

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 41 DECEMBER 2001 NUMBER 4

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The JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY is published at Immanuel Lutheran College, 501 Grover Rd, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701-7199, by authorization of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Subscriptions: \$10.50 per year, \$18.00 for two years, \$26.50 for three years (Foreign: \$14.50, \$26.00 and \$37.50), payable in advance. Issues are dated: March, June, September, and December.

Editor	Paul Schaller 3854 Claymore Lane Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701-7160
Assistant Editor	Elton Hallauer
Managing Editor	Steven Sippert
Book Editor	David Lau
Circulation Manager	Benno Sydow 2750 Oxford Street North Roseville, Minnesota 55113
Staff Contributors	M. Eichstadt, S. Kurtzahn, D. Maas, P. Naumann, T. Schuetze, A. Schulz, J. Lau (advisory)

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"Be still, and know that I am God." *

Psalm 46:10

Stephen C. F. Kurtzahn

(* Sermon at St. Paul' s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Austin, MN, September 16, 2001.)

Dear fellow Christians:

President Franklin Roosevelt said that December 7, 1941, would be a day that would live in infamy. That was the day Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was attacked, hundreds and hundreds of American sailors died, and several of our battleships were sunk. September 11, 2001, will be another infamous day in American history. Highjacked civilian airliners were deliberately crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, as well as the Pentagon in our nation' s capital. Thousands of our fellow citizens died. We will never forget the video we have seen on television this past week. One hundred fifty years ago in our war with Mexico, the battle cry was "Remember the Alamo!" During the Second World War, our troops in the Pacific were motivated by the battle cry,

"Remember Pearl Harbor!" Undoubtedly, there will now be a new slogan added to the first two, "Remember the World Trade Center!" I hope none of us will trivialize what has occurred this past week. I hope we all understand and comprehend how serious this all is for us as a nation.

Through the horrible events of the past several days, many have asked the question, rather cynically, "Where was God last Tuesday?" "If God is such a loving God, why did He let those two big buildings collapse? Why did He let all those people die?" It is possible that such thoughts have crossed our own minds. But instead of questioning the Lord and shaking our fist at heaven, let us take the advice of our text for today: "Be still, and know that I am God." In the stillness, let us listen attentively to what God has to tell us about such things in His holy Word. It is only in that Word and its precious gospel that our hearts can truly be comforted.

At times like this, we need to remember that God is not the Author of evil, nor is He the cause of evil. Not only do we see in the Ten Commandments how God condemns evil and sin, but we have other portions of God's Word that tell us the same thing: "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You" (Psalm 5:4). "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone" (James 1:13).

When God made this world and universe, when He created our first parents, Adam and Eve, the Bible tells us, "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Our first parents were holy, formed in the image of God. But they were tempted and led into sin by the devil. Jesus said of the devil, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). We are also told in the Bible that "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

But it is not just the devil that is the problem. Ever since our first parents fell into sin, we are no longer born in the image of God. Instead, our human nature is sinful and evil. Before the flood at the time of Noah, "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). After the flood, God told Noah, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders," etc. (Matthew 15:19).

We see then from Holy Scripture that evil is instigated not only by the devil, but also within the naturally sinful human heart. But people still ask the question, "If God knew ahead of time that man would sin, why did He create him?" The Lord does not answer such a question in Holy Scripture. We need to be careful that we do not idly speculate in those things where God has not revealed His will. What God wants us to know, He has told us in His Word. That is what we have to focus on. When someone asked Dr. Martin Luther, the sixteenth century reformer of the church, why God created man when He knew He would sin, Luther replied, "Let us keep clear of these abstract questions and consider the will of God such as it has been revealed to us."

God is holy and perfect. Sin and evil, however, have their source with the devil and in the sinful hearts of human beings. Years ago steel tools were not made in factories, but in blacksmith shops. In discussing this matter of evil in the world, one confessional Lutheran author from the early part of the twentieth century pointed out that just as little as the Christian blacksmith approves of the murder committed with the axe that he forged in his shop, so little does God take pleasure in the evil deeds done by the arm that He created and that He sustains with blood and strength.

Sinful men do wrong. Sinners commit great evil. However, God uses their evil to accomplish His purposes. For example, the government has laws against stealing and robbery and arson. However, since people will commit these crimes anyway, no matter what the law of the land might say, the state may put such criminals to work in prison making things that are good for society. I do not know if they do it anymore, but the convicts in Stillwater and St. Cloud used to make car license plates and rope. Down South, you can still see chain gangs doing road work.

In the same way, God uses the evil deeds of men to accomplish His good and gracious purposes. Think of the Biblical account of Joseph. He was sold as a boy into slavery by his own brothers. He endured a tremendous amount of trouble and hardship. But he eventually became second in command in all the land of Egypt. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers who had come to Egypt to buy food, he said to them: "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

When it comes to the disasters in New York and Washington this past week, we cannot understand how these terrible events can work out for anyone's good. But someday we will know, and someday we will understand. When we get to heaven with our Lord, we will know all things. The apostle Paul wrote: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part . . . For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I

shall know just as I also am known" (1 Corinthians 13:9,12).

In the Bible, God also allowed evil to affect the lives of people as a call to repentance. We should be reminded of the history of the Israelites in the Old Testament. When they strayed from the faith and fell into sin and unbelief, the Lord would allow foreign nations to attack and harass them, until they repented of their sins and returned to the Lord for forgiveness. For many years, and through many prophets, God warned the nations of Israel and Judah that if they did not forsake their idol worship and their sinful ways, they would be carried off into captivity. This was a call to repentance, but the call fell on deaf ears, except for a small, faithful remnant. Consequently, Israel was carried off by the Assyrian Empire, never to be seen again. The people of Judah were carried off by the Babylonians. They did not return to their homeland for seventy years.

On Tuesday afternoon, after the terrorist attacks were finished and the two towers of the World Trade Center had collapsed, one TV commentator said, "This is a real wake-up call for the American people!" I do not know what she meant by that, but we also could say, "This is a real wake up call—a call to repentance." Why? People in our nation have strayed from God and His Word! Money, wealth and success have become the idols of our time. People in our country kill their own children in the womb, and they have the protection of the law of the land to do so. People abuse the bodies God gave them with all sorts of drugs and other substances. Sexual immorality runs rampant. Yes, what has happened this past week is a wake up call to the people of this nation to repent of our sins! "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

But we must also realize that God sets limits on the evil that is done by the devil and our flesh. After Moses and the children of Israel left Egypt, Pharaoh tried to stop them and get them to return. We all know what happened to Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. King Saul tried repeatedly to take the life of David, who became more popular than the king after he killed the giant Goliath. But Saul was never successful. The enemies of the apostle Paul plotted to kill him in Damascus and Jerusalem, but the Lord put an end to their wicked plans.

Did God set limits on the disasters of this past week? I think we can say He did. Before the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center collapsed, hundreds and possibly thousands of people were able to escape. The plane that crashed just outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was not able to make it to Washington, D.C., where many more could have died, if it had crashed into the White House or the Capitol. There were many in the Pentagon who were not killed or injured.

As I prepared for this sermon today, I tried to find a portion of God' s Word that would be especially applicable to what our country experienced this past week. In Luke chapter 13, Jesus was informed of some people in His home province of Galilee whose blood Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus responded: "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you no; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:2,3). Jesus also referred to a disaster that had occurred, that apparently everyone had heard about. A tower had fallen, and eighteen people were killed. Jesus said, "Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all the other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4,5).

Jesus did not say why the tower fell. He did not give clever reasons why God would allow such pain and suffering for these families. No doubt, He had compassion on the victims. But He brought the situation home to his audience. He made it personal for them: unless you repent, you will all perish.

