Church and is in no way denying the continuing distinctiveness of the Jewish people and the future literal fulfilment of their destiny in God's overall prophetic program. When we cite New Testament passages in support of a spiritual interpretation of Old Testament promises concerning Israel, we can anticipate their reply: "But those passages you are quoting from the New Testament apply only to the Church, not to the Jews and God's prophetic plans for them in this world." Or they may say: "Those New Testament citations refer only to God's program for Israel and not to the Church."¹⁴

Over against such dogmatic assertions by the dispensationalists, we affirm confidently that the writers of the New Testament, including Paul, stand for us as the authoritative interpreters of Old Testament prophecy. An unprejudiced reading of the New Testament, moreover, will convince one that these writers believed that the New Testament Church was foretold in the Old Testament, and that the ancient promises to Israel find their complete and final fulfilment in the Gospel of Christ and those elect children of God, Jews and Gentiles, whom the Spirit has been gathering together in the Church through that Gospel.¹⁵

Meyrick has given us a Scripture-oriented guide to the interpretation of prophecy: "In respect to past prophecies already fulfilled, interpret in terms of history; in case of future prophecies yet unfulfilled, interpret by the analogy of faith."¹⁶ Contrary to the opinions of

the dispensationalists, the New Testament indicates that the majority of Old Testament prophecies are already fulfilled in Christ and His Church, and the New Testament record of this historical fulfilment serves as an infallible guide in finding the Spirit-intended meaning of these prophecies. And wherever in the Bible we find prophecies pertaining to the last things, these we interpret according to the analogy of faith (analogy of Scripture), that is, according to those *sedes doctrinae* in which the doctrines of Scripture are presented in clear, strict-literal terms. Through such a procedure we learn, for example, that Revelation 20 cannot be speaking of two physical resurrections of the dead which are separate in time, one of the believers and another of the unbelievers. For Christ says plainly in John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." It is self-evident that the clear passages of Scripture must be used to illumine the obscure, and not vice versa. Yet the dispensationalists routinely inject their opinions into the figurative passages and then twist the meaning of the strictly literal to force them into agreement.¹⁷ This has been the method of false teachers for many generations.

THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE

The revelation contained in Scripture is a self-consistent whole, inasmuch as all the books of the Bible have but one Author, the divine Spirit of truth. This unity extends also, and preeminently, to God's redemptive dealings with mankind. From eternity to eternity there has been but one way of salvation for fallen sinners, the God-given Savior, Jesus Christ. In all centuries of this world's existence the doctrine of justification by faith has stood at the center of revealed truth. In every generation of mankind the doctrines of the Law and the Gospel, man's sin and condemnation and God's saving grace and forgiveness, have been part of the believers' God-given proclamation to the world.

Any system of interpretation, now, which in any way violates this unity of Scripture must be viewed as dan-

gerous, and it is our belief that dispensationalism does precisely this. For it posits a double program of God for sinful mankind, actually two programs which are distinctively different. On the one hand is God's program for literal Israel, which pertains to earthly and material things; on the other hand is God's program for the parenthesis Church, which pertains to spiritual and heavenly things.

We admit, of course, that God did set Israel aside as a separate nation during the Old Testament period, but this action of God served His unitary plan of salvation for all mankind by perpetuating His saving Word and a believing remnant in the midst of an ungodly world until the fulness of the time. When the Savior finally came, the separateness of the Israelite nation and the entire Mosaic order came to an end, as Paul testifies so clearly in Galatians 3 and 4 and elsewhere in his epistles. The hopes of believing Israel during the Old Testament period and the hopes of the believers in this New Testament period are one and the same, the blessings of the forgiveness of sin and the promised inheritance of heaven. Compare Romans 4, Hebrews 11, and many other passages of both testaments.

When one examines certain commonly-held dispensational teachings concerning the Jewish remnant on earth during the tribulation and the millennium, he sees again how dispensationalism violates the unity of God's redemptive dealings with mankind. For this remnant consists of those so-called "pious" Jews who did not believe on Jesus Christ at the end of the Church age and who therefore were not raptured with the Church. In what sense, we might ask, were they pious? For if during this time of grace a man spurns the world's only Savior, Jesus Christ, he merits nothing but the wrath and curse of God. And what is the nature of that "gospel" which, according to some dispensationalists, the Jewish remnant is to preach during the tribulation and the millennium and by which the vast majority of the earth's inhabitants are to be saved? It is a gospel which is no Gospel, in that it emphasizes Christ in His role of King rather than that of Redeemer, and relies more on outward force as a means of persuasion than on the inward working of the Holy Spirit

upon the heart through the message of forgiveness. The implication of such dispensational teaching is that the cross and blood of Christ concern only the Church age and Church saints, and not the Jewish remnant and its activities during the tribulation and millennium. It is true that dispensationalists in their writings seem to make much of Christ's sacrifice for the sins of the world, and they may even affirm that no one from Adam until the end of time has ever been saved apart from this sacrifice. Yet if they but follow their teachings to their logical end, they may well find themselves involved in a denial of the universal necessity of the atoning death of Christ for salvation.¹⁸

THE CHRISTOCENTRICITY OF SCRIPTURE

This topic has already been touched upon in the previous section, but certain additional things must be said. Luther, as we well know, affirmed that "*die ganze Schrift treibt Christum*" — all of Scripture concerns itself with Christ. Concerning the Old Testament Scriptures the Lord Himself said: "They testify of me," and Peter declares that "to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (John 5:39; Acts 10:43). The Apostle Paul states concerning the New Testament proclamation: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness ... For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 1:23; 2:2). From these and similar passages we learn that the Church's message must ever center upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The image of the suffering Savior must stand forth prominently in all of our preaching, teaching, and exhortation.

Now the dispensationalists do indeed insist in their writings upon the importance of the cross. But it is questionable whether the cross is in fact central in their teaching. Read one of Hal Lindsey's paperbacks sometime and form your own opinion. You will probably agree that the "reigning Messiah" stands forth far more prominently than the "suffering Messiah." The eyes of the reader are indeed directed at first toward Calvary, but then they are refocused upon the exciting events of

our own age. Lindsey affirms that "since the restoration of Israel as a nation in 1948, we have lived in the most significant period of prophetic history," and then advises: "All we need to do is know the Scriptures in their proper context and then watch with awe while men and countries, movements and nations, fulfill the roles that God's prophets said they would."¹⁹ One's personal Christianity becomes to a large extent a comparison of dispensationally interpreted prophecy with the events of the day, particularly with the news concerning the Middle East and the nation of Israel. Christian zeal may manifest itself more in a promotion of Zionism than in a faithful and complete proclamation of the crucified Christ.

Because of the religious orientation of many dispensationalists, an orientation which is Arminian in nature, one commonly finds also a strong synergistic element in their writings. In *The Late Great Planet Earth*, for example, there is an implicit denial of the fact that man is by nature spiritually dead, with the result that the "gospel" becomes an appeal to invite Christ into your heart and life.²⁰ Very little, if anything, is said about daily contrition and repentance, which according to Scripture constitute the essence of the Christian life. The serious nature of these errors is too evident to require extended comment.

