



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

I Timothy 4:15

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LUTHER - THE HYMN-WRITER

INTRODUCTION

*O come, let us sing unto the Lord
let us make a joyful noise
to the rock of our salvation.*

*Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving
and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms
For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods. (Ps. 95:1-3)*

"O come, let us sing unto the Lord," was the invitation of the Reformer, Martin Luther, as he witnessed Satan and his works fleeing before the Gospel witness. And it still remains something to sing about with hearts of thanksgiving and praise. The musical heritage, which is ours today in the Lutheran Church, finds its roots in the God-given gifts and spirit of a man. For in Luther we find a man who not only demonstrated from Scripture alone that the theology of the church of the day was corrupt but he gave direction for the future. He gave theological and practical direction. He had the people at heart. He was concerned above all about reaching the common person. One of the ways which he felt this could be done was through music. He was right. The message of salvation in Jesus Christ put to music sung its way into the hearts of people everywhere until the noted Roman champion Cardinal Bellarmine wailed: "The fine songs of Luther have seduced more souls from the (Roman) Church than the archheretic (!) with his preaching."¹

Well-deserved acclaim pours forth from historians and people of musical integrity alike as the musical works of Martin Luther, an instrument of God, are analyzed and appreciated. One speaks of him as "The father of evangelical hymnody,"² while "the great Handel acknowledged that he had derived singular advantage from studying the compositions of the great Saxon Reformer."³ Another acclaims Luther as "a thorough master of one of the fine arts - music,"⁴ while a professor of music at Harvard says, "We have reaped the fruits of the Reformation not only in our modern religious and social freedom but also in some of

the highest forms of musical art."⁵ Philip Schaff writes: "To Luther belongs the extraordinary merit of having given to the German people in their own tongue the Bible, the Catechism and the hymnbook, so that God might speak directly to them in His Word, and that they might directly answer Him in their songs."⁶ But to gain such accolades was never the intention of the Reformer, nor did he ever acknowledge that he deserved such special honor in the field of music. Luther's primary purpose in promoting hymnody was to spread the teachings of God's Word.

PEOPLE PARTICIPATION It is well for us to note that the practice of hymn singing by congregations was almost unheard of at the beginning of the 16th century. It's not that it was always that way. In fact, there is evidence to demonstrate that hymn singing throughout the congregations of early Christendom was a rather common practice. Greek hymns and New Testament canticles were introduced into public worship freely and joyfully. One such hymn which is familiar to us is "Shepherd of Tender Youth."⁷ Another such hymn, though less familiar to us, is "O Gladsome Light, O Grace."⁸ These hymns are mentioned only to demonstrate that the Christians, especially in the eastern realms of Christianity, wrote and sang hymns to the praise of our Lord from the earliest centuries.

The chanting of Psalms seems to have been the primary form of congregational "singing" in the earliest years of Christianity. The Ambrosian (St. Ambrose, 340-397) style of music came upon the scene in the 4th century and proved to be very acceptable with the people. It was a type of plain song with solemn character yet rhythmical accent. It was easily mastered by the common people and thus quickly sprang into great popularity.

A POPE PREVENTS PARTICIPATION When Gregory the Great, in 590 A.D., ascended the papal chair, a reaction set in. He determined that many of the Ambrosian hymns and chants had become corrupted and secularized and had lost their worshipful character. Besides, Gregory considered the bright and lively style of Ambrosian singing an abomination to the worship service. Furthermore, the people's singing with untrained

ear and voice became intolerable to him. Immediately he took steps to reform church music.

A school of music was founded in Rome where a new Gregorian liturgical music, known as "Cantus Romanus," was taught. The Gregorian method was unison, slow; uniform and measured, without rhythm and beat, and thus was similar in character to the recitative method of Psalm singing practiced already in the earliest days of the New Testament Church even before the Ambrosian style became popular.

The reform instituted by the Roman pontiff was carried out directly with great thoroughness. Professional singers were sent from Rome to all the principal centers of religious life in Europe to introduce the new style. Deviations from the system were rigorously prohibited. Soon local liturgies and hymns throughout the Christian world were replaced by Gregorian music. As a result hymn singing in the worship of the church practically became a thing of the past.

Perhaps it could be said that the Gregorian chant and the insistence upon perfection raised church music to a more polished level and may have seemed more noble and dignified than congregational members singing off key, at times. But the price that was paid was very high since the common people more and more were reduced to silent, passive worshipers. The congregational hymn was superseded by a clerical liturgy. The prevailing influence of the Gregorian style continued, especially in the western church, for almost 1000 years. This helps us to realize how special and joyful it was for the common people to be given songs to sing about their Savior at Luther's time. Not only were they encouraged to sing in church services but every day in their homes and as they went about their several tasks of life. It can be said without a doubt that it was through the gifts of the great Reformer that the lost art of congregational singing was restored and the Christian hymn again given a place in public worship.

LUTHER'S LOVE OF MUSIC

Luther's credentials for the task which he considered so important were by no means inferior. His education had pro-

vided thorough courses in singing and in the art of musicography. The art of music composition, as it was then practiced, was quite well understood by him. As an Augustinian friar he was enabled to profitably continue to exercise his musical abilities since this order was noted for emphasizing this art. Yet, with characteristic modesty, Luther confessed that his love of music far outran his proficiency in it. One comes to realize how deeply he felt about music when we hear him say, "Next to theology music is God's most significant gift to man." He went on to emphasize, "I would not surrender my little knowledge of music for a great deal."⁹ The place which music held in his life becomes obvious from some of his letters written to noted composers and musicians of the day. One such letter was addressed to the then noted musician, Ludwig Senfel, who lived in Catholic Munich. The religious environment in which Senfel lived added to the significance of the following letter:

Although my name is so hated that I must fear, my dear Ludwig, that this letter will not be safely received and read by you, yet my love of music has overcome my fear, and in musical talent I see that God has richly endowed you. It is this that makes me hope my letter will bring no danger to you, for who even in Turkey would be offended at me for loving art and honoring an artist. Moreover, I greatly honor and esteem your two Dukes of Bavaria, although they are not very favorable to me, because I see they love and foster music. I doubt not that there are many seeds of virtue in a mind touched by music, and I consider those not affected by it as stocks and stones. We know that music is hateful and intolerable to devils. I really believe, nor am I ashamed to assert, that next to theology there is no art equal to music, for it is the only one, except theology which can give a quiet and happy mind, a manifest proof that the devil, the author of racking care and perturbation, flees from the sound of music as he does from the exhortation of religion. This is the reason why the Prophets practiced no other art, neither geometry nor arithmetic nor astronomy, as if they believed music and divinity near allied; as indeed they declare in their

psalms and canticles. Praising music is like trying to paint a great subject on a small canvas, which turns out merely a daub. But my love for it abounds; it has often refreshed me and freed me from great troubles.¹⁰

Another letter, showing Luther's playful honor of music and those who produced it, helps us to see the sense of humor in Luther behind the work. It was written to one Matthew Weller, who had sent the Reformer one of his compositions.

We sing your song as well as we can at table and afterwards. If we make a few mistakes, it is not your fault but that of our skill, which is small enough even after we have sung the song over twice or thrice. Vergil says we are not all equal to all things. No matter how well our composers do, we are too much for them and sing their songs badly. If indeed all the governments of the world were to punish us, and if God and reason were to write the tunes, nevertheless we would make such mincemeat of them as might be sold at the butcher's and make people wish us and our tongues hung as high as church bells. You composers must not mind if we do make howlers of your songs, for we insist on trying them whether we fail or not. My dear Katie says she hopes you won't take offense at my jokes, and she sends you her kind regards. God bless you.¹¹

ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS Though Luther loved music dearly he never considered himself to be specially gifted in this area. Rather, he often expressed the wish that someone more gifted than he might give to the German people in their own language some of the beautiful hymns written in Latin. Besides translations of previously written hymns Luther advocated the writing of hymns in the vernacular as well as chorales which would reflect the Spirit's activity among the people in that time. But he lamented that Germany lacked poets and musicians who were able to produce Christian music which could be used daily in the house of God. Though Luther urged others to join him in this worthwhile task of providing meaningful spiritual songs for the peo-

ple to sing, his earnest urgings seldom were met with enthusiasm. We hear him speaking to his good friend Spalatin:

There is a plan afoot to follow the example of the Prophets and the Fathers of the early Church and compose for the common people German psalms, that is, spiritual songs, so that the Word of God may remain among the people in the form of song also. We are seeking everywhere for poets, and since you are gifted with such knowledge of the German language and command so elegant a style, cultivated by much use, I beg that you will work with us in this matter, and try to translate some one of the Psalms into a hymn, like the sample of my own which you have here. But I wish that you would leave out all new words and words that are used only at court. In order to be understood by the people, only the simplest and commonest words should be sung; but they should also be pure and apt and should give a clear sense, as near as possible to that of the Psalter. The translation, therefore, must be free, keeping the sense, but letting the words go and rendering them by other appropriate words. I lack the gift to do what I wish to see done, and so I shall try you and see if you are a Heman or an Asaph, or a Jeduthun.¹²

But with little positive response to his earnest plea the Reformer found, as it is so often experienced, that if a man wants something done, he had better do it himself.