We can grieve for the recent victims. But Jesus is saying that we need to look at ourselves, too. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." We can ask why God allowed people to die, but we also need to ask why God allows us to live. Each of us has had wrong thoughts, evil thoughts. Each of us has done something wrong, something evil. Why does God allow evil within us? None of us deserves to escape punishment, and yet God allows escape. If we ask why there is evil, we should also ask why there is mercy. Why should God forgive us when we do not deserve to be forgiven? Let us abhor evil and hate evil. But let us also rejoice in God' s grace, His undeserved love in Christ. Let us repent.

Driving in our van this past week, I was talking to my wife about today' s sermon, and how it would focus on the terrorist acts of this past week. Our youngest daughter was listening to the conversation from the back. "Pastors aren' t supposed to talk about crashing towers," she said. "They' re supposed to talk about Jesus!" How right she was!

As we repent of our sins, as we are turned away from our evil and sinful desires, thoughts, words and deeds, as we mourn over the fact that we have broken God' s laws ourselves, may we flee to the cross of Christ. There in the blood that poured out from His wounded hands, head, feet and side, we have cleansing and forgiveness. Through faith, we are buried deep in His holy wounds, where there is forgiveness for even the worst sins and the most terrible sinners. There we are covered with His blood and righteousness, which hide our sin and guilt before the

eyes of the heavenly Judge.

Not only do we have forgiveness in our Savior' s blood, but we have hope. Three days after Jesus died, He rose victorious over sin, death and the grave. We know He has conquered Satan. We know we will rise on the Last Day just as He did on Easter. We know we have a wonderful heavenly home to look forward to. And in the meantime, we know that our Savior, in His divine power and authority, controls everything that happens in this world for the eternal benefit of His believing children.

The events of this past week are indeed a wake up call. They make us realize that our end could come at any moment. How many of those people who died last week thought that Tuesday would be their last day on earth? None of us knows when our earthly end shall come. So may we always be ready. May you and I live everyday of our lives as if it is our last day. Moreover, may we be still, and listen carefully as God comforts our hearts through His Word. May you and I live every day trusting in our Savior, who forgives our sins and who will take us to His side in heaven.

Finally, let' s remember that we have a marvelous opportunity as Christians. In the aftermath of these tragedies people will be looking for help. Friends, neighbors and coworkers will look for reasons to hope. You and I have the message they need. May we not hesitate for a moment to share with them the gospel of the Prince of Peace, whose forgiveness and salvation can still the most tumultuous heart! In Jesus' name, Amen.

EXEGESIS: JOEL 3:9-17

Paul Naumann

Translation

- v.9 *Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors!
Let all the men of war draw near; Let them come up!*
- v.10 *Beat your plowshares into swords, And your pruning knives into spears!
Let the weakling say, "I am a mighty man!"*
- v.11 *All you nations - hurry and come! Assemble yourselves from all around!
Bring down thither, O Lord, Your mighty men!*
- v.12 *"Let the nations be roused, and let them come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat,
For there I shall sit to judge all the nations from round about.*
- v.13 *Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.
Go in! Trample the grapes, for the winepress is full!
The vats are running over, for their wickedness is great."*
- v.14 *Countless multitudes in the Valley of Decision!
For the Day of the Lord is near in the Valley of Decision!*
- v.15 *The sun and the moon shall be dark,
and the stars shall withdraw their brightness.*
- v.16 *The Lord shall roar from Zion, from Jerusalem give forth His voice,
and heaven and earth shall quake!
But the Lord shall be a Refuge for His people,
and a Fortress for the Children of Israel.*
- v.17 *"Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God,
Who dwells in Zion, My holy mountain.
And Jerusalem shall be holy;
no longer shall foreigners pass through her."*

Overview

Of all the minor prophets, Joel may be the most difficult to place in the history of Israel. No date is given in the superscription of the book. There is no reference to the prophet Joel in any other Old Testament book. The book of Joel itself makes no historical references, such as to foreign nations or kings, that might help to date the work. However, its

position in the canon suggests that the ancients considered it an early work, and conservative scholars have long held it to be pre-exilic, possibly from the early part of King Joash' s reign (87-837 BC)¹

The prophesy of the book of Joel may be divided into two parts. The first of these, 1:1-2:27, treats what was evidently a double plague of drought and locusts that fell upon Israel during Joel' s time. The second section, 2:28-3:21, concerns prophesies of the near and distant future. The latter part of this section has a strong eschatological tone, and the verses we are about to examine can hardly be seen as anything but a graphic representation of the final Day of Judgment.

Verse Nine

קְרֹאוּ זֹאת בְּגוֹיִם קְדָשׁוֹן מִלְחָמָה הֶעִירוּ
הַגְּבוּרִים יִנְשׂוּ יַעֲלֶוּ כָּל אַנְשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה:

v.9 Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the men of war draw near; Let them come up!

Qal impv m pl; cry, proclaim, announce	קְרֹאוּ [קְרֹא]
Denominative verb √קָדַשׁ, Piel impv m pl; be hallowed, holy, sanctified; Piel: sanctify, consecrate; dedicate; prepare	קְדָשׁוֹן [קָדַשׁ]
Qal impf (juss) 3 m pl; come near, approach	יִנְשׂוּ [יָנַשׁ]
Qal impf (juss) 3 m pl; ascend, go up, come up	יַעֲלֶוּ [עָלָה]

Grammar:

Variant: Karl Elliger, editor of the minor prophets in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), proposes we emend the two jussives in the final clause to imperatives, and cites the *Septuagint* (LXX), which does indeed have two imperatives, προσσαγγαγετε and ἀναβαίνετε. However, the jussives serve equally well, and are supported by the other versions. We reject the variant.

The Pi' el imperative קְדָשׁוֹן is a rare denominative verb from the noun קָדַשׁ, meaning "holiness". The verb means "to sanctify, consecrate." In this context it is a technical term meaning "to prepare for war," and comes from the custom of opening a military campaign with sacrifice.² Cf. Jeremiah 6:4, 51:27-28, Micah 3:5.

You might notice the circule over the word הַגְּבוּרִים, *warriors*. The masoretic note in the margin is מל 7, *seven times plene*, indicating that this word occurs seven times in the Bible spelled *plene* (with the long *holem*).

Comments:

The section, vv. 9-17, constitutes a description of the "judgment of the nations" that was announced in v. 2 of this chapter. It seems clear that the prophet is looking forward to the battle that the Church would be engaged in during the New Testament era, and to the ultimate victory of the Lord and His people over the forces of wickedness.

Varying opinions are held regarding who is being addressed in the opening verses of this section. Lange, a reformed commentator, believes that vv. 9-11 are an exhortation aimed at Israel, and that the unbelieving nations are not addressed until v. 11. Luther, going even further out on a limb, sees it as an encouragement to the Christians to preach the gospel boldly; as it were, with military vigor ("Soldiers of the Cross Arise," etc.). In fact, Luther interprets the entire section as referring to "...the day when the gospel will have been revealed and to the entire time of the new Zion, and not to the day of final judgment."³ That the Reformer could have been blind to the obvious allusions to Judgment Day in this section seems uncharacteristic. It requires no little amount of exegetical gymnastics to explain, e.g., v. 12b, v. 13c, and v. 15., which clearly seem eschatological in nature.

A more natural interpretation sees vv. 9-11b as a bold challenge to the throngs of the unbelieving nations. Let them assemble themselves and bring all their dark forces of wickedness to bear on the New Testament Church. Let the soldiers of sin prepare for war and do their worst. As we shall see in the following verses, the prophet is confident of the final triumph of the Lord and His believers on the last, great Day of Judgment.

Verse Ten

כַּתֹּב אֶתְּיָדְךָ לְחַרְבֹּת וּמִזְמַרְתֶּיךָ לְרִמָּחִים
הַחֲלֵשׁ יֵאמֶר גְּבוּר אֲנִי:

v.10 Beat your plowshares into swords, And your pruning knives into spears! Let the weakling say, "I am a mighty man!"