KEY CONCEPTS Perhaps the most fruitful approach when dealing with those disturbed by dispensationalism is a Scriptural study of certain key concepts, the understanding of which is crucial if the prophecies of the Bible are to be interpreted correctly. The discussion which follows is not intended to be complete, but it will indicate a few areas which are deserving of further study.

KINGDOM The dispensationalists distinguish between the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" as they are employed in the New Testament. The first is used only by Matthew, and inasmuch as they regard Matthew as the Gospel of the Jewish remnant and not of the Church they associate the term with the prophetic references in the Old Testament to the fu-

ture reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom. This kingdom, they affirm, will be a visible, actual, historic kingdom on earth, to be established again and ruled by the reigning Messiah of the millennium. The term "kingdom of God," on the other hand, is defined more broadly, so as to include God's rule in all dispensations, both earthly and heavenly.²¹ The point to note is the sharp distinction drawn by the dispensationalists between the kingdom of prophecy, which is Jewish and earthly, and the spiritual rule of God in the hearts of believers as manifested in the Church. This kingdom of prophecy is during the present Church age being held in abeyance, but it will be manifested again following the rapture. Those Christians like us who ascribe the kingdom prophecies to this New Testament period and the Church are regarded by the dispensationalists as attempting to rob the Jews of their promised earthly heritage.

In reply it should be noted that the dispensational distinction between "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" is artificial. Both terms, as Allis points out, have their Old Testament antecedent in Daniel 2:44 and therefore refer to one and the same thing.²² This passage reads: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." Thus "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are abbreviations for the fuller expression "the kingdom of the God of heaven" referred to in this passage. Note also that in Matthew 19:23-24 the two terms are clearly being used synonymously: "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Moreover, the parables of the "kingdom of heaven" in Matthew 13 are referred to in the parallel sections of Mark and Luke as parables of the "kingdom of God."²³

The New Testament surely indicates to any unprejudiced reader that the kingdom of prophecy is not earthly and Jewish, but that the prophetic references to a restored Davidic kingdom find their fulfilment in the spiritual rule of Christ over His Church through the Gospel. Christ specifically repudiated an external kingdom, based

on the force of arms, in the familiar passage, John 18: 36-37: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now [logical rather than temporal $\nu\upsilon\nu$: "but as it is, as things stand"; for a similar usage of $\nu\upsilon\nu$ $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ cf. John 9:41 and 15:22,24] is my kingdom not from hence. ... To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingship in the hearts of His disciples through the Word of truth.

In the book of Acts we find the apostles citing Old Testament prophecy repeatedly and finding the fulfilment of these prophecies, not in some future earthly kingdom, but in the New Testament Church. Compare, for example, Acts 15:14-17:

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

In this passage James indicates clearly that the prophets (note the plural) had the establishment of the New Testament Church in view when they spoke of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. Note also how Paul in Acts 26 identifies "the hope of the promise made of [by] God unto our fathers" (vs. 6) with the Gospel of Christ and its proclamation to Jews and Gentiles:

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light un-

to the people, and to the Gentiles (vs. 22f.).

To the Hebrew Christians the holy writer says:

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28).

Many more passages could be cited from the New Testament showing that the kingdom promised to ancient Israel through Moses and the prophets is the spiritual kingdom manifested in the New Testament Church.

The Christian Church has not then robbed the Jews by appropriating the kingdom prophecies to herself, but rather the "Dispensationalists 'rob' the Church of many of the exceeding precious promises contained in the Old Testament which she is fully entitled to claim and possess."²⁴

TEMPORAL SUCCESS, EARTHLY
GLORY, UNIVERSAL PEACE

Once that it has been established that the prophecies of a future Davidic

kingdom are spiritual in nature, the statement of Prof. Lillegard follows of necessity: "The Old Testament prophets have often expressed prophecies concerning the blessedness of the kingdom of Christ, both the kingdom of grace and that of glory, in words which apparently speak of temporal success and earthly glory, but which in the exegesis must be understood and explained in a spiritual way."²⁵ The prophecies of the Old Testament are largely poetic, and anyone with knowledge of Hebrew poetry will know how it abounds in imagery, depicting spiritual matters in terms of earthly scenes.

And what is that universal peace on earth which is the frequent subject of Old Testament prophecy? The New Testament does not leave us in doubt on this matter, pointing as it does to that peace with God that belongs to forgiven sinners, Jew and Gentile alike, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The angel announced to Joseph in Matthew 1:21 (the gospel of the Jewish remnant, according to the dispensationalists) that the Child's name should

be JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." And in Luke 2:14 that salvation from sin is connected with a universal spiritual peace: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Christ pointed the eyes of His disciples away from an external peace among nations when He said prior to His passion: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). For the writers of the epistles "peace" is similarly a spiritual concept, as for example in Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Hal Lindsey comments regarding the promised peace: "Peace is available to the individual today as he invites Christ into his heart and allows him to reign upon the throne of his life. [Notice the synergism!] But the Bible teaches that lasting peace will come to the world only after Christ returns and sits upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and establishes His historic kingdom on earth for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6)."²⁶ But it should be noted what kind of peace it is that is to prevail in the millennial kingdom of the dispensationalists. It is a peace maintained largely through the imposition of external force, a peace also which will be violated during the "little season" at the end of the millennial period. What a caricature this is of the Scriptural concept!

ISRAEL AND JUDAH The Old Testament prophets speak often about a future gathering of the dispersed of Israel and Judah, and the dispensationalists apply this in literal fashion to a return of the Jews to the nation of Israel. This is why they become so excited about the events which are taking place in the Middle East and are so active politically in the promotion of Israeli interests.

The extreme literalism of the dispensationalists has led them into error also on this subject, for the New Testament again clearly indicates that these prophetic references to Judah and Israel find their ultimate fulfilment in the New Testament Church. The Apostle Paul in Romans

shows so clearly how the gathering is taking place, namely, through the conversion of the elect children of God during the present New Testament period. The picture of the olive tree in chapter 11 illustrates the fact that the believing Gentiles are to enjoy with the believing Jews all of the blessings promised to the true seed of Abraham. For Paul the "Israel of God" consists of the Church, including all those Jews and Gentiles who look to Christ alone for their salvation (Galatians 6:16). Note well also how the writer of Hebrews in chapter 8 identifies "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" with the very ones in this New Testament period who have received the new covenant of the forgiveness of their sins.²⁷ In I Peter 2:9 the glorious titles given to the Old Testament people of God are ascribed to the members of the New Testament Church. They are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

It is sad to observe how the teachings of the dispensationalists, which distinguish so sharply between the earthly Israel and the spiritual Church, serve only to perpetuate the dichotomy between Jew and Gentile, while the New Testament speaks rather in this way:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).