ORIGINALITY? How original was Luther in his musical productions? The historians have debated this for centuries. Yet, as music critics often point out, no musical composition can be entirely original. Those who produce musical pieces have assimilated music of the past and this dictates to a large degree what they produce. Luther was deeply steeped in the Gregorian tradition. So, as one would expect, much of the music which Luther produced or reworked carries the influence of this style.

Luther is credited with about 36 to 40 hymns. As we sing his hymns originality is of no concern to us. Rather,

we recognize that just as Christ was the center of his theological teaching, so our Savior was at the core of his musical productions. His purpose was always to bring Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior of all, into the hearts of the people. He made no pretense at being original in all of his hymn writing but often used medieval hymns, freely revising or translating them. Poetical treatment of various Psalms was a common practice.

Schwiebert claims:

Reliable evidence shows ... that Luther was the composer of three original hymns: "We All Believe in One True God," "Isaiah, Mighty Seer, in Days of Old," and "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." Three more he (Winderfeld) considered as "probable" compositions by Luther. Of the 36 hymn texts credited to Luther, the remainder were set to older medieval melodies or even to popular tunes of his day.

Luther's distinction in the field of music lies not so much in the degree of his originality as in the fact that he encouraged and even increased the use of music in the Church. In his treatment of the musical heritage of the Church he remained consistent with his practices in other fields, always retaining the good, discarding the untenable, creating where necessary. In such a picture it is not essential that Luther be an original composer. For that undertaking he called freely upon contemporary musicians. Storck has stated the generally accepted viewpoint of impartial critics regarding Luther's role as a hymn writer and composer thus: "The selection and reworking of old melodies of the Gregorian hymnody and the spiritual and secular folk songs and their adaptation to the evangelical church hymns."¹³

Luther's belief that music could be an able device for transporting the Gospel and that the people should be involved in singing praises unto their gracious God earned for Lutheranism the title of "The Singing Church."

In Luther's musical efforts as well as in music criticism two things were emphasized. He insisted that the

melody should reflect the mood expressed in the words. Secondly, he had a great distaste for any music which was very involved. Just as Luther contended that a good sermon ought not contain anything too involved and above the grasp of the average individual, so he felt that good music ought to be plain and natural. He felt that hymns ought to be written in such a way that the average person who knew nothing of technical niceties could follow and enjoy the melody.

A GLANCE AT HIS WORK

If Luther had produced no more than the one hymn which has come to be accepted the world over, he properly could have been classified among the finest hymn writers. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" has been acknowledged by many as among the finest ever written. As a Dr. John Ker describes: "It breathes the force of battles, faces fearlessly the fire and scaffold, and thrills in every line with unconquerable faith and Christian heroism."¹⁴ This hymn, based on Psalm 46, appears in every church hymnal of consequence and has been translated into over one hundred and seventy languages and dialects. Numerous historians have attempted to establish the time of its writing as well as the particular circumstances which inspired it. Their conclusions have been as varied as their numbers. Yet, it seems that it may be safe to say with Plass: "This chorale, gloriously defiant of the powers of darkness, was written some time between 1521 and 1529, at a time when further unjust and oppressive strictures on religious liberty and freedom of conscience were enacted."¹⁵ Plass goes on to report how the music critics marvel at:

... How perfectly the mighty melody of this masterpiece reflects the heroic thoughts of the text. The stubborn, challenging insistence upon the first note, which Luther strikes three times, the comparatively high note of C above the middle C, is certainly the deathless courage and confidence of the Reformer translated into the language of music. Listen also to the musical description of the slithering approach of "the old evil Foe," and the thud of the following notes: a musical picture of the grim conflict that ensues and the panting of the contestants. Attention

has been called to the fact that perhaps no composer ever succeeded in epitomizing more perfectly the pervading spirit of an age in the language of music and in words than did Martin Luther when he gave to the world his immortal "battle hymn of the Reformation."¹⁶

But lest we begin to think that Luther could only speak with earthshaking defiance against the Devil and all of God's enemies, we should not conclude without reminding all that Luther was very much a family man. It was for his little son Hans that he wrote "From Heav'n Above." In the first five verses of this hymn Luther lets the angel sing the grand Good News of the birth of God's Son. The last ten verses are a simple and joyful response by those who receive this Good News with the heart. For Luther knew, without a doubt, that whether one were young or old, rich or poor, the ruler or the ruled, the peasant or the prince, all must kneel before the manger crib in Bethlehem and say with a heart of faith:

*Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.*¹⁷

L. D. Redlin

NOTES

1. Ewald M. Plass, *This Is Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), pp. 375-376.
2. E. E. Ryden, *The Story of Christian Hymnody* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 29.
3. Plass, p. 370.
4. Plass, p. 371.
5. Plass, p. 370.
6. Ryden, p. 57.
7. *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), No. 628.
8. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 101.
9. Plass, p. 367.
10. Plass, p. 368.

11. Plass, p. 369.
 12. Plass, p. 374.
 13. E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther And His Times* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 375-376.
 14. Ryden, p. 60.
 15. Plass, p. 375.
 16. Plass, p. 370.
 17. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 85:13.
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THE LUTHER CELEBRATION - IN RETROSPECT

The very fact that the birth of Doctor Martin Luther has been commemorated throughout the world after the passing of five centuries is proof in itself that he was an exceptional man, a man for the ages, a man who placed his stamp upon many areas of life. The very fact that his detractors and those who understand and appreciate his principles the least feel constrained to give him some recognition is evidence for the fact that even after 500 years he is a man to be reckoned with, a man whose name cannot be erased from the pages of history. But he who will take the observances of his birthday and the far-flung commemorative writings which have come off the press during this year and place them alongside his writings must come to the conclusion that most of these words give forth a hollow sound and serve to deprecate the man rather than to give him the honor that he deserves.

To those who know him best, Luther stands high as a man of God who saw himself as small by measure of God's law but great in God's sight by virtue of the imputed righteousness of Christ. In the courtroom of God's justice, he found no deed of his that gave him standing, but grace and grace alone by Jesus' merit raised him up to heights of glory. To all that he accomplished by word or deed, this man for the ages would attach the words: *Soli Deo Gloria!* Let Luther's name sink into the shadows, even as the name of a Simon Peter must give place to the glory of his confession in Jesus' presence, "Lord,

to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). Thus would Luther speak to us today. And in this spirit we would bring to its conclusion our commemorative writings in this year of celebration. In the midst of all the verbiage of press and podium, it is well that we consider the true greatness of the man who taught us to sing: "A Mighty Fortress is our God, a Trusty Shield and Weapon."

The stature of the man is seen in the simplicity of his faith-life expressed so well in the little volume which we so affectionately call "The Small Catechism." This is one of the two volumes, of all his writings, which Martin Luther hoped would survive his death. Here, in words that all can read and readily take to heart, are found the basic truths of Holy Scripture. In the Catechism, drawn from the sacred Book of God — the Bible (which Luther delivered to his generation in language which they could read and understand) — all things necessary for Christian faith and instruction are found. As a child of simple faith, Luther never rose above its truth, but daily, as time permitted, rehearsed it in his mind and heart. Down through the years the Small Catechism has served the old and the young, in sickness and in health, in good days and in ill, in life and in death. No man can measure or estimate all the good that has come to sinner and to saint through the words engraved to stand for the ages in that little volume which will never grow old for those who use it. It is so well suited for prayer and for meditation, for instruction and for edification. As an aftermath of the great celebration now drawing to its close we can do the great Reformer no greater honor than to imprint its truths upon our memories with letters indelible and capital. Not that Luther would want honor for his person but rather that honor might be bestowed upon Christ whose Word is emblazoned upon its pages. This would reflect his heart's desire.