Qal impv m pl; *beat (into, with לְ), forge, cf. Isa. 2:4, Mic. 4:3*
 m pl noun + 2 m pl pron suff; *plowshare, mattock, hoe*
 m pl noun + pref ׀ + 2 m pl pron suff; *pruning knife*

 m pl noun + pref ׀-; *spear, lance;* cf. Judg. 5:8, 1 Chron. 18:28
 adj, used as subst; *weak, feeble (one)*

פְּתוּ [פְּתַת]
 אֲתִיכֶם [עַת]
 מְזַמְּרֵיכֶם [מְזַמְּרֵה]
 וּמְזַמְּרֵיכֶם
 לְרִמָּחִים [רִמַּח]
 הַחֲלָשׁ [חֲלָשׁ]

Grammar:

Note the two circules in the text. The marginal masorah indicates that the words *וּמְזַמְּרֵיכֶם* and *הַחֲלָשׁ* are unique with this spelling, found only here in all of Scripture.

Comments:

If you' re thinkig that something in this verse sounds a little off-kilter, you' re right. Verse ten describes the exact process found in the more familiar passages Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3, *only in reverse*. There the triumph of the gospel of peace in the Messianic Age is couched in terms of swords being beaten into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks. Here however, as part of God' s bold challenge to the enemies of the Church, the process is reversed. Let the ungodly employ every domestic tool at their disposal as a deadly weapon, they will still face ultimate defeat at the Lord' s final judgment.

The word *גִּבּוֹר* has a range of meanings, but usually indicates a mighty or strong man, a warrior – especially in a martial context such as this. There will be no weaklings among the ungodly in the end time, says the prophet; even the most timid will become a warrior. Jesus said, *"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? It tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother..."* Luke 12:51-53.

Verse Eleven

עוֹשׂוּ וּבֹאוּ כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם מִסְבִּיב וְנִקְבְּצוּ
 שָׁמָּה הַנִּחַת יְהוָה גִּבּוֹרֵיךָ:

v.11 *All you nations - hurry and come! Assemble yourselves from all around!
 Bring down thither, O Lord, Your mighty men!*

hapax; Qal impv m pl; *make haste"*

[עוֹשׂוּ = חוֹשׂוּ]
 עוֹשׂוּ

(adv or) prep + pref ׀-; *around, from, round about;* cf. Ezra 39:17

מִסְבִּיב [סְבִיב]

Niph perf 3 pl; *be gathered, assembled*

וְנִקְבְּצוּ [קְבִיץ]

Hiph impv m s; *go down, descend;* (in Hiph) *bring down*

הַנִּחַת [נִחַת]

Grammar:

The editor has a field day with this verse in the apparatus. Here are the three notes indicating his suggested emendations:

pcrp? prp עוֹרֵוּ **vel** עוֹשׂוּ

a: "The first word of the verse, עוֹשׂוּ, may be corrupt. I propose emending to עוֹרֵוּ ' wake up' ' עוֹשׂוּ ' hasten' ." This would replace עוֹשׂוּ, which is a *hapax*, with a more common word. Editors don' t like *hapaxes*.

b-b prb | שָׁמָּה הַקְּבִצוּ שָׁמָּה

b-b: "Here we should probably read שָׁמָּה הַקְּבִצוּ," i.e., with the regular Niph imperative instead of the MT perfect,⁴ and moving the *athnah* ahead one word." I think the *athnah* works alright where it is (cf. my translation), and the substitution of the perfect for the imperative may just be an irregularity.

הַנִּחַת יְהוָה גִּבּוֹרֵיךָ

c-c: "This clause may be corrupt. Several additional manuscripts have this reading, but compare LXX: ὁ πρᾶτος ἕστω μααχητής (' let the meek become a warrior'); perhaps we should read *גִּבּוֹרֵי יְהוָה הַנִּחַת* ' let the timid be a warrior' and transpose it after 10b." These emendations would undoubtedly restore an attractive parallelism to the last part of verse ten, and tie everything up in a nice, neat bundle. LXX notwithstanding, however, most manuscripts and the other

supporting versions militate for keeping the MT as it stands. The first principle of sound textual criticism is *Difficilior lectio potior*, "The more difficult reading is preferable."⁵

The single masoretic note in this verse again demonstrates how the ancient scholars "built a hedge around" the sacred text of scripture, enumerating unusual words with their various spellings so that mistakes could not be made in the future. Here is the note:

הַגְּחָה

"This word occurs twice in the Bible, once with *pathah* and once with *qames*."

In this verse, הַגְּחָה has *pathah* under the first syllable. The other instance is in Daniel 5:20, where it has *qames* (הַגְּחָה).

Comments:

Here the prophet issues a stirring summons, first to the nations of the ungodly, and then to the Lord Himself. The unbelievers should marshal their forces from the four corners of the earth to do battle against the Church (cf. Ps. 2: "Why do the heathen rage...?" etc.) Joel is confident that when the Lord brings down His mighty men, the outcome of the battle will be forgone – the Lord will conquer! If it is not already clear to you that the last clause of this passage refers to the work God' s mighty angels in gathering and destroying the wicked on the Day of Judgment, compare 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, where the overthrow of the persecutors of the Church is pictured even more literally and graphically: "It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who troubled you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

As you may by now have guessed, this section is a favorite of the millennialists. The martial language and atmosphere of strife and tribulation lend themselves well to their visions of a real, physical battle of Armageddon, followed by the thousand-year reign of the Lord and his victorious believers, etc. Among other difficulties, however, it would in that case be difficult to take the following verse (v. 12) literally. Even if you put all the world' s unbelievers in a blender, they' d never all fit in the physical "Valley of Jehoshaphat."

Verse Twelve

יְעוֹרֵן וַיַּעֲלוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֶל-עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט
כִּי שָׁם אָשִׁיב לְשִׁפְטֵי אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם מִסָּבִיב:

v.12 "Let the nations be roused, and let them come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat,
For there I shall sit to judge all the nations from round about.

Niph impf (jussive) 3 m pl; *wake, stir*; Niph: [עוֹרֵן] יְעוֹרֵן
be awakened, be roused up; cf. Jer. 25:32
proper noun; *Valley of Jehoshaphat* [עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט]

Comments:

The Lord now takes up the call, and issues His personal challenge to the heathen to come to the place of judgment. That the Lord Himself is speaking in this verse is evident from the last half of the verse.

This passage raises an interesting question: what and where is *the Valley of Jehoshaphat*? Clearly, it is identical with the "valley of Decision" of verse fourteen. Equally clear is that, in this context, the name is being used metaphorically of the place where the Lord' s judgment will be meted out on the Last Day. But where does the metaphor come from? Commentators are of two opinions; one group feels that the valley referred to is the Kidron, immediately east of Jerusalem, running between the eastern wall and the Mount of Olives.⁶ This identification muddies the allegorical waters somewhat, though, since the Kidron valley merges on the south with the Valley of Hinnom, often used in the Bible as a metaphor for hell. However, a more logical train of thought identifies the Valley of Jehoshaphat with the Tekoa Valley east of the Dead Sea, also called the Valley of Berachah, where the Lord annihilated the forces of Ammon, Moab and Edom under the hand of King Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:1-30.⁷ This is surely a more suitable place to portray, in metaphorical terms, the destruction of the Church' s enemies on Judgment Day. An American Translation (Beck) actually renders עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט literally, as "the valley of the Lord' s judgment."

יָשִׁיב לְשִׁפְטֵי, *to sit to judge*, is a forensic phrase that we are familiar with: e.g., "Judge Suter *sits* on the Supreme Court;" or similarly, "The court is in *session*." This expression was also common to Hebrew thought, and can be seen throughout Scripture, especially in connection with the Lord' s sitting in judgment over sin and sinners. Here, of course, the final judgment of the Last Day is referred to (cf. Ps. 96:13, 98:9).