Permit another quotation from Allis, where he says concerning the New Testament Church:

As an invisible body it consists of the elect, of all those who truly believe in Christ as Saviour and belong to Him. This Church was founded at Pentecost. It was originally wholly [largely?] Jewish and is proved by this very fact to be the continuation and successor of the Old Testament Church. Gentiles were early received into it and soon came to constitute a majority in it; and the teaching that the

middle wall of partition between the two was completely broken down was especially, but not exclusively, committed to Paul who was in a pre-eminent sense the apostle to the Gentiles. But no one emphasized more strongly than did Paul the vital oneness of the New Testament Church with the Old Testament Church. The Gentile branches were grafted into the good olive tree that they might enjoy its fatness, the fulness of the blessing promised to all the spiritual heirs of the Abrahamic covenant."²⁸

JERUSALEM The dispensationalists were elated when the nation of Israel during the six-day war in 1967 recaptured the ancient city of Jerusalem. In spirit at least they said "Amen" to the words which General Moshe Dayan spoke at the wailing wall, the last remnant of the second temple: "We have returned to our holiest of holy places, never to leave her again."²⁹ For the dispensationalists are convinced that with the repossession of Jerusalem by the Jews, the prophetic program for the Jews is, after all these centuries of interruption during the Church age, once again in motion. It will be, so they trust, only a short time before the Jews regain the whole of Mt. Moriah, rebuild the temple, and reestablish the ancient sacrifices.

Let us look back to the time of the early New Testament Church and the letter to the Hebrews. There were many Jewish Christians who had left the city of Jerusalem and were scattered in various Gentile nations. These believers were experiencing much persecution because of their confession that the crucified Christ was their promised Messiah, persecution no doubt also at the hands of their unbelieving fellow Jews. The pressure being put on them was so great that there was danger that they would give up their Christian confession and return again to Judaism. The temptation was there to go back to the earthly city, at least with their minds and hearts, to gaze again upon its splendid temple and behold its daily sacrifices of sheep and oxen.

But through the writer of this epistle the Holy Spirit presents them with many reasons for holding fast to their confession of Christ Jesus. They had indeed left

the earthly Jerusalem with its temple and sacrifices. But that earthly Zion was intended by God to be merely the type and picture of the heavenly Jerusalem, the holy Christian Church and communion of saints. The earthly Jerusalem had its high priests, but they were only sinful human beings who had to continue making sacrifices day by day for their own sins and those of the people. But the heavenly Jerusalem has Jesus Christ Himself as its great High Priest, the sinless Son of God who by His one sacrifice on the cross has won an eternal redemption for a world of sinners. The earthly Jerusalem had rejected its heaven-sent Savior, and God had departed from it because of its unbelief. But the heavenly Jerusalem is the city of the living God, where He dwells in the midst of angels and believers with all His grace and His favor:

But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:22-24).

How foolish, then, those first Jewish Christians would have been to return to the earthly Jerusalem, which was but a picture of things to come, when by God's grace they had come to and were now citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, the God-intended fulfilment. And how foolish are those millions in our day who have tied their spiritual expectations to a piece of real estate on the shores of the Mediterranean!

The Old Testament patriarchs did not have the New Testament Scriptures to guide them in their understanding of the promises which God had made to them concerning a city and a country. Yet they did not fall into the trap of a grossly literal understanding of these promises, as have the dispensationalists, for Scripture testifies of these patriarchs:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into

a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16).

THE ANTICHRIST For the dispensationalists the Antichrist is a political leader, the "Future Fuehrer" or "Great Dictator," as Hal Lindsey calls him.³⁰ He is to arise during the great tribulation, achieve world dominion, and then wage warfare against the Jewish remnant and the multitudes of Gentiles whom they have converted to Christ. After several years of such activity he will be destroyed by Christ as He returns for His millennial reign.

The chief reason why the millennialists and many others have failed to recognize that the Antichrist of Scripture is the Roman papacy is the fact that they do not rightly understand the nature of saving grace and the doctrine of justification by faith. That they look to political tyrants is due to their failure to comprehend what it means that this man of sin is "sitting in the temple of God [εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ]" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). For this temple of God in apostolic usage is the Christian Church, so that the Antichrist is manifestly a spiritual leader rather than political. Compare 1 Corinthians 3 and 6, and Ephesians 2.

THE MILLENNIUM The book of Revelation, from which the

dispensationalists derive the term millennium ("a thousand years," Revelation 20:6), has been variously interpreted. According to the traditional view, chapters 2 and 3 deal with seven historical churches which were in existence at the time of writing; chapters 4 through 19 speak under a variety of pictures of the experiences and hopes of Christ's Church during this New Testament period; chapter 20:1-6 recapitulates the preceding chapters, thereby covering the entire period between Christ's first and second coming; and chapters 20:7 to 22 depict the closing of the earth's time of grace, the second coming and last judgment, and the final consummation in the everlasting kingdom of glory. This approach, with which we too are identified, gives due recognition to the symbolical character of the book and yields results which are consistent with the doctrines taught by Christ and His apostles. The millennium, thus understood, is now; it is that entire period of grace (1000 as a symbol of completeness) in which we are living, ushered in by Christ's coming in the flesh and brought to completion by His return in glory.

The dispensationalists, pursuing with dogged persistence their literalistic approach to prophecy, have adopted a futuristic interpretation for the book of Revelation. For them everything from chapter 4 to the end (if not also portions of chapters 2 and 3) lies yet in the future. As previously mentioned, they associate chapters 4 through 19 with their theory of a Jewish remnant on earth during a coming seven-year tribulation which is to follow the rapture of the Church, and 20:1-6 with a 1000-year reign of Christ on earth following that tribulation. Their approach to the book involves them in numerous difficulties and contradictions, as Allis so well demonstrates in his book.³¹

IN CONCLUSION An elderly widow in our fellowship struggled for several years prior to her death with the errors of the dispensationalists. She had been entrapped in their false doctrine by listening to a "gospel" radio station broadcasting from Minneapolis and reading a large number of "evangelical" publications which had been sent her through the mail. When her pastor discovered her millennial leanings, he urged her to

focus her private Bible study upon the gospels and epistles of the New Testament. This was sound advice, for through their inspired record of fulfilment her eyes could once again be opened to that vision of surpassing glory which the Old Testament prophets beheld — the peace of God which passeth all understanding in the Gospel of the crucified Christ, and the transcendent beauty of the New Testament Church which has been cleansed by His blood and arrayed in the spotless garments of His righteousness.

May the eyes of many others be thus opened, for Jesus' sake!