The stature of the man, Dr. Martin Luther, is shown in that other volume which he wrote in answer to Erasmus of Rotterdam: "The Bondage of the Will." Here Luther is revealed as a man of great learning indeed but as one whose wisdom did not rise above the Scriptures. He is

revealed as one who had studied every word as translator and as one who recognized therein the Savior-God from Genesis to Revelation. He was well-equipped to enter the lists with a man who has been considered "one of the most learned men of his age if not all all times." In every step of the way Dr. Luther gave Scriptural answer to all the "learned" and humanistic objections which Erasmus raised against the bondage of the will in his diatribe on "Free Will." "The Bondage of the Will," then, is that other volume which Luther hoped would survive his demise. Let him who has absorbed the truths of the Catechism go on to read it. From it one will be led to read Scripture with careful attention. And that would be what Luther wanted.

The stature of the man is shown in the hymns he wrote as is shown in the concluding article of our series on Luther. From the simplest cradle song to the more profound doctrinal hymns, one cannot miss the fact they are grounded in Scripture and well suited to be sung by man, woman, and child. There is a song for every occasion and we are thankful to God that He gave also this gift to Luther that made him able to put into verse and prepare for song, the great teachings of Holy Scripture. Luther has put it all together in the inimitable hymn: "Dear Christians, one and all rejoice, with exultation springing." After its call to song, the hymn goes on to express in the first person the sinner's confession of sin and guilt and utter woe. This is followed by the answer from God in His eternal counsel promising His Son and then commissioning Him to carry out the work of man's salvation. The last four stanzas present the answer of the Son who willingly carries out the mission. There are ten stanzas, all so meaningful that one hesitates to omit any one of them, but the last one may serve to bring our commemoration to a close:

What I have done and taught, teach thou,
 My ways forsake thou never;
 So shall My kingdom flourish now
 And God be praised forever.
 Take heed lest men with base alloy
 The heavenly treasure should destroy;
 This counsel I bequeath thee. (L.H. 387:10)

C. M. Gullerud

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE INCARNATE LORD

When one walks amidst mysteries, he is likely to find himself stepping into quicksand. This can happen, because of the human tendency to go into uncharted territory. The solution is to stick with the charts and go where and only so far as they lead one.

The mystery of the Trinity is, perhaps, the most profound in all human experience. This is not to say that everything about it is a mystery. In His wisdom, God has seen fit to reveal to us certain truths about this mystery. Into these we are free to probe and in them we find blessing. But to go beyond is to tread in quicksand to one's own destruction.

In the incarnation of the Son of God, we find another grand mystery. Here, too, one must be careful to walk only on the paths that Scripture has charted. In an effort to discover how the infinite, divine nature of Christ can embrace the finite, human nature, many errors have arisen. All this, because some have wanted to walk on uncharted ground.

If one now combines these two mysteries, the danger becomes two-fold. Yet, the adherence to the simple principle of staying within the boundaries of Scripture will help one to avoid the quicksand.

It is in this spirit and with this as my prayer that I present this study of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the incarnate Lord. To put it another way, this is a study of the anointing of Jesus.¹

THE OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF THE ANOINTED ONE

The anointing of the Holy Spirit was a well known fact to the believers in Israel. Throughout Old Testament times, it was recorded that God gave His Spirit to men. It was this endowment which enabled them to perform extraordinary works. In every case their tasks were related to the Kingdom of God.

It is recorded that God would give His Spirit even

for practical skills. For instance, we are told concerning Bezalel, the son of Uri: "He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship; to make designs for working in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. He also has put in his heart to teach ..." (Ex. 34:31ff.). The purpose of this was not the personal profit or glorification of Bezalel. It was so that Bezalel might glorify the Lord by skilfully fashioning all the trappings of the Tabernacle (cf. Ex. 28:3).

At this point, we might adopt the thoughts of E. J. Young: "The Spirit is a divine force and supernatural power who equips the recipient to perform his task" (*Isaiah*, Vol. 3, p. 110. It should be noted that Young is not denying the person of the Spirit. The context will reveal his belief in the Trinity.). In the case of Bezalel, his task was to construct the Tabernacle, both by his own hand, and by teaching others his Spirit-given skills.

Most of the time, however, the tasks for which God gave His Spirit relate to ruling, prophesying, and serving in the priesthood. Thus, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Moses (Num. 11:17) and upon the seventy elders (v. 25). God gave His Spirit to Joshua and the Judges of Israel (Deut. 34:9; Jdg. 6:34). Saul was endowed with the Spirit (I Sam. 10:10), as was David (I Sam. 16:13), Azariah (II Chr. 15:1), Zechariah (II Chr. 24:20), etc. Each of them was given a task to perform, and God gave them His Spirit, so that they might do their work in a manner pleasing to Him.

ANOINTING To symbolize this endowment with the Holy Spirit, God instituted the outward rite of anointing with oil. Priests were anointed (Ex. 28:41). Kings were anointed (I Sam. 16:12f.). Prophets were anointed (I Kgs. 19:16). When the Lord authorized the anointing, He was authorizing the person to perform the appointed task and was giving His Spirit to that person for that task. In each instance, the anointed was given only such gifts of the Spirit as were necessary for the

performance of his particular task. Aaron was not given the Spirit of prophecy. David was not given the Spirit of priesthood. Elisha was not given the Spirit of kingship.

MESSIAH As Israel watched the prophets, priests, and kings being anointed with oil, they were reminded of the coming One, Who would be anointed above His fellows. This One had an appointed task, which would call for the combined gifts of prophets, priests, and kings; yes, and more. It would not be enough for Him to receive finite gifts, but infinite. He would have to be anointed above His fellows (Ps. 45:7). The task given to Him was infinitely greater than any task which heretofore required the gifts of the Spirit. He would need to see beyond what the eyes can see, to hear more than the ears can hear, so that He might make judgments that are just and fair. His word would need the power to strike the earth and slay the wicked (cf. Is. 11:3-4). At the same time, His word would need the ability to bring boundless comfort and strength to the weak and suffering (cf. Is. 61:1). He would need the power to establish a kingdom without boundaries and a justice for the whole world (Is. 42:1ff.).

THE SEED OF THE WOMAN The question is this: "How can a mere offspring of man perform the great task assigned to the Messiah?" Time and again the Lord had promised that a man, a human, would be born. He would be the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the Seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18), the Seed of Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, the Son of David (II Sam. 7:12), etc. (Cf. also Deut. 18:18; Gen. 24:2; 38:9.) God took great care to preserve the geneological line of these people, so that the human descent of the Messiah would be clearly evident to all generations.

Why should His humanity be so emphasized? The answer is given by the writer to the Hebrews: "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives, for assur-

edly he does not give help to angels, but he gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in all things, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (2:14ff.). It would not do for the Messiah to come in the form of any other creature nor, for that matter, without form, but in the form of a slave to the Law (Phil. 2:7).

It was disobedience to the revealed Law of God that made man a slave to sin and death. Only man was subject to that law, not bird nor beast nor angel. So it has been unto this very day. To redeem man, the Messiah had to be man; He had to take man's place under God's Law, both as to its demands and as to its curse. It is for this reason that His humanity is stressed (though not to the exclusion of His divinity).

ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES

The question is repeated: "How can a mere offspring of man perform the great task assigned to the Messiah?" There were many great and godly men in the centuries before Christ, but none of them possessed the requisite gifts. Who among men could be greater than they? Or, as the Jews said in their blindness, "Surely you are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too" (Jn. 8:53).

By the prophet Isaiah, the Lord made it known that there would be one, particular human being, who would have all the necessary gifts to fulfill this task. "A shoot will spring from Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (11:1f.).

The Messiah would indeed have all that He needed for the performance of His office. And all that He would need is the Spirit illimitable. Thus endowed, He would be able to render the right decisions at the right time; He would have insight into the true nature of things; He would have the ability to contrive plans based on His

wisdom and perception, and He would have the power to carry out those plans; He would always know the will of the Father and would possess the perfect reverence to motivate Him to do that will. This would be the perfect Ruler, capable of bringing forth justice to the nations (Is. 42:1).