Verse Thirteen

שְׁלַחוּ מִגֵּל כִּי בָשַׁל קִצִּיר בְּאֵן רְדוֹן כִּי־מְלֹאָה
 גַּת הַשִּׁיקוּהָ יִקְבִּים כִּי רַבָּה רָעָתָם:

v.13 *Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.*

*Go in! Trample the grapes, for the winepress is full!
 The vats are running over, for their wickedness is great."*

Qal impv m pl; <i>put forth, stretch out, extend</i>	[שְׁלַחוּ]
masc noun, occurs twice; <i>sickle</i> ; cf. Jer. 50:16	[מִגֵּל]
Qal perf 3 m s; <i>boil, seethe; be ripe, ripen</i> ; cf. Gen. 40:10	[בָּשַׁל]
Qal impv m pl; <i>tread; (all other places) rule</i>	[רְדוּ]
f noun; <i>wine-press</i>	[גַּת]
Hiph perf 3 m s; <i>overflow, run over</i> ; cf. 2:24	[הִשִּׁיקוּ]
noun m pl + pref הָ; <i>wine vat</i> ; cf. 2:24, Job 24:11	[יִקְבִּים]
noun f s + 3 m pl suff; <i>evil, wickedness</i>	[רָעָתָם]

Grammar:

There are a couple of etymological difficulties to be dealt with in this verse. First is the word מִגֵּל, which occurs only here and in Jeremiah 50:16. *International Critical Commentary* (ICC) dislikes mixed metaphors, and wants the whole verse to concern grapes; thus it renders קִצִּיר "vintage," and מִגֵּל "pruning knife."⁸ However, מִגֵּל clearly means "sickle" in Jeremiah, and the קִצִּיר almost always refers to the grain harvest elsewhere. Moreover, the combined metaphor of harvest and vintage is found in some other remarkable passages of Scripture, as will be shown.

Touching the word רְדוּ we find a thornier problem. Connected as it is with the word גַּת "winepress", the verb obviously has something to do with trampling or treading out the grapes, although in every other occurrence the verb רָדָה bears the meaning "to rule." ICC, once again, takes the back door and emends to דָּרְפוּ, דָּרְדָה being the more common verb for this process. As always, however, I am loath to depart from the MT. An Akkadian cognate verb רָדוּ supports rendering "tread, trample," and it may well be that the more common meaning "rule" grew out of this concept i.e., that of a ruler trampling his enemies. Further complicating this verse is the King James Version rendering, "Come, get you down...," confusing the root רָדָה with the root יָרַד. Against this, see LXX, which has πατεῖτε, from πατέω, "to walk, tread, trample."

Comments:

In this verse, the executors of the Lord' s wrath are represented as harvesters and vintners, whom, when the time has fully come, He commands to go in and reap. It is beyond doubt that the servants of God here referred to are the angels who, on the Last Day, will be sent to separate out the tares from the wheat and burn them in the ovens of everlasting fire. Many times throughout Holy Scripture, the final judgment of the unbelievers is pictured in exactly the terms of this passage, perhaps most strikingly in Revelation 14:14-20.⁹ In the final clause of the verse the veil of metaphor is momentarily dropped, and the reason for the final destruction of the ungodly is plainly stated: "...for their wickedness is great!"

Verse Fourteen

הַמְּוִנִים הַמְּוִנִים בְּעֵמֶק הַחֲרוּץ כִּי קָרוֹב
 יוֹם יְהוָה בְּעֵמֶק הַחֲרוּץ:

v.14 *Countless multitudes in the Valley of Decision!*

For the Day of the Lord is near in the Valley of Decision!

noun m pl; <i>noise, tumult, commotion; multitude, abundance;</i> with emphasis on unrest, turbulence or noise, often of troops, cf. Gen. 17:4, Isa.14:6	[הַמְּוִנִים]
adj; <i>decided, decreed; sharp, pointed;</i> (as a subst) <i>decision,</i> <i>judgment</i> (i.e., a judgment resulting in punishment, as here)	[הַחֲרוּץ]

Grammar:

Coincidentally, each of the four words in this verse with circles above them have the same masoretic note – each occurs only twice with this spelling in the Old Testament.

Comments:

Here the prophet is transported in awe at the vision of the countless multitudes before the Lord' s judgment seat on that fateful Day. The word **הַמְנוּנִים** is a picturesque term suggesting the confused noise or hum of a great throng of people. The repetition of the plural intensifies the concept.¹⁰ I' m reminded of my college days, when my upperstory apartment in Madison, Wisconsin, was situated across the street from the university' s Camp Randall Stadium. On game days, when the stadium was packed to it' s 74,000 person capacity, the steady drone of crowded humanity would carry to my window. It was indeed a striking sound. Imagine the spectacle of billions of people gathered in one place on the Lord' s great Day of Judgment!

That the majority of these throngs will be assembled for the purpose of punishment is evident from the word **קָרָה**. This term can carry with it not only the concept of sharp decision, of incisive judgment, but also the negative connotation of the punishment resulting from that decision. Witness LXX: ἐν τῇ κοιλάδι τῆς δίκης, which may be rendered "...in the Valley of Punishment." Here is where the full cup of God' s wrath will be poured out on those who have despised the gospel offer of forgiveness, and multiplied sin upon sin while travelling the broad pathway to hell. The irrevocable quality of God' s righteous final judgment may be contained in the meaning of the root **קָרָה**, "to cut, incise." Something that is cut cannot be "uncut"; there will be no appeal from the decisive verdict which every man will hear pronounced on Judgment Day!

One unfortunate byproduct of the appellation, "Valley of Decision," is that it gives the Reformed writers something of a peg upon which to hang their decision theology. One of their commentaries reads, "While in this day of opportunity men are challenged to make their decision for Christ, in that day God' s decision about men will be declared."¹¹ Needless to say, this is a sad misapplication.

Verse Fifteen

שָׁמַשׁ וְיָרַח קָדְרוּ וְכוכְבֵּים אָסְפוּ וַיִּגְהָמוּ:

v.15 *The sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their brightness.*

Qal perf 3 pl; <i>be dark, mourn</i>	קָדְרוּ [קָדַר]
Qal perf 3 pl; <i>gather collect; withdraw; take away</i>	אָסְפוּ [אָסַף]
noun m + 3 m pl suff; <i>shining, brightness; cf. Isa. 4:5, 60:19</i>	וַיִּגְהָמוּ [וַיִּגְהַם]

Grammar:

The perfects in this verse may be confusing until you recall that the Old Testament prophets often used a form called the "prophetic perfect" to describe as yet unfulfilled events. We may translate with a simple future.¹²

Comments:

This verse is a verbatim repeat of 2:10b, and here describes the preternatural signs that will accompany the approaching Day of Judgment. The root **קָדַר** is often used in the Old Testament in contexts of judgment, where the wrath of God over sin is associated with a darkening or mourning of the heavenly bodies, cf. Jeremiah 4:28. For other descriptions of the darkening of the sun, moon and stars as a harbinger of Judgment Day, see Zephaniah 1:14-16, Revelation 6:12,17, 8:12.

Verse Sixteen

וַיְהִי מִצִּיּוֹן וּמִיְרוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ
וְרָעַשׁוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי מִחֻסָּה לְעַמּוֹ
וּמַעוֹ לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

v.16 *The Lord shall roar from Zion, from Jerusalem give forth His voice, and heaven and earth shall quake!
But the Lord shall be a Refuge for His people, and a Fortress for the Children of Israel.*

Qal impf 3 m s; <i>roar</i>	יִשְׁאַג [שָׁאָג]
Qal perf 3 m s + waw-cons.; <i>quake, tremble</i>	וְרָעַשׁוּ [רָעַשׂ]
noun m; <i>shelter, protection, refuge</i>	מִחֻסָּה or

noun m + pref -w; *fortified place, fortress* (often of God) מִחְסָה [מִחְסָה]
וּמְעוֹז [מְעוֹז]

Grammar:

We find an interesting note in the marginal masorah, concerning the word מִחְסָה.