C. Kuehne

NOTES

1. The volume by Allis is available from either Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company or from Baker Book House in paperback for \$3.95 list. That by Mauro is published by Reiner Publications in paperback for \$5.95 list. That by Prof. Gawrisch can be secured from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Bookstore, Mequon, Wisconsin, for \$2.25. (The latter two titles are available also from the CLC Book House.) The quotations from Allis in this paper are from the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company edition, copyright 1947.
2. The terminology "seven-year tribulation" can be found in some writers. Strictly speaking, the great tribulation encompasses only the last three and one-half years of this period.
3. It is Allis who states that according to pretribulation premillennialism a Jewish remnant preaching a Jewish gospel will be instrumental in saving large numbers of the earth's inhabitants during both the tribulation and the millennium, cf. p. 252. Other writers are less definite concerning the activities of the Jews during the millennium. In this connection it must be recognized that the pretribulationists are not agreed among themselves as to the details of their system. It is therefore difficult to present a summary which would be fully acceptable to

- all its adherents. The reader who desires more information about pretribulational premillennialism and other forms of millennialism may wish to consult Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977). In the book Erickson contends that posttribulational premillennialism is better supported in Scripture than other eschatological viewpoints, including the amillennial.
4. Lindsey's best known volume, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, has gone through many printings and millions of copies have been sold. The quotations from Lindsey in this paper are from the Zondervan Publishing House edition of this title, copyright 1970.
 5. Erickson, pp. 112-114.
 6. *Homiletisches Reallexikon* (St. Louis: Success Printing Company, 1914), p. 659.
 7. Charles C. Ryrie, an ardent dispensationalist, lists the following as the *sine qua non* of the system: 1) Israel and the Church must be kept distinct. 2) This distinction is born out of a system of hermeneutics which is generally called literal interpretation. 3) The underlying purpose of God in the world is broader than salvation; it is, namely, the glory of God. See his *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), pp. 44-46.
 8. A number of Reformed writers have written such books. The following are published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Nutley, New Jersey: Jon Zens, *Dispensationalism: A Reformed Inquiry into Its Leading Figures and Features* (1978); William E. Cox, *An Examination of Dispensationalism* (1977).
 9. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 243f.
 10. Lindsey, p. 173.
 11. Allis, p. 17f.
 12. Allis, p. 256.
 13. George O. Lillegard, unpublished class notes on Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 8.
 14. Ryrie contends that his opponents are guilty of "imposing the New Testament on the Old," (p. 187). Zens rightly responds by charging the dispensationalists with "taking the Old Testament out of the New," (p. 20).

15. What is stated here does not deny that some Old Testament prophecies may have both an immediate and a remote fulfilment, a fulfilment in an Old Testament event and a later fulfilment in the New Testament period. Compare hermeneutics textbooks on multiple fulfilment, double reference, and prophetic perspective.
16. Cited in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1950), p. 158.
17. As an example of this compare the following comments on the above-cited passage, John 5:28-29 in the *Scofield Reference Bible*: "Since this 'hour' of spiritual regeneration [vs. 25] has already lasted for over nineteen centuries, it is also possible for the future 'hour' of physical resurrection (vv. 28-29) to extend over a thousand years — the righteous to be raised at the beginning; the wicked, at the end. See Rev. 20."
18. Cf. Allis on the Jewish remnant, pp. 218-235.
19. Lindsey, pp. 62, 77.
20. Cf. pp. 80, 111f., 149, 170, 174, 186f.
21. Cf. *Scofield Reference Bible*, footnote to Matthew 6: 33.
22. Allis, p. 67.
23. Compare Mark 4:11, 26, 30; Luke 8:10.
24. Allis, p. 133.
25. Lillegard, p. 8.
26. Lindsey, p. 170.
27. As one might expect, there are dispensationalists who state that the terms Israel and Judah must be taken literally here, for otherwise the essential distinction between Israel and the Church would be obliterated. Ramm exposes the futility of their assertion in the 3rd ed. of his textbook, p. 264f.
28. Allis, p. 166.
29. Cited in Lindsey, p. 55.
30. Lindsey, p. 103
31. Cf. especially pp. 192-255.

 THE SCRIPTURAL CONCEPT OF DIDASKALOS AND DIDASKEIN*

DIDASKALOS The word "didaskalos" is used 58 times in the New Testament, 48 times in the Gospels and 10 times in the epistles. Jesus was most commonly known as "didaskalos." Both friend and foe addressed Him with this term. When Jesus slept on the ship on the occasion of the great storm, His disciples awakened Him by crying out: "Didaskalos, carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38). On the occasion when Jesus accepted a dinner invitation from Matthew, the Pharisees approached His disciples and asked, "Why eateth your didaskalos with publicans and sinners?" (Matt. 9:11). Jesus referred to Himself as didaskalos, yea, as the, "ho didaskalos," when He sent Peter and John to make the necessary preparations for the last Passover: "Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, ho didaskalos saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples" (Matt. 26:18).

Didaskalos was used also of others besides Jesus. In the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus, His parents "found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors (ἐν μέσῳ τῶν διδασκάλων), both hearing them, and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). Jesus used the term in the proverb: "The disciple is not above his didaskalos: but every one that is perfect shall be as his didaskalos" (Luke 6:40).

Didaskalos is translated "master" in the Gospels, except in two passages; in the Acts and epistles it is translated "teacher," except in James 3:1 ("masters"). We have already observed that in the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, Jesus was found sitting among the doctors, the didaskaloi. When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he addressed Him as "Rabbi," the Aramaic form of didaskalos. Nicodemus continued by saying, "We know that thou art a teacher (didaskalos) come from God" (John

* This paper was presented to the Southeastern Pastoral Conference of the CLC, held in Winter Haven, Florida, November 3-5, 1981.

3:2). Farther on in the conversation Jesus asked Nicodemus, "Art thou a master (didaskalos) of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10).

The apostle Paul spoke of himself as a "didaskalos." In his first letter to Timothy he called himself a "didaskalos," combining that term with κήρυξ and ἀπόστολος: "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (I Tim. 2:7). We find the same triple combination in Paul's second letter to Timothy: "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher (κήρυξ), and an apostle (ἀπόστολος), and a teacher (διδάσκαλος) of the Gentiles" (II Tim. 1:11).

It is obvious that didaskalos was in common usage among the Jews. It was the Greek translation of the Aramaic "Rabbi," which in modern Hebrew usage is shortened to "Rab," as in the novels of the modern Jewish writer, Chaim Potak. A didaskalos was the intellectual and spiritual leader of a group. He was their teacher, and he had disciples whom he taught.

For the modern reader the identity of the didaskalos is a bit obscured by the KJV because, as we have observed, it quite consistently translates didaskalos with "master." Master is the old English term for teacher, as in "headmaster" of a prep school, or as in "schoolmaster." The newer translations consistently translate didaskalos with "teacher." That translation both enlightens and obscures. It enlightens as to the function of the didaskalos, but obscures as to his position in society as a respected leader of a group of disciples and as an authority figure in society. The current usage of teacher in our society has no such connotations.

The rabbi or teacher at the time of Jesus was an expositor of the Torah. Gamaliel is the leading rabbi of the Pharisees mentioned in the New Testament. In Acts 5:34 he is called a νομοδιδάσκαλος, a teacher of the law. In Acts 22:3 Paul sought to establish his orthodoxy among the Jews, in part, by informing them that he had been a disciple of Gamaliel. Jesus was not and never was called a νομοδιδάσκαλος, for He was the Fulfiller of the Torah,

as well as the Prophets (Matt. 5:17). Jesus was not a teacher in the sense of a new lawgiver or moralist. He was and is The Teacher who was Fulfiller of the Torah and Prophets, as well as Teacher of the Kingdom.

DIDASKEIN The verb "didaskein" occurs 57 times in the Gospels and 40 times in the epistles for a total of 97 times in the New Testament. The most common word in the Gospels to describe the activity or ministry of Jesus was didaskein.