They are spiritually blind, who think that the Messiah would need more than the Spirit. The millennialists of all ages have wanted Him to come with arms and armies, with the physical weapons of warfare, as did the Jews of Christ's day. They believe that only by subduing the governments of the world through physical force can the Messiah bring forth justice to the nations.

Such are blind to the true nature of the Kingdom of God. They do not see that His brand of justice pertains to the spiritual realm. There are governments other than those reported about in the fourth estate. There are principalities and powers, rulers and authorities which the eye cannot see. There are forces, which ignore the physical boundaries of nations, nor are they limited by the physical world in other ways. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

The Messiah came to overthrow these spiritual governments and thus establish a form of justice, which is also spiritual. It would not be one which avails before the courts of nations, but which avails before the divine tribunal. Under this justice, the voice of the Accuser (Rev. 12:10) would be silenced. Neither he nor any other creature would be able to bring a charge against the chosen of God (Rom. 8:33f.). The terms of the Messiah's justice spell out righteousness for all.

The Messiah Himself would have to establish these terms. It could not be on the basis of law, or the Accuser would still have a voice before the divine tribunal. There are, indeed, terms of justice in the Law of God, but they always condemn mankind. The Messiah would not come to be a "new Lawgiver."

Rather: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting, so they will be called the oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" (Is. 61:1-3).

To establish the new justice, the Messiah would have to satisfy the old justice. He would have to satisfy the demands of the Law, not only the demand for righteousness, but also the demand for retribution. His satisfaction would then stand in place of the Law as the basis for the new justice. All who would accept what He did on their behalf would be adjudged accordingly. They would be as righteous as He, for they would possess His righteousness. So it is that the justice of the Messiah would bring good news, freedom, comfort, gladness, etc.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ..." so spake the Messiah in prophecy. It is this fact that would make it possible for this human being to do what no other human being could. The full endowment of the Spirit would give Him everything that He needed to achieve this stupendous feat.

THE ANOINTING: WHEN? It shall not be our purpose to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. This we shall take for granted, although the remainder of this study should leave us with no doubts concerning His authenticity.

The question that we shall consider is this: "When did this anointing take place? When was Jesus endued with the Spirit?" There are three schools of thought among conservative theologians. The first is that He was anointed in eternity. The second is that this took place at His baptism. The third is that it took place at the moment of His conception.

THE FIRST SCHOOL OF THOUGHT The first assumes that the anointing was only the divine authorization to carry out the work of redemption. Thus, it holds that the Son of God was authorized from eternity. It is true that the anointing does serve this purpose. It is likewise true that the Son was foreordained to be the Redeemer (I Pet. 1:20; Acts 2:23). However, the anointing of the Spirit was more than authorization; it was an enduing. The Son of God according to His divine nature did not need the enduing of the Spirit. It was the human nature of the Messiah that needed all the gifts of the Spirit.

THE SECOND SCHOOL OF THOUGHT The second school of thought is much more popular. It is evident upon reading that the Spirit did come upon Jesus in the form of a dove. This was not a matter of the dove representing the Spirit. The Spirit was truly present at the Baptism. This would make it appear as though Isaiah's prophecies were being fulfilled at that time. Furthermore, the wording of the New Testament echoes the wording of the prophecy. John 1:32: "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and He remained upon Him (καὶ ἔμελεν ἐπ' αὐτόν)." Is. 11:2: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him (רוּחַ יְהוָה יָרֵחַ אֶל־מָשִׁיחַ)." ἔμελεν corresponds to רָחַץ; ἐπὶ to לָצַד.

However, what was the purpose of this visible display? John the Baptism declares that it was for his sake, at least in part: "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God,'" (Jn. 1:33f.).

It appears that it was not only for John's sake, but also for Jesus. "And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heaven opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him" (Mk. 1:10). As to what this meant for Jesus, one can only surmise; perhaps it was simply a divine verification that now was the time to begin His ministry.

A. B. Bruce (Expos. Grk. N. T.) makes much of the preposition used by Mark, i.e., εἰς: "εἰς αὐτόν: this reading suggests the idea of the descent not merely upon (ἐπ' αὐτόν) but into Him, as if to take up its abode; henceforth the immanent spirit of Jesus" (Vol. I, p. 343). However, εἰς with verbs of motion can have the sense of "to" or "towards" and even "on" or "upon" (cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 593). Nigel Turner (*A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, by J. H. Moulton, Vol. III, p. 256) states: "Sometimes also εἰς appears to stand for ἐπ' and πρὸς." Considering that it is the dove form that Jesus saw, "towards" appears more likely than "into." Matthew and Luke use ἐπ', indicating that the dove, as a bird would, landed "on" Jesus. Of the three synoptic Gospels, Mark is the most vibrant. It is in keeping with his style to picture the bird in flight, descending "toward" Jesus.

Many venerable fathers have regarded this as the time of the promised anointing (Athanasius, Hengstenberg, Edersheim, Stoeckhardt, A. Pieper, J. Ylvisaker, P. E. Kretzmann. Kretzmann tries to draw Luther into this corner, but readings by this author would seem to place Luther in the third school of thought.).

THE THIRD SCHOOL OF THOUGHT With such luminaries speaking for the second school of thought, one hesitates to oppose it. Yet, there are many equally venerable fathers who espouse the third school (Ambrose, Origen, M. Chemnitz, F. Pieper, J. Schaller). The support of this or that father does not make a given position Scriptural. Neither is it my purpose to make the time of the anointing a matter of doctrine. The arguments are here set forth only for the purpose of meditation, so that we might have a deeper appreciation for and understanding of the fact of the anointing of Jesus, which is doctrinal.

A powerful argument for the third school of thought is presented by John Schaller (*Biblical Christology*, pp. 129f.):

Inasmuch as he was the Son of God, he needed no special endowment for this function (i.e. the prophetic

office); in his human nature, however, he was anointed as our Prophet in the moment of incarnation. By virtue of the hypostatic union, which was established by his conception, his human nature received the anointment of the Spirit without measure. ... Nevertheless it is true that he did nothing which might have caused him to be recognized as a prophet with a special message to all the people until after his baptism by John.

3. It is quite improper to conclude from Matthew 3: 16; John 1:32 that Christ was first endowed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism, and that this ceremony made him the Prophet ... the visible descent of the Holy Spirit took place for the information of Christ's forerunner who from that day was able to proclaim Jesus as the Promised One.

4. Modern theologians almost without exception assume that Christ was anointed for his Messiahship at his baptism. This necessarily implies that Jesus was not actively and in the full sense our Savior from his birth, and is in direct contradiction of the Christmas message of the angel (Lk. 2:11). (Underlining represents Schaller's italics.)²

Christ did not become the "Christ" only after His baptism. He was anointed to be the Savior, and this work began at the moment of His conception. The thirty years of His existence prior to the baptism were years of substitutionary activity under the Law as well. Jesus was "born under the law in order that he might redeem those who were under the law" (Gal. 4:4f.). Therefore, when we read that the twelve-year-old Jesus "continued in subjection to" His parents (Lk. 2:51), we rightly teach that this was part of the vicarious obedience of the Christ. If one understands the anointing of the Spirit to be more than official authorization, but to include endowment with the necessary gifts to carry out His role as the Savior of the world, he is left with the conclusion that Jesus must have been anointed at His conception. (Again, this is a conclusion of logic, not doctrine.)

Speaking to Cornelius and his guests, Peter said: "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about do-

ing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). There are certain similarities between these words and the angelic announcement to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35). In both messages, the πνεῦμα ἅγιον and the δύναμις are referred to in relation with Christ. This further supports the third school of thought. It was at the moment of conception that the Spirit and the power were poured out upon Jesus of Nazareth. (To those who argue that Lk. 1:35 speaks of the Spirit's coming upon Mary and not Jesus, I refer Matt. 1:18,20. There it is stated that the Child is ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου. Therefore I conclude that referring Lk. 1:35 to Jesus is Scripturally legitimate. It speaks not only of Mary, but also of the Seed in her womb.)

THE ANOINTING: WHAT? "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." "For that reason" (δύναμις), i.e., because the Spirit and the power were poured out on Jesus of Nazareth, He is designated "the Son of God." This is a matter of great significance. It was the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which resulted in the union of the divine nature of the Son of God and the human nature of the Son of man in person of the one man, Jesus of Nazareth. (This is not to exclude the other Persons of the Trinity in this mysterious act. However, as in other divine deeds, one Person is emphasized in the action.)