"This word occurs eight times in this and similar forms; three of them are spelled *rafe* (with the guttural pointed with composite instead of simple shewa). And מִחְסָה, a related verb, is always written this way (*rafe*), with one exception." The note is perfectly correct, too – I checked it against my Hebrew concordance. מִחְסָה occurs eight times, three *rafe*. And מִחְסָה is always *rafe*, except once, in Psalm 57:2. The Masoretes worked between fifth and tenth centuries *anno domini*, and they had no computers! The depth of their scholarship is truly astounding. It should lead the modern critic to be very leery indeed of second-guessing the Masoretes with textual emendations.

Comments:

The first half of the verse is the final portion of the description of the terrors that will overtake the godless on the fatal Day. Against all the raging might of the wicked, Jehovah merely has to send forth His voice to be triumphant. The Lord will roar forth from His heavenly throne — "Jerusalem above", not the literal city. The quaking of the heavens and the earth will herald their imminent destruction, as described by Peter: "*The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*"

At this point, a great contrast is drawn. Now comes the gospel answer to all the law that has gone before, "*But the Lord shall be a refuge for His people, and a fortress for the Children of Israel.*" Often in the Old Testament, the Lord is pictured as the "refuge" (מִחְסָה) and "shelter" (מְעוֹז) of the true believers.¹³ The terms "His people," and "Children of Israel," of course, must refer to all who cling to the Lord's Redemption from every nation; cf. Romans 2:28-29, "*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter.*" Here is hope for the believer! The earthquakes and thunderings that will announce the Day of Judgment need not terrify the ones whose trust is in Christ - they will find a safe refuge in the blood of the Lamb.

Verse Seventeen

וידעתם כי אני יהוה אלהיכם שכן בציון
הר-קדשי והיתה ירושלים קדש וזרים
לא יעברון בה עוד:

v.17 "*Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God, Who dwells in Zion, My holy mountain.
And Jerusalem shall be holy; no longer shall foreigners pass through her.*"

Qal act part m s; <i>settle, rest, dwell, inhabit</i>	שָׁכַן [שָׁכַן]
Qal act part m pl (here as a subst) + pref -וּ; <i>stranger, alien, foreigner</i> (basic thought a <i>non-relatedness</i>)	זָרִים [זָרִים]

Grammar:

Another interesting example of the kinds of notes one finds in the masorah parva: you'll notice the circles above and between the words of the phrase, "For I am the Lord your God," and the tiny *yod* in the margin. That tells us that this combination of words occurs exactly ten times in the Old Testament.

This verse happens to contain the classic example used to illustrate how the Hebrew language deals with its shortage of adjectives. Instead of using a noun and an adjective, two nouns are used in construct, the second acting as a modifier for the first. הַר-קְדְּשִׁי means not, "mountain of My holiness," but rather "My holy mountain."

Comments:

This final verse of the section is another direct statement from the mouth of the Lord Himself. It serves to reassure the child of God that, dark as the believer's lot in this life may seem, his confidence in the Lord will one day be vindicated. When the Lord comes from Zion to claim His own, no doubt will remain in anyone's mind concerning who God is, or who His people are. From that Day forward into eternity, the congregation which inhabits the heavenly Jerusalem will be free from persecution and strife. No hypocrites will penetrate its ranks; holiness and joy will prevail. It is a prospect indeed that all believers can look forward to with joy in their Redeemer!

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¹ Zahn, Theodore. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1925. p.92.

² Brown, Driver, Briggs. *Lexicon*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1907. p. 873.

³ Luther, Martin. *Lectures on Joel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955. p. 118.

⁴ Gesenius notes that, both in Isa. 43:9 and here in pause, the imperative Niph' al is replaced by the perfect, but he feels that, in both cases, either the reading or the explanation is doubtful. See para. 51c.

⁵ "This rule arises from the fact that the ancient scribe, like anyone copying a manuscript, tended to see what he expected to see. That is, he tended to see the familiar. When he failed to copy what was in front of him exactly, therefore, he was much more likely to substitute the familiar for the unfamiliar than the reverse. An unusual reading, therefore, is not likely to have arisen from an ordinary one or a distinctive reading from a commonplace one. The critic favors the harder reading, the reading the scribe is less likely to have expected to see and, therefore, is less likely to have introduced erroneously into his text." Mc Carter, P. Kyle, Jr. *Textual Criticism*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, p. 73.

⁶ "The Kidron, or ' the Valley of Jehoshaphat,' is ~~ally~~ three miles long which bounds the eastern slope of Jerusalem and separates it from the Mount of Olives. During the summer the Kidron Valley is dry, but in the rainy season it is the bed of the brook Kidron." *Baker's Bible Atlas*, p. 153.

⁷ Laetsch, Theodore. *The Minor Prophets*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1956. p. 131.

⁸ Bewer, Julius A. *Commentary on Obadiah and Joel*. ICC, vol. 24. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911. p. 139.

⁹ Rev. 14:14-20: Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

¹⁰ "Here the repetition of the plural is used to intensify the expression to its highest degree: ' Countless multitudes!' Cf. Exod. 8:10. – Gesenius, para. 123e.

¹¹ Di Gangi, Mariano. *The Book of Joel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970. p. 68.

¹² "The prophet so transports himself in imagination into the future that he describes the future event as though it had already been seen or heard by him." Cf. Isa. 5:13, 9:1ff., 10:28, Job 5:20, 2 Chron. 20:37. Gesenius, op. cit., para. 107n.

¹³ Cf. Jonah 4:16, Ps. 14:6, 46:1, 62:8, 91:9, Isa. 25:4, Prov. 14:26, 18:10.

Ministering to the Victims of Alzheimer's Disease and Their Families

Theodore W. Barthels

Many are tempted to feel that it is a waste of time. We have all doubtlessly experienced the frustration of calling on an Alzheimer's victim, or victim of other forms of dementia, and leaving again wondering if we had reached them at all, or perhaps wondering how we can better succeed in reaching the victim of this sad disease. It is a critical time for ministry.

Over the years of my ministry I have seen dementia presenting itself in many different ways. As many different dementia presentations that may be seen, there may be as many different problems arising within the family because of the dementia. Often the spouse of the Alzheimer's victim attempts to cover the dementia for as long as possible, adding an additional burden of stress to his life as they attempt both covering for the victim, and caring for the victim. Often times the first presentations that are noticed in public, by the pastor or by another congregation member, may seem no worse than peculiar behavior (e.g. whistling during the sermon). If that behavior is pointed out, commented on, the family may just withdraw, attend service less often, even offering legitimate sounding excuses for their absences. By the time the pastor becomes aware of the problem, it may very likely have progressed to the point where it is not easily concealed, a point when the family care-giver, very often an elderly spouse with somewhat fragile health, it at wit's and stamina's end.

The first ministrations of the pastor to such a family are important ones. Heartbreaking issues are either on the table, or just under the surface. For the victims this can be a very frightening time, when they know something is wrong but either do not know just what is wrong, or come to very erroneous conclusions about what is wrong. Some years ago a very dear member of our congregation brought his wife over to the church to meet with me. I did not know the nature of his concern until they came into my study. Up until a few days before our meeting this elderly husband had noticed a decline in his wife's interest in home duties, in going out visiting and in participating in some of their regular activities. He had had some unspoken concerns about this, but they had remained just that, unspoken concerns, until suddenly his wife became convinced that he was an imposter, and not her husband at all. She tried to escape from him, running away down the neighborhood streets, and was terrified of her own husband. He had brought her to me hoping that I might be able to convince her that he was really her husband. The dementia would not allow for that. Although she would later acknowledge that this was a nice man who was taking care of her and visiting her daily in the nursing home, she was never convinced to the day of her death that this man was her devoted husband.

With some medication he was able to care for her at home for quite a while, and even brought her to church, and to church activities. But he was almost as much the victim of this disease as she was. In his desperation he sought out many doctors who took a great deal of his money and in the end gave him no more than some short term false hope.