The two most common places where Jesus carried on His teaching activity were the synagogue (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 13:54; Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:15; 6:6; 13:10) and in the temple at Jerusalem (Matt. 21:23; Mark 12:35; Luke 19:47; 20:1; 21:37; John 7:14,28; 8:2,20). In His defense before the high priest Jesus stated: "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:30). To His captors at Gethsemane He said: "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me" (Matt. 26:55; Mark 14:48-49).

But Jesus did not restrict His teaching to the synagogues and the temple. He carried on His teaching activity on the mountain side (Matt. 5:2) and in the cities and villages of the Jews (Matt. 11:1; Mark 6:6; Luke 13:22). Capernaum is especially named as one of the chief cities in which He did much teaching (Luke 4:31; John 6:59). He commonly taught in the streets (Luke 13:26). He taught by the sea side (Mark 2:13; 4:1), and also from a ship (Luke 5:3). He pursued His teaching activity east of the Jordan (Mark 10:1), yea, throughout all Jewry (Luke 23:5).

His teaching (διδάσκων) is combined with "preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας - Matt. 4:23; 9:35) and just plain preaching (Matt. 11:1) and with evangelizing (διδάσκοντος αὐτοῦ καὶ εὐαγγελιζομένου - Luke 20:1). Matthew characteristically associates the teaching ministry with preaching the Kingdom (and with the healing ministry), while Luke asso-

ciates teaching with evangelizing, a word used repeatedly by Luke, but found only once in Matthew (11:5) and never in Mark or John.

The teaching activity of our Lord took various forms. It is used of His great exposition of the law in setting forth the pattern of behavior for citizens of the Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:2), in teaching by parables (Mark 4:2), in speaking of His coming passion (Mark 8:31; 9:31), in responding to questions (Mark 12:14), and in rebuking evildoers on the basis of Old Testament prophecy (Mark 11:17).

The effect of His teaching upon the common man was "astonishment": "When Jesus had ended these sayings (the Sermon on the Mount), the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). After listening to some of His parables, the people "were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matt. 13:54). The people were conscious of the authoritative ring to His teaching (consider also the same effect in the synagogue at Capernaum, Mark 1:22), and they associated His teaching with His "mighty works."

Our Lord assured His disciples that after He had left them, He would send the "Comforter" to continue His work of teaching (John 14:26). Before His leaving this earth Jesus had sent out His disciples on a "teaching" tour (Mark 6:30); upon leaving He commissioned all His disciples to carry on the work of teaching (Matt. 28:20).

The rabbis or teachers of the law (νομοδιδάσκαλοι) had as their aim to gain disciples. The aim was more than intellectual assent; the ultimate goal was total commitment. Gamaliel gained just such a disciple in Saul of Tarsus who is described as "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1) in his zeal and commitment to the law, as he had learned it at the feet of the great and famous Gamaliel. The Lord's teaching had the same aim — to gain the total person for the cause or side of Himself, the Teacher. Jesus achieved that goal in Saul when He retaught him and claimed him body, soul, and spirit for the gospel. In our mod-

ern society the communists and religious fringe groups teach with this same "win the whole person" intensity. The didaskein of the New Testament is more than a mere intellectual activity, nor does it have the modern secular purpose of developing innate potentiality in the student. Its aim is an aggressive effort to snatch the person taught from the kingdom of darkness and translate him into the kingdom of light. Martin Franzmann in *The Word of the Lord Grows* (p. 169) expresses it thus:

The act of teaching is anything but a merely intellectual one and is far removed from the secular idea of developing a potential which is in man and needs only to be called into active play. Teaching in the New Testament sense is the shaping of the whole man, including his will and especially his will; and this shaping is done, not by human persuasion using the tools of human wisdom but by divine revelation; the content of the teaching is simply the Gospel revelation, with all that serves and supports that revelation (the Old Testament, both Law and Promise); it is the Gospel as a formative and disciplinary power, "the word of God ... at work in you believers." (1 Thess. 2:13)

DIDACHE The content of Jesus' teaching is called collectively "didache" (διδασχῆ — Matt. 7:28, the contents of the Sermon on the Mount, and Mark 1:22, the contents of Jesus' message in the synagogue at Capernaum). Jesus referred to the contents of His teaching as doctrine: "My doctrine (διδασχῆ) is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). The same word (διδασχῆ) is used of the teachings of the Pharisees and scribes. When Jesus warned His disciples of the "leaven" of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they at first thought He was speaking of bread, but later they came to understand that He was speaking of the "doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:11).

DIDASKALIA The word "didaskalia" (διδασκαλία) is used in but one connection when Jesus warned the Pharisees concerning their hypocrisy: "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines (διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας) the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7).

BARRIER TO TEACHING Jesus found in man a natural barrier or resistance to His teaching. That became manifest in the dumbfounded question of Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" (John 3:9) and the responding question of Jesus, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10). The basic problem, which Nicodemus had failed to take into consideration, was and is the fact that "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). The intellect and reasoning processes of man are "flesh," that is, turned away from and contrary to the things of God. So also the will of man is diametrically opposed to the things of God, as Jesus indicated when speaking to the Jews in the temple: "If any man will do his will (θέλη τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιεῖν), he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). But if the will of man is set against the will of God, the doctrine remains unintelligible.

The apostle Paul stated this truth, that man is naturally conditioned against the things of the Spirit, in his first letter to the Corinthians: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them (οὐ δύναται γινῶσθαι), because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). The "is not able to know" categorically and without exception posits an inbred, natural, universal barrier to the receiving of instruction in spiritual matters.

NATURE OF "TEACHING" Such being the nature of the case all teaching on the part of Jesus began with a call to repentance — "Repent!" (Matt. 4:7); led to Him — "Come unto Me!" (Matt. 11:28); and issued forth from Him — "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). A theologian of the Wisconsin Synod, August Pieper, reduced the content of the gospel in its wider sense and so all of the teaching of Jesus to these three brief statements: You have sinned! Your sin is forgiven! Sin no more!

"REPENT!" John the Baptizer began and concluded his message with "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1). When Jesus began to

preach some six months later, He had nothing to change or add. He, too, preached or taught: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). The word "repent" is here used in the broad sense of both a call to contrition and faith. We are here concerned with the former, as in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Our Lord taught repentance, calling for a change of mind away from rebellion against the Lord God, which is the essence of all sin. In so doing He was using the law as a foreign work for Him, "for God sent his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Jesus used the law as a "schoolmaster," as Paul later called it (Gal. 3:24), to lead rebel sinners to Himself for pardon and reconciliation.

Jesus used the word "repent" as a simple imperative, for Matthew reports the initiation of His ministry in this way: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). In so doing Jesus was, as John the Baptizer before Him, carrying on the tradition of the prophets. The Hebrew counterpart to μετανοεω is *שׁוּב*. Isaiah exhorted the people: "Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted" (Is. 31:6). The Lord instructed Jeremiah to proclaim: "Return, thou backsliding Israel ... and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful ... and I will not keep anger for ever" (Jer. 3:12). The Lord instructed Ezekiel to proclaim to the captives in Babylon: "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations" (Ez. 14:6). Through Malachi the Lord called out to His people: "Return unto me, and I will return unto you!" (Mal. 3:7). Before He ascended our Lord instructed that even as He had preached repentance so "repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). The epistle of James is a call to repentance, patterned after the prophets of old, although the word "repent" does not occur in the epistle. (See the analysis of Franzmann in *The Word of the Lord Grows*, pp. 26-36.) The last book of

the Bible was written by John. The first section contains the glorified Lord's letters to the seven churches. As in His public ministry on earth, so the risen and glorified Lord continued His preaching and teaching of repentance (Rev. 2:5.16; 3:3.19).