The Spirit accomplished that which the fathers have called the "Communication of Natures." God became man; this man is God. Isaiah prophesied that the Child's name would be called "the Mighty God, the everlasting Father" (9:6). Gabriel made a similar declaration. When Jesus asked, "Who do people say that the Son of man is?", Peter answered, "Thou art ... the Son of the Living God" (Mt. 16:13,16). Paul writes that "The second man is the Lord from heaven" (I Cor. 15:47). God took upon Himself the nature of the human; the human received the nature of the divine.

Likewise, through the work of the Spirit a Communication of Attributes took place. The attributes of one nature were communicated to the other. This was absolutely necessary for our redemption. The blood of a mere man is not sufficient as payment (cf. Ps. 49:7-9). This would have been the case if the two natures had remained separate. It would have been only a man who was sacrificed. The work of the Spirit achieved such an intimate and indissoluble union of the two natures that the blood of Jesus could be called, in truth, "the blood of God" (cf. Acts 20:28; I Jn. 1:7). It was no one less than "the Lord of glory, the Prince of life" who was killed upon the cross (I Cor. 2:8; Acts 3:15).

The same holds true in matters pertaining to the imputation of righteousness; it was necessary that there be a perfect union of the two natures. Had Jesus been mere man and yet attained perfect righteousness, it would have sufficed for Himself alone. However, since this One was both God and man, His righteousness could be imputed to all men. It was the Son of God Who destroyed the works of the devil (I Jn. 3:8).

The union of the two natures was necessary, also, in order for Jesus to have the sort of ministry that He did. The Spirit communicated to the human nature the attributes of the divine. Jesus of Nazareth was anointed with power (Acts 10:38). Thus, it is said that power "went out of Him" (Lk. 8:46: ἐξελλυθησαν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ), when He performed miracles. This is what made it possible for Jesus to give His disciples authority over unclean spirits (Mk. 6:7). By virtue of the union, Jesus also knew what thoughts men had in their hearts (Jn. 2:24f.).

The fact that this can be attributed to the union of the natures is borne out in the account of His first miracle. By the performance of this miracle, Jesus "manifest His glory" (Jn. 2:11). John had already defined this glory as "glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (1:14). It was His own divine glory that shown forth out of the veil of His humanity.

Thus, the anointing of the Spirit can be equated, in part, to the Communication of Natures and Attributes.

The Spirit poured out upon the human nature the very gifts which are inherent in the divine nature. For strength He leaned on the Spirit (as well as the Father) "in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17). Jesus was man's Substitute; therefore it behoved Him to do it as man.

However, it was necessary for this man to have a quality which no other man possessed, namely, holiness. Here, again, it was the anointing of the Holy Spirit that made the difference. "... for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." Because of the manner of the conception, this offspring was holy from that very moment. He was set apart from sin and unto God. "He had to be made like his brethren in all things ... yet without sin" (Heb. 2:17; 4:15). The Holy Spirit achieved this great feat when He breathed life into the Seed of the virgin Mary.

Had it been otherwise, Christ's work would have been for naught. Had He been conceived in the natural fashion, He would have been born with the power of sin ruling in His heart (Ps. 51:5). This would have nullified His effectiveness as the Savior. Yea, He would not have been able to save Himself!

PSALM 45:7 "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil"
 (Prov. 8:13). Only one conceived without original sin would have perfect fear. We are conceived with minds hostile toward God (Rom. 8:7), minds which love darkness rather than the light (Jn. 3:19), minds which are intent on evil from childhood (Gen. 8:21). However, the Spirit of the fear of Jehovah (Is. 11:2) was upon Jesus from birth. Thus, He was born with a natural hatred of evil.

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hast anointed thee with the oil of joy above thy fellows." This translation would indicate that the anointing was subsequent to and even consequent on His attitude. Indeed, עַל־כֵּן does mean "therefore," "on that account." However, as Gesenius and others point out, "in poetry it also has the force of a conjunction for עַל־כֵּן 'on account that,' 'because that'

..." (*Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 403). — Leupold, also, writes: "We believe that those interpreters are correct who regard the second half of the verse as a clause that offers evidence rather than result. One rightly concludes that, if this Hero loves righteousness and hates iniquity, it is because God has given Him an anointing with the oil of gladness, rather than the case should be reversed" (*Exposition of the Psalms*, p. 356).

The Messiah's anointing was with the oil of gladness. The Holy Spirit filled the heart of Jesus with joy in doing the will of God. "I delight to do thy will, O my God ..." (Ps. 40:8). It was the result of the anointing that Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

In Jesus, this attitude completely dominated His heart. To be sure, King David, the author of Ps. 45, rejoiced in righteousness, as do all believers. Yet, because of the Old Adam, we still sin. Jesus, however, was anointed above His fellows. He had a perfect, human heart.

It does not suffice to say that Jesus delighted in the will of God, because He was true God. As God, He did indeed delight in holiness. As a man, however, He needed the Spirit's anointing, for the human nature does not naturally have this attitude. It must be "breathed" into it.

Jesus came not to take God's place under the Law, but man's. He came to fill up our emptiness. It had to be human substitutionary obedience on the part of Jesus that attained perfect righteousness for us all. Yea, *πεπερασμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα* (Heb. 4:15).

In this we rejoice with great joy! There has been imputed to us the very kind of righteousness which God wanted us to achieve. Because Jesus, the man, imbued with the gifts of the Spirit, accomplished the will of the Father, therefore His perfect obedience on our behalf is acceptable.

HEBREWS 9:14 "How much more shall the blood of Christ,
who through the eternal Spirit offered

himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." On this passage, Albert Barnes lists five interpretations regarding this "Eternal Spirit": He is 1) the Holy Spirit; 2) Christ's divine nature; 3) immortal life; 4) the glorified person of Christ now presenting His blood; 5) divine influence. Barnes, himself, favors 1): "Christ made his great sacrifice under the extraordinary influences of the Eternal Spirit." His reasoning:

(1) It is the interpretation which would naturally occur to the readers. ... (2) This interpretation is one which is most naturally conveyed by the language of the original. ... (3) This interpretation accords with the fact that the Lord Jesus is represented as having been eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit. ... Though He was divine, yet he was also a man, and as such was under influences similar to those of other pious men. The Holy Spirit is the source and sustainer of all piety in the soul, and it is not improper to suppose that the man Christ Jesus was in a remarkable manner influenced by the Holy Ghost in His readiness to obey God, and to suffer according to His will. (4) If there was ever any occasion on which we may suppose he was influenced by the Holy Ghost, that of his sufferings and death ... may be supposed eminently to have been such an one. ... (5) This representation is not inconsistent with the belief that the sufferings and death of the Redeemer were voluntary, and that they had all the merit which belongs to a voluntary transaction. Piety in the heart of a Christian now is not less voluntary because it is produced and cherished by the Holy Ghost, nor is there less excellence in true religion because the Holy Ghost imparts strong faith in the time of temptation and trial. It seems to me, therefore, that the Lord Jesus was led by the strong influences of the Spirit of God to devote Himself as a sacrifice for sin" (*Barnes on the New Testament — Hebrews*, p. 196).

Thus, we learn that in matters pertaining to the active and passive, vicarious atonement, Christ did not re-

sort simply to powers innate in His divine nature, but truly humbled Himself and trusted in the aid of the Holy Spirit.

VARIOUS PASSAGES This by no means exhausts the subject of the Spirit's involvement in the life of our Savior. I shall only make fleeting references to some other passages, which deserve further study, hoping that the reader will do so.

MARK 1:12 We are privileged to see Jesus' passive submission to the will of the Father. While Jesus was willing, He does not charge into the wilderness, like some sort of crusader. Rather, He is led, yea, "driven" (ἐκβάλλει) into the wilderness to face that most distasteful (to put it mildly) confrontation with the Prince of darkness. One can almost see Jesus stumbling forward, as the Spirit pushes Him toward His destiny.

LUKE 4:14 After the experience in the wilderness, Jesus does not shrink from His work. The Spirit fills Him with the strength to carry on.

LUKE 10:21 The Spirit fills Jesus with joy. He rejoices over the marvelous way in which God does His work.

ROMANS 1:4 The human mind bends and sways over the various interpretations of "spirit" in I TIM. 3:16 these passages. Give this some consideration: The Spirit is the Breath of the Almighty (Job 33:4). God breathed life into the lifeless body of Jesus, and He came to life. — The Spirit, by breathing life into the body of Christ, declared that all that was done by Jesus in the flesh is acceptable to God; He was justified in the Spirit.