So what do we bring to the Alzheimer's victim, and to the victim's family? And how do we go about bringing it? We minister to these people with great compassion and love, as you would minister to your own father or mother (1 Timothy 5:1-2). This means regularly and tenderly bringing them the only comfort that can make things better. We bring them the hope of eternal life where there shall be no more pain or sorrow. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

The need for regular spiritual visits with Alzheimer's victims and care-givers, especially spouses, cannot be overstated. With the passing of time such calls can easily become less frequent, or seem less necessary and not the best use of the pastor's time, because of the appearance that the visits don't do the Alzheimer's victim much good, and the care-giver seems to be coping.

Two important aspects of this disease must be appreciated as it progresses. The first is with reference to the Alzheimer's victim. The feelings of panic, of continual fear, increase. One nursing home professional stated that it is believed that one of the causes for the common trait of pacing and wandering that is found among the Alzheimer's victims is that they are looking for their minds. They are looking for something they remember, they are looking for home. Even when staying at home, the Alzheimer's victim may look around and see nothing that appears familiar. That fear is one of the most troubling aspects of this disease, and has been recognized in early stages of the disease. It must not be assumed that this fades quickly as the disease progresses. It is not known if or when these feelings fade.

The second aspect of the disease that the pastor must always be aware of is the increased strain and isolation that the care-giver experiences. Even when extended family is faithful in checking on "Mom and Dad," the victim and care-giver may still be afraid of overburdening their family members, who are also emotionally upset by the decline of their loved ones. Both the victim and the care-giver miss the associations they had previously enjoyed. This may be especially true of their church associations. Even if they were only moderately active or even inactive members, the association with their church and pastor becomes increasingly important to

them. We must realize that it is most important that they do not feel isolated from their Savior at a time when they are carrying a burden of tribulation under which the devil will actively tempt them to such a conclusion.

So how best can the pastor approach, and minister to the Alzheimer's household? Regular, scheduled visits are called for. Find out which day of the week works best for them, which time of day the Alzheimer's victim is best able to cope with company coming into the house. Call, and confirm that you are expected. Even if you think that it surely shouldn't be any trouble for them if you stop by, it may indeed be a difficult time for the care-giver to cope with a visit, even from the pastor. If they have already had a doctor's appointment, or a visit from a social worker, that may have been enough for them to handle for one day. Always approach Alzheimer's victims in a manner that will not startle them. Even if you have been their pastor for years, and you are fairly confident that the dementia has not yet become very severe, they may see you as an approaching stranger, a stranger that has just entered their home or room, and that, in itself may be very alarming. Enter the home in a low key manner, and always identify yourself. Use familiar Scriptures, such as Psalm 23, or John 10, or well known Bible stories from the life of Jesus. If you are unable to secure the attention of the Alzheimer's victim, use a cross, or a picture of Jesus to try to fix his attention. Keep it short, and keep it SIMPLE! In all this we are thankful for the power of the Holy Spirit to reach into diseased and confused minds, and bring them the comfort and assurance of God's love and forgiveness that is so vital, especially in such trying circumstances. As long as the Alzheimer's victims are able to discern the Lord's body, to examine themselves, bring them the comfort of the Lord's Supper. This is a difficult issue to address, and may also be a sensitive issue for the spouse care-giver. It needs careful discussion and ongoing evaluation. There will be a period of time at the outset of the disease when one will find that, in the context of worship or a devotion, the Alzheimer's victim is still able to benefit from partaking of the Lord's Supper. Following this there may be a period of time when the pastor can lead the Alzheimer's victim through proper preparation, and recognition of the Lord's presence in the Lord's Supper, so that on occasion the sacrament can still be given for blessing. It is during these "good" times that the pastor needs to open some frank and honest discussions with the spouse care-giver about the true nature of the Lord's Supper, and the blessing of the spoken Word as a means of strengthening assurance for the victim. There will be a need for a continuing evaluation concerning the use of the sacrament. I regularly bring along my private communion set in the hope that there may be an especially lucid moment when the blessing that comes with communion might be given.

Again, the change that can take place during the course of a devotion testifies to the marvelous working of the Holy Spirit through the Word. Reaching the Alzheimer's victim may take some thought and discussion with family and care-giver. Are there some especially favorite hymns which this individual treasured? What prayers were commonly said in the family, or as the Alzheimer's victim was growing up? Use this information to try to find a key to unlock a memory, to call back a mind. How important, even startling, this can be is illustrated by a case I encountered several years ago. I had called on an elderly woman, and read scripture, and prayed with her a number of times, but the only response to my visits was a continued nonsensical babbling which characterized her daily behavior. One of her nurses kindly informed me that no one had carried on a real conversation with her for years. In discussing her situation with another member of the congregation, it came out that she was one of the congregation's German Russians, and had been raised with German as her first language. On my next visit I took my German Bible and began reading in John chapter three. Immediately the babbling stopped, and the woman was focused on the Word of God's love and forgiveness, and the hope of everlasting life. I'm terrible at German. I cannot converse in it. But by the grace of the Holy Spirit this woman was able to be comforted from Scripture, and when I spoke to her in English, she responded in English, and we concluded praying the Lord's prayer together.

As much joy as such a success can bring, it does not always come, at least it is not always so apparent. I have also ministered to Alzheimer's victims where I never received such an evident sign that I was reaching them. I was never able to find such a key to their mind. Even then we must continue to minister with the confidence that in the gospel we always do hold the key to the soul. We continue to minister with the confidence that the Holy Spirit can and does work in these beleaguered hearts, that they may find rest for their souls.

Remembering the spouse care-giver is an important part of our ministry to this family. Enduring the course of this tragic disease takes more spiritual strength than any of us possess on our own. While this is true of a son or daughter serving as care-giver, it is even truer for the spouse care-givers. They are enduring a time of great loss, possibly in a context of isolation that they would not face if their spouse had actually died. At the same time they are faced with caring for their loved ones in very difficult circumstances, for the Alzheimer's victim is not able to comprehend simple instructions to cooperate in the simplest, but necessary, daily tasks. One woman recently shared with me the frustration of dressing her husband. If she asked him to lift his foot to slip on a sock or a pant leg, he would respond by pressing the foot harder against the floor. He was not deliberately uncooperative, but was rather trying to cooperate, though unable to receive the communication and convey it to a proper reaction. He would respond with the proper foot but the opposite reaction; and no, reverse psychology didn't work. Getting him

to sit on the toilet was equally difficult. She slept very little at night, because she never knew when he would get up, where he would go, what he would do. For an 83-year-old wife, after more than 60 years of marriage, this was heartbreaking, and fatiguing at the same time. She needed help, and encouragement.

The pastor has a role in both areas. We need to continue to bring the Word, especially when it becomes too difficult for people to make it to church. We also need to lead the way and encourage the congregation to be there, to ‘bear one another’s burdens’ (Gal. 6:2). Even when there is extended family around to help, we must not assume that they can provide all the help that is needed. There is much that they can do best and may already be doing, such as providing transportation to the doctor’s appointments, helping with the personal hygiene issues, providing opportunities for outings for both the Alzheimer’s victim and the care-giver, helping with government and insurance forms and legal paperwork, grocery and other shopping. So when the care-giver needs help it shouldn’t be assumed that extended family should be doing this. They may already be doing as much as possible, much more than others may imagine. And there are no perfect families. There may be times when close families have an extremely difficult time seeing or being with the parent who does not know them, or can’t control bodily functions, or curses and swears at them, or strikes out violently at anyone who comes close.

We, as fellow believers, can offer help in many ways. Teens, or adults, of the congregation can offer to help with lawn work, especially at times when seasonal changes may demand extra chores be done. Some would appreciate help with food preparation, especially on certain days when the Alzheimer’s victim had different medical appointments. Some individuals may obtain a little training so that they can provide relief for the care-giver so that he may go out for an afternoon, or take a nap, or even sleep through the night.