In dealing with Nicodemus Jesus taught repentance with an axiomatic statement, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:16). The force of that statement in its positive form, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and in its contrasting form, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," did not immediately penetrate the consciousness of Nicodemus. He remained bewildered as his question, "How can these things be?", reveals. The Lord didn't push it. He waited for Nicodemus to come to the realization that he too was a slave of flesh which held him captive in the pride of his own doing and blinded him to the fact that he needed enlightenment. The Lord pointed to the solution of Nicodemus' problem by pointing to the Old Testament type of Himself, the raised serpent, and by teaching the gospel in its best-known capsule form, John 3:16. The apostle John reintroduces Nicodemus two more times in his gospel account, on the occasion of his timid defense of Jesus before the chief priests and Pharisees (John 7:50) and his heroic commitment to Jesus on the day of His death (John 19:39). (The synoptists don't mention Nicodemus.) It is significant that Jesus laid the seed in the heart of Nicodemus at the beginning of His ministry but then waited until the day of His death before that seed blossomed forth and bore fruit. This is divine patience, as contrasted with our all too frequent impatience.

The use of the axiomatic statement as a teaching of repentance was used by Paul, for example, in his letter to the Romans: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). How often hasn't that statement been quoted down through the ages! Axiomatic statements have become part and parcel of our liturgy, for example the Confession: "We poor sinners confess unto Thee that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against Thee by thought, word, and deed." The danger, of course, lies in such axiomatic statements be-

coming mere recital with the heart, mind, and conscience disengaged.

In the case of the woman of Samaria Jesus taught repentance in a gentle, indirect, yet forceful manner. He had aroused her to a state of eager anticipation. She really wanted this "living water" which would quench thirst permanently and so make those arduous trips out to the well unnecessary. "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:15). Water she wanted, but she still didn't know what she was asking for. Jesus abruptly brought her to an understanding of the kind of water she really needed when He commanded her: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither" (John 4:16). Her chin must have dropped, her eyes fallen, as she confessed, "I have no husband." The Lord finished her confession for her: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly" (John 4:17-18). But notice that Jesus did not dwell on her sin. He did not rub it in. He did not add to its weight by demanding a specified degree of contrition. He simply followed the lead of the nimble-minded woman which led to His revealing Himself to her as the promised Messiah. So the Lord taught repentance — to lead the sinner to Himself.

The case of Jesus' dealing with the young man who came with the question, "Good Master (Teacher), what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23) reveals the technique of beginning the instruction at the point established by the learner. In teaching this story we like to point out that this young man's question reflected the *opinio legis* of natural man. He expressed himself in terms of works because natural man can think of his relations to God and eternal life in no other way. But Jesus didn't correct his question or challenge his approach. He went along with it. The man was operating on the basis of the law, so Jesus began instruction at that very point: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments!" That sounded reasonable and orthodox to the ruler, but it didn't solve his problem. There were those 613 commandments that the νομοδιδάσκαλος had isolated in

the Torah, consisting of 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commandments. On which of these should he concentrate his efforts? One could imagine this zealous man to have been a bit chagrined when Jesus began reciting the commandments of the second table of the law. After all, this was elementary: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" He was asking for it, so the Lord let him have it. He gave him the first commandment with its demand for total, undivided commitment: "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." "Is not my word like ... a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). "He went away sorrowfully," hopefully to return at a later time. He was taught with a sudden jolt that the law was not his friend, but his enemy; that it was not a way to life but the way to death. The Lord accepted the ruler's point of approach, went along with it, set the man up, as it were, and then delivered the hammer blow of the law as a "schoolmaster" to win this man to Himself.

When the situation warranted, the Lord Jesus taught with a curt sledge-hammer effect, both on His disciples and His enemies. When Peter responded to Jesus' instruction concerning His imminent suffering and death at the hands of the chief priests and scribes with his patronizing and contradicting remark, "Lord, this shall not be unto thee," Jesus gave him a judo chop with the law: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me!" (Matt. 16:22-23). Jesus used this same sledge-hammer, judo-chop method in His sevenfold "Woes" against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Paul followed his Lord's lead with his "anathema" upon his judaizing opponents (Gal. 1:8) and his subsequent wish: "As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!" (NIV, Gal. 5:12). This is the shock treatment of the law — a method used both by the Lord and His apostles to awaken a consciousness of the horror of sin in a disciple or to warn sinners against the soul-destroying nature of sin.

"COME UNTO ME!" This is an invitation to come and learn the Lord Jesus as Savior. The gospel is invitation to sinners. The invitation is to come to

become acquainted with and so to learn to trust, without reservation, a Person, God's Son made man. Trust cannot be commanded; it is created and develops, sometimes slowly, other times rapidly. Faith does not spring naturally from a human heart; it is taught by the Spirit through the gospel.

The disciples of the Baptist heard his testimony: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). When John repeated his testimony the following day, two of his disciples edged away towards Jesus. When Jesus noticed they were following Him, He asked in all simplicity, "What seek ye?" And they just asked where He was camping out that night. "Come and see," was the response. That simple invitation was the beginning of a relationship which bore fruit unto eternal life. That method of initiating instruction caught on. When Philip found Nathaniel and enthusiastically told him that they had found the One of whom Moses and the prophets had written, Nathaniel responded with skepticism, for how could anyone so notable come from Nazareth? Philip didn't argue; he just invited, "Come and see" (John 1:46). "Come and see" is the opening line, the precondition for learning. So our Lord taught. Believers have followed His example down through the ages.

The Lord Jesus generally revealed Himself to learners slowly. To the disciples of John the Baptizer Jesus extended an invitation. To the skeptic Nathaniel the Lord revealed a ray of His glory: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (John 1:49). Jesus didn't lay it all out for Nathaniel, for he wasn't ready as yet. Jesus just assured him that he hadn't seen anything yet. A short time later Jesus worked His first miracle at Cana. The apostle John recorded the effect: "His disciples believed on him" (John 2:11). Their learning continued. The night of the great storm on the Sea of Galilee was a tremendous learning experience. When the tumultuous sea was changed into a calm at the word of their Lord, they exclaimed: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" (Matt. 8:27). When Jesus began to teach them concerning His coming suffering and death, His teaching was met with no comprehension, yea, even with rebel-

lion (Matt. 16:22). His instruction regarding His resurrection fell on completely stony ground; they just didn't know what He was talking about. It took a post-graduate course after His resurrection plus the outpouring of the Holy Ghost before the Twelve even began to understand Nathaniel's spontaneous confession: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). Jesus revealed Himself gradually; the disciples learned gradually. This was His usual method. At times, however, the teaching and learning processes were telescoped, as in the case of the malefactor on the Lord's right.