CONCLUSION From the Holy Writ, we learn that the Holy Spirit was most intimately involved in the life of the incarnate Son of God. The Father poured out His Spirit upon Christ without measure (Jn. 3:34). He anointed Him above His fellows. As a result of this anointing, the divine nature was joined in perfect union

with the human nature. The Spirit made them one in every way. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus of Nazareth in bodily form (Col. 2:9; 1:19).

Yet, in His eternal wisdom, the Son saw fit to deny to Himself the full use of His divine powers. In accordance with the will of the Father (Jn. 5:19), He used only such powers as were necessary for the welfare of others, but never used them for Himself. These were the very gifts of the Spirit to Jesus. It was not that Jesus did not possess the fulness of the Godhead. Rather, it was as though the Spirit in union with Christ held back the floodgates of divine knowledge and power and let through only that which the Father determined to be necessary.

Jesus placed His whole trust in the strength which the Spirit would supply. In obeying the Law, He leaned on the Spirit. In facing the cross, He leaned on the Spirit. His work was carried on in union with the Father and the Spirit. Nevertheless, at no time did Jesus cease to be God. At no time did He cease to be man. It is the union of the natures which makes His obedience and His suffering of value to everyone who rests his faith on the vicarious atonement. Truly, it is the blood of God which cleanses us from all sin.

Now, it is we who rejoice in the Spirit. The knowledge of what He accomplished in the incarnation of the Son of God fills us with joy eternal. We have a perfect Savior. He has established an everlasting Kingdom. The spiritual government of Satan has been overthrown. The damning justice of the Law has been replaced by the saving justice of the Gospel. The knowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is the ANOINTED ONE brings us comfort, gladness, and eternal righteousness. Praise be unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, both now and forevermore. Amen!

J. Pfeiffer

NOTES

1. The author makes the point that there is a perfect,

harmonious activity in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in connection with the carrying out of the work of man's salvation. Presented for study, the thrust of the article is on the work of the Holy Spirit. -Ed.

2. For further study, refer to *Journal of Theology*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 1-11: "The Anointing of Jesus," by Prof. E. Schaller. -Ed.

A SURVEY OF PASSAGES PERTAINING TO THE MARRIAGE OF THE DIVORCED

This article has grown out of a presentation made by the writer to the Wisconsin Conference of the CLC in October, 1983, and the discussion which accompanied that presentation. The interest manifested there in the topic of divorce and remarriage is not unusual. For marital problems in our age of loose morals are an increasingly common thing in our congregations. Moreover, the study of the pertinent passages of Scripture involves one in a variety of difficulties. Not only are there exegetical questions involving words, grammar, and syntax, but there are also sufficient textual variants among the Greek manuscripts to furnish real problems in textual criticism. Erasmus was correct when he observed that the divorce texts present many difficulties and that scholars over the centuries have not shared the same opinion about them.¹

Much has been written on this topic — books, pamphlets, and periodical articles representing every opinion from the rigid no-divorce position of the Roman Catholics to the easy no-fault approach of a growing number of Protestants and Lutherans. This article contains merely a brief survey of the passages which treat of the marriage of the divorced. It is the writer's hope that the comments which are offered on matters of textual criticism and exegesis may stimulate further study on the part of the reader. It is proper that we proceed with the conviction that the presence of variant readings does not obscure the Word of God for us and that the Holy Spirit

is fully able to bless our study of Scripture with understanding. To put it simply, the exegete should always approach his text with confidence!

GENESIS 2:24 It is appropriate that a paper discussing any aspect of marriage begin with a review of God's institution of marriage:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Gen. 1:24, KJV)

We note that the New Testament cites this passage frequently, and that the Lord Christ refers to it in His discussions of divorce.

From these words of institution we learn that God intended marriage to be an intimate one-flesh relationship between a man and a woman. According to the divine will here expressed, there was to be no such thing as divorce. Divorce was rather one of the many evils that came into the world with the fall into sin. Christ makes these facts clear in Matthew 19:8:

Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. (KJV)

We recognize divorce therefore as a breach of God's original purpose. Yet, as we shall see, God has granted permission for divorce under certain limited circumstances. Thus while the occasion for divorce is sin, yet the right of divorce under the specified circumstances must be recognized as divine.

DEUTERONOMY 24:1-4 A person may legitimately ask why a passage from the Law of Moses should find a place in a discussion of divorce and remarriage. For the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that this law has come to its end in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior. There are in fact several reasons why we may, and even should, devote some attention to these verses. First, they constitute the chief Old Testament *sedes* on the subject of this paper. Secondly,

this passage clearly stands in the background of the Lord's statements on divorce in the Gospels, and this background must be considered in a proper grammatical-historical interpretation of these statements.

The NKJV is here cited, since it reflects the syntactic structure of the Hebrew more accurately than does the KJV:

1. "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house,
2. "when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's *wife*,
3. "*if* the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her *to be* his wife,
4. "*then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."

We shall not enter into a comprehensive discussion of this passage. The first matter which is pertinent to our purpose is the meaning of the words "some uncleanness." What was this "uncleanness" which in the Mosaic economy was considered adequate grounds for divorce? In the Hebrew the words נֶפֶשׁ אִשָּׁה mean literally the *nakedness* or *shame of a thing*, or more simply, *something shameful*. The application of these words to casuistry was a matter of dispute among the Jewish rabbis. The school of Hillel interpreted them in a very broad fashion, so as to include even such petty things as the wife's being a poor cook.² This lax interpretation is evident in the question of the Pharisees in Matthew 19:3: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The opposing school of Shammai understood the words more strictly, namely, as referring to actual approaches toward adultery. The opinion of some rabbis that the reference is to adultery itself is not tenable, inasmuch as the Law of Moses pre-

scribed, not divorce, but death for this sin (Deut. 22: 13-30).

A second matter is of even greater importance as background for the Lord's utterances on divorce. It should be noted carefully that divorce in the Mosaic dispensation involved the dissolution of the marital bond and the right of remarriage. The passage from Deuteronomy 24 cited above speaks of the divorced woman as "going and becoming another man's wife" and it refers to the men involved as a "former husband" and a "latter husband." The clear implication is that following such a divorce the former spouses were both free to enter into other marriages. To put it simply, the Old Testament divorce carried with it the right of remarriage for both partners. This, now, is the background for the questions raised by the Jews of Jesus' day and His responses to them. While the Lord routinely corrected these adversaries in their misimpressions concerning the will of God, at no time did He tell them that they were wrong in their assumption that divorce could legitimately be followed by remarriage. He permitted them to remain in their opinion that divorce involved a dissolution of the bond of marriage and that the former spouses could therefore enter into new unions. More than that, as we shall see later, He even spoke to them in terms of remarriage.

This point needs to be emphasized because of variant views among Christian denominations on this question. The Roman Catholic church, for example, allows only a separation "from bed and board," holding that the bond of marriage remains unbroken until the death of one of the partners.³ We hold that such a view violates the Scriptural understanding of divorce. Where divorce takes place according to divine norms, the bond of the former marriage is to be regarded as broken, and the man and woman are permitted to remarry. The guilty party must, of course, take the blame before God for the dissolution of the marriage.

MATTHEW 5:31-32 In this passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is instructing His disciples concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. There are several variant readings among the Greek manuscripts,

one of which will be considered later. The translation in the KJV is as follows:

31. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:
 32. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

In verse 31 Jesus is citing the passage from Deuteronomy 24. In the following verse He shows clearly that the easy-going divorce practice advocated by the followers of Hillel was contrary to the will of God. While He does not take sides with any particular party, His explanation would obviously be more to the liking of the pupils of Shammai. For in effect Jesus points to only one rightful basis for divorce.

Let us consider some elements in this verse. To the question whether or not the verb "put away" (ἀπολύω) refers to the dissolution of marriage, an affirmative answer must be given. Those who insist that it means mere separation from bed and board do not have a proper lexical basis for their contention. For the Greek verb signifies an absolute releasing which results in the undoing of previously existent bonds.

The phrase "saving for the cause of fornication" could be rendered also "except for the cause of fornication." To what does this exceptive clause refer? Those are probably correct who affirm that it refers to the entire statement in verse 32. Without this clause Jesus would say: "Whoever divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." With this clause He gives an exception for which God permits divorce and remarriage, namely the cause of fornication.