Here in Minnesota there are state and county programs which are very beneficial to the home care-giver for the Alzheimer’s victim. There are day-care facilities at some nursing homes. There are county trained and county funded assistants that may come into the home one or two afternoons a week. There are county nurses who will visit, and assist in evaluating the situation. And there is, of course, nursing home care available. The pastor can and should be able to direct the family to this available support as it is appropriate for the affected family. The pastor needs to be watchful of the state of health of the care-giver, and, if possible, maintain some contact with other family members regarding their concerns for their parents, or relatives. When the time comes that the transition to a nursing home is indicated, the pastor must be sensitive to the dynamics of that situation. The care-giver may be as upset as the Alzheimer’s victim, and feel a great sense of failure and guilt for not continuing care at home, for not providing the care he thinks he should. Again, pastoral care is called for to help the family make this decision when it is time, and to reassure the care-giver that this is not a desertion of her spouse. The guilt that frequently accompanies this heartbreaking move is addressed with the comfort of the gospel.

Following the move to the nursing home the pastor’s care continues for both the Alzheimer’s victim and the care-giver. Indeed it may become easier to schedule visits with the Alzheimer’s patient once the move to the nursing home has been made. It also frequently indicates a deterioration of the patient’s condition, a progression of the disease. The same encouragements regarding devotions apply. When the disease has progressed simple familiar verses of Scripture may bring great comfort. A clear picture of Jesus, or simply pointing to the cross on your Bible cover may help the individual realize who you are and connect with your message. There may also be cases where behavior problems or care difficulties at home indicated nursing home care earlier, and very meaningful devotions and visits can be maintained with the victim of dementia. One of my current congregation members has been in the nursing home for a number of years because of dementia behavior that made her unmanageable at home, and yet she follows well when I present a synopsis of the week’s sermon, and still receives the Lord’s Supper with some preparation help.

As stated above the transition to the nursing home does not immediately end the spiritual needs of the care-giver, even though she may now more easily be able to attend worship services and to participate in other congregation activities. He may be so worn down physically, emotionally, and spiritually that several regular visits may be indicated to help comfort and assure the care-giver. She may still be very actively involved in the care giving process, going back and forth to the nursing home on a daily basis. The grief of watching his loved one deteriorate before his eyes is as sharp and painful as if the spouse were dying of any other terminal disease. These are factors that the pastor should continue to be aware of and to address in his ministrations to the care-giver.

SUMMATION: Ministering to the Alzheimer’s Victim:

1. Do it!
2. Do it regularly.
3. Do it gently, keeping in mind their emotional upset, state of panic.
4. If possible, make a connection with their past with some scriptural symbol or picture.

5. Keep it simple.
6. Remember the care-giver.
7. Include them on visitation lists. Encourage members to visit them, offer assistance.
8. Organize help from the congregation so that the burden is borne by all and not forgotten.
9. Be attentive to the special problems that arise as the disease progresses and enters late stages.

Defending and Confirming the Gospel

Philippians 1:7

Vance A. Fossum

Why discuss the relationship of the defense of the truth to the proclamation of the gospel? Why is it sometimes suggested that there must be a proper *tension* or *balance* between proclaiming the gospel and defending the truth? The early Church considered neither *balance* nor *tension* in this matter. It was *boldness* not balance that concerned the early Christians — boldness *in bearing witness concerning Jesus*. They prayed that in the face of growing persecution they might have “boldness” to speak of Jesus (Acts 4:31).

We recall the chief characteristics of the Apostolic Church:

1) Unity in doctrine — Acts 2:42 ff.; and

2) boldness to speak of Jesus — Acts 4:31.

And this boldness to witness concerning Jesus, no matter the cost,
was given by the Holy Spirit to those who were

3) obeying His Word. — Acts 4:20

And wherever persecution drove them,

4) they went everywhere preaching the word. — Acts 8:4

We affirm that there is a “relationship” between “The defense of the truth” and “the proclamation of the gospel.” We would, however, not prefer to say that they are in “tension with one another” or need to be “balanced” in our ministry. These are terms far too susceptible to subjective judgment on our part. We would rather say:

*All Christians are commissioned to be **witnesses** of Christ. This necessarily includes defending His truth so that we may proclaim His gospel in its truth and purity for the salvation of sinners.*

*If we pastors are also called shepherds of Christ’s flock, it is again necessary that in our **witnessing** of Christ we defend His truth. We will want to protect the flock from “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” and all error that wars against the soul either by slowly eroding or by violently tearing down a sinner’s faith in his only Savior.*

“WE CANNOT HELP SPEAKING ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.”

(Acts 4:20 NIV)

The witness of our preaching

I.

WE ARE TO BE WITNESSES WHO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH — GOD’S TRUTH.

A “witness” is not a dreamer or a public relations expert who makes up whatever message pleases him or the public. A witness is sworn to tell the truth. We are witnesses in our preaching because we are testifying to the truth we have “seen” in God’s Word and experienced by Spirit-worked faith in Jesus Christ.

As it was in Jeremiah’s day, so today there are many who proclaim “peace” in their gospels, but few witnesses who proclaim the peace of Christ in its truth and purity. How often we hear it said that a church’s teaching or doctrine is not so important as its social impact for the betterment of community and nation. Then those same false prophets “use their tongues to say, God says!” God is “against” them. But the modern religious world is more than ever *for them!* Surely without God’s grace it is impossible to be uncompromising witnesses of His truth as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. We are in constant danger of falling down this slippery slope, as others have before us. The majority of churches called “Christian” today do not believe and teach God’s Word faithfully. These are truly unprecedented times of rebellion in the churches, characterized by great hypocrisy and defiant

rejection of the teachings of Holy Scripture.

Remaining faithful to the Word of our great Savior God is a responsibility that He continues to place on His under-shepherds, even as He did to Jeremiah in those difficult days before God's judgment upon Judah. The temptation is to get out from under God's yoke and take the "easy way." "Don't all the churches preach Jesus?" we are often asked. "If doctrine is so important to God, why are you confessional Lutherans so few in number?" "If the Bible is so clear, why are there so many churches?" Why do we need to "defend the truth?" The answer to all such questions:

- 1) We sinners despise the hearing of God's Word;
- 2) We sinners neglect the hearing of God's Word,
and do not listen carefully to it.
- 3) We sinners know His Word, but we choose not to obey it.

Yet all Christian Churches claim the right from God to proclaim something, calling it their "gospel message," their "good news." Therefore we must be clear on just what the Church's mission to the world is. Jesus plainly tells us in **Matthew 28:18-20**: "***You go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.***"

The great majority of the churches today seem to think *that their* calling is to "proclaim good news" in order to make people feel good about themselves. Their "gospels" are not THE gospel which Christ commanded us to "preach to every creature" (Mark 16). Their false, feel-good gospels so often avoid whatever may "cost" the preacher the loss of members or offerings. Jesus' commission to His Church, on the other hand, is to make disciples by baptizing and teaching them to observe all things "*whatsoever*" He commands. This will include not only the good news of the forgiveness of sins, but also the "difficult sayings" of His Word and the impossible prescriptions of the law so that believers may be created and strengthened by the continual reminder of their need for gospel grace in the blood of the Christ, and may finally be preserved in the faith unto eternal life.

We find that human sentiment continues to prevail over the authority of the Word in the minds of countless people who claim to be Christians. How is the proper and saving connection with Jesus made? Is a person saved by his/her "relationship" to Jesus through membership in a Christian Church? Does salvation belong to the one who feels especially close to the pastor, especially a "good" pastor? Is that person on his way to heaven who is always seeking "warm fuzzies" whenever he "walks and talks with Jesus" or does something "good" for his neighbor? Why does a person need the Word of God, if he can "feel" His presence walking through the woods or talking with a friend?