Jesus expected His disciples to learn by inductively assimilating facts, making judgments, or simply putting two and two together. When the disciples of the Baptizer came to Jesus and asked in behalf of their master, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?", they no doubt expected to carry back to John an explicit "Yes" or "No" answer. They wanted their doubts removed. Their question was repeated, under different circumstances, later by the Jews who came to Jesus and insisted on a clear-cut answer: "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24). But Jesus did not give the disciples of John a "Yes" or "No" answer (Matt. 11:4-6). Jesus expected John to evaluate the evidence on the basis of prophecy and come to his personal conclusion. In like manner the identification of the Great Antichrist is not revealed in the New Testament. As the marks of the Christ were revealed in the Old Testament, so the marks of the Great Antichrist are revealed in both the Old and New Testament prophecies. Believers are to exercise themselves spiritually and make the identification.

Both malefactors on the cross saw the same events, heard the words of Jesus, and observed His conduct. The one on the right arrived at the proper conclusion; the one on the left blasphemed his way into death and hell. The centurion in charge of the execution also witnessed the same, plus the earthquake, and was brought to the confession: "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54). The truth of Jesus is learned and faith is worked through the normal uses of man's intelligence, emotions, and will. Faith is not created nor maintained in a vacu-

um. The Spirit moves the student through the use of his God-given faculties on to a living relationship with the Lord.

Jesus taught through proclamation. We have observed that teaching was associated with heralding and evangelizing. Jesus proclaimed the truth, for example, in the form of His great "I AM" statements. On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus stood and "cried, saying ..." (John 7:37). He may have startled some, but He surely attracted attention. He had something to say. He wanted to be heard. And He wants that form of teaching to continue. Before His ascension He gave the commandment: "Go ye into all world, and preach (herald) the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). In other words, "Continue doing what I did!" The pulpit is the podium for a teacher determined to teach Christ. It is not a stage for an entertainer, nor a soapbox for a politician or moralist.

Jesus employed variety in presenting the blessings of salvation that He had come to bring and teach. With the woman at Jacob's well He used the very essential figure of "living water" (John 4:10,14; also John 7:37-38 at the Feast of Tabernacles). In the synagogue at Capernaum He used the practical figure of "bread of life" (John 6:25,41,48,50-51). On that same occasion He used the unusual figure of His own "flesh and blood" which must needs be eaten and drunk (John 6:51-58). In Matthew 11:28-30 He used the figure of "rest," with all its ancient and weekly associations with the Sabbath. He used "light" (John 8:12), "sight" (John 9:39), and the figure of the "good shepherd" (John 10:11), which conjured up images of the prophets and of Israel's "shepherd king." Think of the variety of figures used in the parables. Paul later introduced a word from the business sphere of life — "redemption," "justification" from the legal sphere, and "reconciliation" from social life. The gospel is a many-faceted jewel. Jesus and teachers following His example use great variety in teaching.

Another fascinating variation in teaching the gospel was our Lord's Kingdom teaching, especially as recorded by Matthew. The Kingdom is "at hand" (Matt. 4:17). The

blessings of the Kingdom are announced in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-11). The Jews were not to take citizenship in the Kingdom for granted, for the Gentiles will be in and the Jews out (Matt. 8:11-12). The Kingdom is "like unto" in the great parable chapter (Matt. 13, also 18:23ff.; 20:1ff.; 22:2ff.; plus the three parables in 25). In the challenging phrase of the KJV the Kingdom "suffereth violence," "has been forcefully advancing" (NIV, Matt. 11:12). To Peter Jesus said that He would give him the "keys of the kingdom" (Matt. 16:19). To demonstrate greatness in the Kingdom Jesus placed a child in the midst of His disciples (Matt. 18:2-4). Entrance into the Kingdom is difficult for the rich (Matt. 19:24). As a matter of fact, one has to be born again (John 3:3-6). The disciples will share in judging Israel in the Kingdom (Matt. 19:28). Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was quite the opposite of what was expected; it served as a visual demonstration of the nature of the King and His Kingdom (Matt. 21). All could see Him entering Jerusalem; yet He had testified that the Kingdom "cometh not with observation." How can it, for it is "within or among you" (Luke 17:20-21). It is "not of this world" (John 18:36), the King Himself testified before the highest representative of the world power of that day. The Kingdom came when the King cast out devils (Matt. 12:28). The King is coming: "Surely I come quickly. Amen" (Rev. 22:10). So the New Testament closes. What variety! What teaching! Have we as much as scratched the surface with our teaching?

"ABIDE IN ME;
BRING FORTH FRUIT!"

The bringing forth of fruit is natural and spontaneous. A fruit tree does not have to be commanded to bear fruit; it just naturally bears fruit. So also believers, as new creations of the Holy Spirit, naturally and spontaneously bring forth fruit. Yet the Lord makes it clear that bringing forth fruit is what He expects: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). Jesus also specified the nature of that fruit: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:22). That commandment is general: Love! Love is the desired and expected fruit.

But how is that love to manifest itself? Jesus gave specific answers, detailed instruction, even as John the Baptizer did before Him. In response to John's exhortation, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance," the people asked, "What shall we do then?" John gave specific instruction: Give your extra coat to someone who hasn't a coat; share your food with the hungry. He told the tax collectors not to cheat the people; the soldiers were told not to throw their weight around, not to blackmail people by accusing them falsely, and to be content with their wages (Luke 3:8-14). Jesus gave His most detailed instruction of fruit bearing in the Sermon on the Mount, where He laid out the fifth, sixth, and eighth commandments, gave specific instruction on such practical matters as almsgiving, praying, and fasting, and laid out in detail what it means to trust our heavenly Father on a day-to-day practical basis. This was detailed, explicit instruction in sanctification, in living as citizens of His Kingdom.

The apostles continued this method of explicit instruction in fruit bearing in the admonitory sections of their epistles, spelling out what the new commandment to love one another meant in husband-wife, parent-children, master-slave relationships (Eph. 5-6). In his epistle to the Romans Paul spells out what it means to present one's body as a living sacrifice unto the Lord (12), what the relationship of a believer to civil government should be (13), how to deal in love with the weak (14), concerning the matter of a collection for the poor (15, also II Cor. 8-9), and how to deal in love with those who adhere to false doctrine (16).

Specific instruction concerning the application of the law of love to specific situations was given by John the Baptizer, Jesus, the apostles after Him, and the prophets before Him.

A second method employed by the Lord was the teaching of principles with the student obliged to work out the application of the principle to situations in life. For example: One of the areas on which Jesus clashed with the scribes and Pharisees was the matter of ceremonial washings. They were offended that Jesus' disciples

ate without washing their hands (Mark 7:2). That was, in itself, a minor matter. Jesus used the occasion to teach a major principle. He made the statement that it wasn't that which a person ate (with washed or unwashed hands), but that which came out of a person that causes the defilement (Mark 7:15). In explaining this principle Jesus said: "Do you not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth into the draught, purging all meats?" (Mark 7:19). That final phrase introduces a completely new principle, but what does it mean? The Textus Receptus has the participle "purging" (καθαρίζον) modifying latrine (ἀεδρωῶνα). It is difficult to understand that construction, for how can waste expelled from the body into the latrine thereby cleanse or purify foods eaten? The Nestle text has the participle in the nominative masculine (καθαρίζων). That would make the phrase a brief commentary added by Mark, who would have received that understanding from his mentor, Peter, or it may have been an understanding learned and shared by the church in Mark's day. The NIV translates the final phrase, "purging all meats" (KJV), as a parenthetical statement: "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean.'" Beck: "Here Jesus made all food clean." NASB: "Thus He declared all foods clean."