And what does "fornication" (πορνεία) mean? In its common, everyday sense it refers to any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse. Through this word Jesus restricts divorce to infidelity which involves, not the mere lustful look (Matt. 5:28), but the act of sexual union.

The words translated "causes her to commit adultery" (ποιεῖ αὐτήν μοιχευθῆναι in the Nestle/Aland and UBS texts; ποιεῖ αὐτήν μοιχεῖσθαι in the Majority text)⁴ and "commits adultery" (μοιχεῖται) are hard to interpret. Lenski has chosen to understand the verbs in what he calls a passive sense: "Every man releasing his wife without cause of fornication brings about that she is stigmatized as adulterous; and he who shall marry her that has been released is stigmatized as adulterous." It is questionable, however, whether the passive can be made to refer to the mere subjective judgment on the part of others, namely, to be stigmatized as adulterous. If we accept the Nestle/Aland-UBS reading (μοιχευθῆναι) for the first clause cited above, we could possibly render the phrase: "she is made to suffer adultery." Many scholars, however, assume an active meaning for this passive infinitive: "she is made to commit adultery." If we accept the Majority reading (μοιχεῖσθαι) for the first clause, we would have no choice but to render the two clauses actively: "causes her to commit adultery" and "commits adultery."⁵

But how are we to understand this: "Whoever puts away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her that has been put away commits adultery"? It is obvious from the context that Jesus is thinking about a situation in which the woman who has been put away marries another man. If she has been wrongfully put away by her first husband, namely for some cause other than fornication, then she is made to commit adultery when she remarries, and the man who marries her likewise commits adultery. For she is in God's sight still bound in marriage to the man who has wrongfully put her away. This first husband is, of course, sinfully involved in this marital tragedy, even though Christ in this passage does not specifically call him an adulterer. Perhaps Christ does not charge him with this sin because he is not viewed as having married again. But he cannot absolve himself from a wrong which leads to express adultery on the part of others: he causes the woman to commit adultery, that is, he places her into a situation where by marrying another she would be committing adultery!

Some exegetes believe that this interpretation must

be rejected as conflicting with the words of Paul in I Corinthians 7:15. For there he permits remarriage to a spouse who has been maliciously deserted. It should be noted, however, that the circumstances of Matthew 5 and those of I Corinthians 7 are not completely parallel. In Matthew 5, a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ is discussing the will of God as it applies in general to the institution of marriage. The Corinthians passage, however, deals with a special situation in which one spouse is a believer and the other is an unbeliever, a situation moreover in which the believing spouse might well have to give up his/her profession of Christ to keep the marriage intact. If under these circumstances the unbelieving spouse should refuse to go on living with the believing spouse, the believing spouse would no longer be under the bond of marriage.

The question remains, however, as to the right of remarriage for a woman who is legitimately divorced for the cause of fornication. Is such a person, as the guilty party, free to remarry? This passage does not answer the question directly. Yet this writer cannot find any other passage in the New Testament which prohibits the guilty party from remarrying. If the bond of marriage has been broken by the fornication and the ensuing divorce, is there any valid reason why the guilty party cannot remarry? Before a pastor would conduct such a remarriage, he would of course seek repentance for the sin of fornication which destroyed the first marriage.

MATTHEW 19:9 This verse occurs in a longer section in which Jesus answers a question of the Pharisees concerning divorce. In the KJV translation it reads: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Variant readings once again enter into the picture. The question concerns the last clause. The Majority text includes it while the Nestle/Aland-UBS text omits it.

The words of interest in this passage are "and shall marry another," since this clause is not found in 5:31-32. Christ here brings the matter of remarriage directly

into the discussion. He speaks of a man who divorces his wife and marries another. If he does this for any reason other than fornication, he is guilty of adultery. If, however, he puts away his wife for the cause of fornication, this putting away involves the dissolving of the bond of marriage, and he therefore does not commit adultery if he remarries. (It will be noticed that the exceptive clause is here being applied to the coordinate structure involving both divorce and remarriage. Cf. Luke 16:18.)

But how are we to understand the final clause, assuming it to be a genuine part of this passage? Note the situation: A man commits adultery by wrongfully putting away his wife and marrying another woman. Now another man marries the wrongfully divorced wife. This second man, Christ says, is also guilty of adultery. Why? Since we do not know all the details, any answer would have to be speculative. Let it suffice to say that all parties have in one way or another shown a disregard for God's will regarding the permanency of the marital bond.⁶ The strong judgment expressed by Christ in this passage serves to underscore how seriously God regards any wanton dissolution of the holy estate of marriage. Any act which violates the permanency of that estate involves sin against the Sixth Commandment!

MARK 10:11-12 The words of these verses were spoken by Christ on the same occasion as that in the above passage from Matthew 19. The NASB, following the Nestle/Aland-UBS text, reads as follows: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery." The Majority text can be rendered: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and is married to another, she commits adultery." The variant readings involved in this passage clearly do not have any significant effect on the meaning.

It will be noted that Christ does not here repeat the exceptive clause of the passages from Matthew. He is here stating a general principle and makes no mention of exceptions. This fact in no way negates or contradicts

the exception recorded in the fuller account in Matthew.

This passage from Mark is helpful also in that it speaks of both the husband and the wife initiating a divorce and marrying another. From this we see that the two spouses are regarded as equal with respect to the bond of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. What applies to the one applies also to the other. In Matthew's accounts only the husband is spoken of as initiating divorce and remarriage.

LUKE 16:18 In this passage the only difference among the Greek manuscripts involves the presence or absence of the word $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ (everyone) in the second clause. Here is a rendering of the Majority reading: "Everyone who puts away his wife and marries another woman commits adultery; and everyone who marries a woman who has been put away from a husband commits adultery." Inasmuch as this passage does not introduce any elements not touched upon above, we shall not give it further consideration.

I CORINTHIANS 7:15 Once again the variants among the manuscripts are minor, involving only the question whether the pronoun is an "us" or a "you." The Majority text can be translated as follows:

If, however, the unbelieving spouse departs, let him depart [permissive use of the imperative]. The brother or sister is not bound as a slave in such circumstances; it is in connection with peace that God has called us.

In the Gentile world a new situation presented itself to which the Lord Christ had not addressed Himself directly during the days of His public ministry. It happened in congregations like that in Corinth that the husband or wife in a family would come to faith but the remaining spouse would remain in unbelief. If this unbelieving spouse agreed to continue living with the believing spouse, this believer was not to disrupt the bond of marriage (I Cor. 7:12-13). If, however, the unbelieving spouse withdrew himself from the marital state, the believing spouse would no longer be bound as a slave to the

marriage. Paul adds, for the comfort of the believer whose marriage has been disrupted, that it is in connection with peace that God has called us. While such a disruption could easily bring grief to the believer, especially in that further opportunity for witnessing to the unbelieving spouse would now be gone, such a believer should lay the matter to rest in the hands of the Lord and not fret over it.

This passage is, of course, the *sedes* which we employ in cases of malicious desertion. When an unbeliever withdraws himself from the marriage, the believing spouse is freed from the bond of that union and may marry another. Questions have been raised concerning the meaning of the word "departs" (χωρίζεται). Does this involve a geographical separation, or may it include also the mere refusal to carry out any longer the duties of marriage? I believe that the answer is to be found in the preceding context, where Paul speaks of an unbeliever who "agrees to go on living" (συνευδοκεῖ οὐκεῖν) with the believing spouse (Vv. 12-13). The verb "departs" in verse 15 would then by contrast involve a refusal to go on living as husband or wife with one's spouse.

On the surface it may appear that the above exegesis is in conflict with verses 10-11 of this chapter: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" (KJV). Note however that in this earlier passage Paul is clearly speaking of a situation in which both spouses are believing members of the congregation. God's will, as expressed by the Lord Christ Himself during His earthly ministry, is that a wife is not to depart from her husband, nor is a husband to put away his wife. Paul adds parenthetically that if a wife should actually (ἐάν ὁ ἐκ) depart from her husband, she should either be reconciled to her husband or remain unmarried. For in God's sight the bond of her marriage is still in effect.