Jesus stated a new principle for the New Testament age. Here was some "new wine" or a "new patch." Peter was present and heard it, but he didn't immediately grasp the significance or application of the new principle. As a result, he was far from being able to apply it to situations that were to come up later in his life. In Gal. 2:11-15 Paul records the incident at Antioch when Peter became flustered, confused, and pressured by unforeseen circumstances to leave the table of the Gentiles, with whom he had been eating, and to make his way over to a table where Jewish Christians were eating. The entrance of some representatives from James and the mother church at Jerusalem caused this unseemly meandering from a Gentile Christian to a Jewish Christian table. Peter was unable to apply the principle that all foods are clean consistently. His old inhibitions concerning non-kosher foods, plus the appearance of "authority figures" from

the Jewish church at Jerusalem, caused him to lose sight of the principle that all foods are clean. Acts 10 records the instruction and learning experience of Peter through the vision that he saw while praying on the roof of Simon the tanner's house. When he saw the odd mixture of clean and unclean animals and heard the command, "Kill and eat," he was horrified. His conditioned response was "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." The voice rebuked him as it patiently instructed him: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:13-15). When the messengers of Cornelius arrived, Peter caught on, and learned much more — that the principle applied also to people.

It took time and patience for the early church to apply the principle, "All foods are clean," to their dietary habits. Paul took the matter up in Romans 14. He enunciated the principle: "As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself" (v. 14), and again: "All food is clean" (v. 20 — NIV). Paul encountered the same problem — applying the principle that "all food is clean" to eating meats that came from carcasses that had been dedicated to idols — in the congregation at Corinth. He summed up the matter by restating the principle in this way: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). The modern church is not confronted with the problem of the possibility of meats displayed in showcases in our modern supermarkets being previously part of sacrifices to idols. But we do have the continuing problem of the proper use, as against the misuse of food and drink, especially alcoholic beverages, as well as the use of wine in Holy Communion. Our Lord, the prophets before Him, and the apostles after Him taught principles which believers of all ages are to learn to apply to specific situations in life.

In our church life we have been working at the application of the fellowship principle to situations. We had to learn, not without sweat and tears, how to apply the principle to the termination of an existing synodic fellowship. Now we are going through the painful process of learning how to apply the same principle to fraternal insurance associations. Who knows what applications lie

ahead for our generation or future generations?

A third method that Jesus employed could be called "Seek and find!" To the Jews the Lord one time either stated what they were customarily doing, searching the Scriptures, or exhorted them to "search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:19). The art of teaching is motivating the student to search. It is leading him to find the answer, not giving him a ready-made answer. Jesus used that method.

When Jesus walked with Cleopas and his friend toward Emmaus that first Easter afternoon, He "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself, beginning at Moses and all the prophets" (Luke 24:27). How often and how many Christians down through the ages haven't sighed and longed for a transcript of that exposition of the Old Testament. Think of how much more easy it would be to learn the Old Testament! But neither our Lord nor the Holy Spirit saw fit to record that exposition. Why not? It was a matter of divine pedagogy! We are to search the Scriptures of the Old Testament and learn to find Jesus in them. Discovering for oneself, being personally led into the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit is a much more effective way of learning to know Jesus than having it all neatly and simply laid out. "In the sweat of thy brow" applies also to studying and learning to know the Lord Jesus in His Word.

What is the nature of Jesus' Kingdom? Is Luther right in his explanation of the Second Petition or are the Dispensationalists right in looking for a personal reign of Christ on earth in the millennium? How are we to understand the final book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ? What is the relationship of the Kingdom to the Church? How is the law to be used in the life of a Christian? The Bible does not answer these and many other questions in simple catechetical form. The suggested method is "Search the Scriptures and ye shall find!"

Jesus was THE TEACHER. He taught in an amazing variety of ways. His methods always had one aim — to bring sinners into a personal relationship with Himself so that

they could "be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; even as He is risen from death, lives and reigns to all eternity." May our study of His methods be motivated by that same aim.

Paul F. Nolting

CHAPEL ADDRESS — JOHN 3:16

Salvation came when God sent His only-begotten Son, the Babe in Bethlehem Who, by delivering us from sin, rescued us from the curse and damnation of sin and joined us to Himself by faith. Salvation, the gift of love, is thus, when possessed by faith, the GIFT OF LIFE. For Jesus tells us, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The worst thing about sin is its curse of death. Every form of ungodliness or godlessness separates from God, Who alone is the fountain of life. There is no true, abiding life apart from God. Yes, of course, men live their natural lives here on earth for a time, but even at their best they are very brief. And what then, when this short life fades out? Jesus describes it for us with the words: "Darkness, howling, and gnashing of teeth." A horrible picture, is it not? There is an existence, indeed, even an unending existence, but it is wholly and forever separated from joy and blessedness, from God and heaven. And that is death, in the fullest sense of the word. The condemnation of this death already rests upon everyone who clings to his sins and rejects the pardon of Christ's salvation. He is already judged, even though he does not know it. Without life now, and spurning the only Giver of life, he shall lie in the darkness of death forever.

Behold, then, what God gave us in His Son! It is pardon and release from our sin, and thus reinstatement as God's children. Death's hold on us is broken; there is no condemnation for us; we have escaped the despair

and everlasting punishment we deserved. Christ is ours, and we are His; our faith binds us to Him as branches to the vine. Having Him we have life, the true life that comes from God and shall continue with God forever. When our earthly days end, our eternal home above receives us, and there we will live with Christ in joy forever. Hear again His glorious promise: "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life!"

Oh, what joy of salvation is ours in the only-begotten Son of God! He came from on high and brought down to us here below the true life which we and the whole human race had lost through our sin and wickedness. Mary, His virgin mother, found this eternal life in Him and rejoiced to ponder over it; so did Joseph, who heard in faith the words of the angel; so did also the shepherds who left their flocks to find the Babe in the manger; so did also the wise men, who came from distant lands, following His star in the east.

Yes, so also did Nicodemus, to whom the words of our text were directly addressed, find life in Christ, as the later gospel story tells us.

We could go on for a long time enumerating the host of others who have found life, eternal life, in Jesus and His acts of love toward mankind. But how about us? It is through faith in the manger Child that eternal life is already ours in this earthly life. Alas, that anyone should love this world, with its death, more than the true life in Christ! Let us, rather, thank the Lord our God for the gift of life together with all its happiness and joy here already as Christ becomes ours more and more, and especially the eternal happiness that awaits every believing child of God in the hereafter.

Salvation, infinite love, saving light, eternal and everlasting life — that is what God gave us in His only-begotten Son.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!

John Lau



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