ROMANS 7:2 The Roman Catholics have made much of Romans 7:2 in affirming that the bond of marriage can be severed only by the death of one of the

spouses. The passage reads:

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. (KJV)

On the surface it might appear that this verse provides strong support for the Catholic position. We must remember, however, that Paul for purposes of illustration cites that marital situation which God intended when He instituted marriage, namely, that a husband and wife would remain bound in that estate until the death of one of the spouses. Paul had no occasion here to cite the exceptional situations involving adultery or malicious desertion. Such a citation would, in fact, have impeded the flow of his Scriptural argument.

CONCLUSIONS From the above passages we can confidently draw several conclusions: It remains God's will that the bond of marriage be dissolved only by death. However, in the case of adultery by fornication He does permit the innocent spouse to divorce the guilty and remarry. Furthermore, in the case of malicious desertion by an unbelieving spouse, the bond of marriage is similarly broken and the believing spouse is therefore free to enter into another union. Yet, while it is a relatively simple matter to state the Scriptural principles regarding divorce and remarriage, it is frequently difficult to apply them to cases which arise within our congregations. The reason for this is that it is so often difficult to establish where the guilt lies in a specific marital problem or even what sins have actually been committed.

It is comforting to observe that even Martin Luther, who was a careful student of Scripture and a conscientious pastor, had to wrestle with marital problems that came to his attention. We do well to note two basic principles that guided him in his *Seelsorge*. First, the high dignity and honor of the marriage estate must ever be preserved. His conviction that the New Testament permitted divorce only on the grounds of adultery or of desertion by an unbelieving spouse led him to detest divorce. Accordingly he taught that everything should be

done to preserve the marriage tie, even if one of the partners has been unfaithful. The innocent party, he said, should be willing to forgive the guilty party, and a "penitent David" should be restored. Secondly, one's pastoral practice must reflect the Gospel of Christ and Christian concern. Whatever decisions are made relative to marriage and divorce, they should be done "in the name of Christ" and "in the spirit of Christ." In the exercise of such faith and love the pastor will do all that he can to help an individual with marital or sexual problems, the salvation of that person's soul remaining the paramount concern.

May the Lord grant to our pastors and congregations a practice which is faithful to His Word and therefore also thoroughly evangelical!

C. Kuehne

NOTES

1. Cited in V. Norskov Olsen, *The New Testament Logia on Divorce: A Study of their Interpretation from Erasmus to Milton* (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1971), p. 21.
2. Cf. Hillel's often quoted words: "Uncleanness is anything."
3. Olsen, p. 18: "Catholic theologians differentiate between two types of divorce. The first is separation from board and bed (*divortium a mensa et thoro*), and the other is an absolute annulment of the marriage tie (*divortium a vinculo matrimonii*), by asserting that the marriage from the very beginning (*ab initio*) had been unlawfully contracted."
4. A simple, and probably adequate, approach in the evaluation of the variant readings in these passages on divorce and remarriage is to compare the readings of the Majority (Byzantine) text and the Nestle/Aland and UBS texts. It should be noted that the 26th edition of Nestle/Aland and the 3rd edition of the UBS present an identical text, a text which is very similar to the earlier Westcott-Hort text and which is based largely on manuscripts of the Alexandrian tradition.
5. Some readers may desire a fuller discussion of the

meaning of the verbs for adultery which are found in verse 32. The Greek language has two such verbs, μοιχεύω and μοιχάομαι. a) μοιχεύω is used some 15 times in the New Testament and all but two of these are in the active voice grammatically and in meaning: "commit adultery." A present middle/passive participle, μοιχευομένη, occurs in John 8:4, and in that context the most natural understanding is again active: "committing adultery." This leaves us with the Nestle/Aland-UBS reading μοιχευθήναι in our passage, the form being an aorist passive infinitive. Thayer's lexicon suggests a passive meaning: "to suffer adultery, be debauched." The newer Arndt-Gingrich lexicon, on the other hand, prefers an active sense: "to commit adultery," basing this choice upon the general usage of the verb when it is used of a woman. It is indeed difficult to make a decision on how μοιχευθήναι should be rendered, assuming it to be the correct reading. The suggestion offered by Hendriksen in his commentary on Matthew may be a happy one. He feels that the thought lies in what the woman undergoes, suffers, or is exposed to. The man who wrongfully puts away his wife causes her to be exposed to the sin of adultery, for if she now marries another she will be involved in an adulterous union. The reason for this is explained in the next paragraph of this paper. b) The other verb, μοιχάομαι, is used less often, the exact count depending on one's choices of variant readings. In the New Testament it is found only as a middle or passive deponent with a seemingly active meaning: "commit adultery." The Majority text has μοιχᾶσθαι in our passage, which would require the rendering: "he causes her to commit adultery." Both the Nestle/Aland-UBS and the Majority texts have μοιχᾶται in the final clause of this verse, which is most naturally rendered: "and whoever marries her that has been put away commits adultery." — As mentioned above, Lenski chooses the reading μοιχευθήναι for the infinitive and insists on what he calls a passive sense: "to be stigmatized as adulterous." He then affirms that μοιχᾶται in the final clause must also be taken in the same so-called passive sense: "he who shall marry her that has been released is stigmatized as adulterous." While this provides an attractive solution to an exegetical crux,

- it does seem arbitrary to impose such a sense upon the deponent $\mu\omicron\lambda\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\iota$. If Christ had intended the meaning promoted by Lenski, why did He not employ $\mu\omicron\lambda\chi\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ in the final clause instead of $\mu\omicron\lambda\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\iota$? For a detailed discussion of the meaning of the Greek terms, cf. John Murray, *Divorce* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1953), pp. 21-24, especially footnote 2. Murray takes strong exception to Lenski's exegesis.
6. The writer has here adopted expressions used by Armin W. Schuetze in "Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Fall, 1982, p. 254. In this article Prof. Schuetze draws an interesting inference from the words of Christ, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). He affirms that these words clearly imply that man can through his sin break the bond of marriage. Where that bond is broken, remarriage would be a legitimate option for the parties involved.
 7. Olsen, pp. 43-57.

BOOK NOTICES

(With no attempt at presenting reviews, a listing and brief description of recent publications are here given so that our readers may be informed of their availability. Northwestern Publishing House is the publisher, and all the books may be purchased through our CLC Book House at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.)

1. *Cross Reference and Index to the Contents of Luther's Works*, by Heinrich J. Vogel. Hard cover. 281 pp. \$13.95. — The first 239 pages are divided into four parts giving cross references as follows: Part 1. Where works included in the American Edition may be found in the St. Louis, the Weimar, and the Erlanged Editions. Part 2. Which works in the St. Louis Edition are included in the American Edition, and where they may be found in the American, the Weimar, and the Erlangen Editions. Part 3. Which works in the Weimar Edition are included in the American Edition and where they may be found in the American, the St. Louis and the Erlangen Editions. Part 4. Which works

in the Erlangen Edition are included in the American Edition and where they may be found in the American, the St. Louis, and the Weimar Editions. A valuable addition to the section on cross-references is the alphabetical index of the American Edition on subjects and Bible passages indicated in the Aland Reference table which is given on each facing page of the cross-reference text. A further part of the addendum is the chronological index to the contents of the American Edition. Like any other index and cross-reference work, this volume may not serve the student for every need that may arise in this area, but we are indebted to the late Prof. Vogel for this stupendous piece of work which may save the reader many hours of searching to find the original of the English translations of the American Edition. The Indices which were compiled through computer by John Hartwig c.r.m. are equally well appreciated.

2. *The Foolishness of God*, by Siegbert W. Becker. Paper back (Pb). 266 pp. \$8.95. — From the works of Luther, the author describes the true place of reason in historic Lutheran theology. The anti-rationalism of Luther's theology is demonstrated by citations from the Reformer's writings.

3. *Martin Luther — Man of God*, by Morton A. Schroeder. Hard cover. 103 pp. \$9.95. — With striking art work illustrating each page of text, vignettes on the life of Luther are presented. The pen and ink drawings are by Harold Schmitz and Harold Paulsen. This would be a splendid confirmation gift.

4. *A Simple Way to Pray*, by Martin Luther. A 4½" x 6½" pb. booklet. Translated by C. J. Trapp. 32 pp. \$1.65. — Based on the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostolic Creed, Dr. Luther teaches Peter the Barber how he goes about praying. In his letter to his friend he says: "When it comes to praying (for our flesh and the devil resist and hinder prayer) I take my little hymnal and hasten to my room, or, if the occasion gives opportunity, to a church service with others. As time permits, I quietly recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, should I be granted more time, some of the quotations of Christ ... just as children recite them." —C.M.G.



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