We are speaking here of that sense of being *connected* to God somehow. And indeed, who could have been more Christ-connected than Mother Mary, who nursed our Lord in His infancy? "***But Jesus said: Rather, blessed are those who hear the Word of God (that's faith!) and keep (fullassw = guard as a treasure) it" (that's confession!) (Luke 11:28).*** The only way to real and eternal blessing before God is not by being the mother and nurse of our Lord, nor by any other connection that man may suggest. Eternal blessings come to sinners only by means of hearing (believing) "the Word of God," for Jesus is the Divine Logos, the very substance of God's Word from Genesis to Revelation. Our blessed "Christ-connection" involves both believing the Word of God, and guarding it – holding on to it and defending it from those who would snatch it away!

Again, our Lord holds up His Word as the only source of salvation when He says to His disciples: "***It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life***" (John 6:63). The early disciples could not separate their future hope of life and blessing from the physical/material presence of Jesus. They shook with anxiety when He told them that to have eternal life they must "eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood" (John 6:53). "*This is a hard saying,*" they said. What then is the "spirit" and "life" of the Christian Church? It can't be the visible presence of Christ on earth, since He has ascended into heaven as He forecasted (6:62), and the Church has continued to receive spirit and life ever since.

The true "spirit" and "life" of the Christian Church cannot be something less than the visible Christ, as some seem to think — like the sincere religiosity of a congregation, the magnificence of its house of worship, or its contributions to the educational and social advancement of the community. If these were the true "*spirit and life*" of the Christian Church, then we would not need to defend the truth of Christian doctrine or to strive to be a confessional, true-teaching church. However, as long as spiritual and eternal life are only given by the "*Spirit,*" and the "*words*" of our Lord "*are spirit and life,*" an Evangelical Christian Church also needs to be a confessional church, because the *words* that bring life continue to be under constant attack by the devil and the world.

Three women were working side-by-side in a doctor's office. They were discussing the need for our nation to retaliate against the Moslem terrorists, who viciously attacked our country on September 11, 2001. One of the

women expressed her opinion that “Moslems believe in the same God as Christians do.” Immediately the other two confessed the truth: Moslems deny that Jesus Christ is true God, and therefore they do *not* believe in the same God as Christians do. There followed the statement of another worker to the effect that she did not know how God could condemn all Moslems to hell for not believing in Jesus. Two Christian women were able to share the gospel, but first they had to defend the truth.

The defense of the truth and the proclamation of the gospel go together, like two sides of the same coin: The gospel cannot be consistently *given* to others unless a defense of the truth is also given, even as one person cannot properly say, “I’ll give you this side of the coin, but not the other.” Neither can one *firmly hold* the gospel without also holding to the defense of the truth, any more than he can say, “I will hold this side of the coin, and let the other fall from my hand.” If one gives or loses one side of a coin, he must also give or lose the other side. If we give or lose the defense of the truth, we must also give or lose the proclamation of the gospel. Again and again the history of churches demonstrates this very thing. On the other hand, we recall the promise of our Lord to the “faithful” church in Philadelphia: Because they had “kept” (held to, obeyed = threw) His Word, He had opened a door to them for the proclamation of the gospel to their fellow man (Rev. 3).

How can we expect a mission “door” to remain open to us, if we do not *keep* God’s Word — hold to and obey it as the truth? One example can be seen in connection with a discipline problem that is on the increase in our day: unscriptural divorce. In dealing with this problem the word “excommunication” has at times come up — a hard saying of God’s word, hardly kept in the churches of our day.

At a women’s group meeting I once had opportunity to explain that there comes a time when we must inform the clearly impenitent sinner that he has cut himself off from His Savior’s saving grace and His Church, and that, without repentance he cannot be saved. I further explained that when a Christian congregation, following the procedure outlined in Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5, officially acknowledges that a sinner has demonstrated such an impenitent attitude, this is called “excommunication.” I told the gathering that this is seldom done in the erring churches, where sentiment rules and outward numbers are more important than the eternal salvation of souls. “But pastor,” a concerned lady inserted, “Some won’t like you if you bring up excommunication.”

When has it ever been *safe* to preach the gospel or live it’s life as individuals or as a Christian congregation? There are always costs involved, even as our Lord warned His disciples on more than one occasion (cf. Matthew 10:16-39, 16:24, John 15:18-21).

God preserve us from compromising and surrendering any portion of the gospel’s message to save our own skin or face before men. To proclaim the gospel can never be a safe thing to do, because the darkness hates the light and rages against its beams wherever they shine. The various shades of persecution threaten our small faith and we often respond by hiding its light. Small wonder that our Lord must encourage us to “let our lights *shine*.”

Of course our *witnessing for the truth* will meet with opposition from the father of lies and his comrades in the world. If we, like so many hucksters, were merely proclaiming a message of financial prosperity for Christians, or had some other idol-pill or spiritual drug to sell, then we would be no threat to the goals of the devil. But we are testifying that peace with God and the certain hope of eternal life are ours through the merits of Christ *alone*, Satan’s mortal enemy. Moreover, our preaching presents not only the inclusiveness of the gospel of Christ, but also its exclusiveness. We are declaring to a fallen world, to Moslem, Mormon, Mason, or impenitent, not only that *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish have everlasting life*, but also that Christ is the *only truth, the only Way, and the only Life, and no one comes unto the Father except through the Son* (John 14:6). In all of this we are proclaiming not that which comes from us, but the truth that comes from God—**“that which we have seen and heard.”**

II.

WE ARE ALSO WITNESSES WHO KNOW THE NEED TO TELL THE TRUTH FOR THE SAKE OF OUR FELLOW SINNERS.

When someone is on trial for a crime he has committed, an honest witness takes the stand for the sake of helping others. He has something to tell that will benefit another person or persons. We are passionately involved as *witnesses in our preaching*, because we are convinced that above all the truth *must be told and defended in order to save life and property — the lives of sinners who are the property of our Redeemer.*

“WE CANNOT HELP BUT SPEAK!”

Confessionalistic or confessionalism are terms that many erring churches would apply to the CLC, perhaps characterizing our position as a type of spiritual disease, a narrowing of the blood vessels of both mind and heart

that diminishes our ability to be evangelical. But ours is not “The Church of the Lutheran Confessional *istics*” nor are we “The Church of Lutheran Confessionalism.” We are a church which fully subscribes to the historic confessions (the *corpus doctrinae*) of the Lutheran Church, not so that we may confront people with the truth and win religious arguments with them, but so that we might invite people to the truth and win them to Jesus.

This is no disease, but the natural mind-set of those who believe in the power of God’s Word to convert poor sinners to Christ. “For Luther and his followers, to be confessional meant not only to accept the content of documents which properly present the Biblical truth, but also to confess, to set that truth winsomely before the people who frequent the marketplace and who engage in the political discussion and decision-making of society. It was also natural for Luther to confess the faith publicly because of his understanding of the way in which the confessed Word creates faith in its hearers. Furthermore, it was natural for him to confess the faith by condemning false doctrine. He believed that sin and evil spring ultimately from doubting God’s Word. The doubt and deception in false teaching must be labeled and countered. Therefore, Luther’s followers did what came naturally to them when they were invited to confess the Word of the Lord at Augsburg.”¹

The *anathemas* of the Augsburg Confession, for example, were to clarify what the confessors meant by their wording, NOT to express their desire for the eternal harm of errorists. The authors “chose their words carefully so that even their enemies might listen.”² To illustrate: Three years ago our church in West Columbia changed its name from *Holy Trinity Independent Lutheran Church* to *Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church -- CLC*. By so doing we purposely gave expression to the fact that we are an *evangelical* (*good news announcing*) and *confessional Lutheran Church*. We were concerned that the word “independent” in our church name suggested to others a defensive/paranoid posture, that is more ready to pounce than to proclaim the gospel. As Christian witnesses to the truth of salvation, our goal is not to confront but to *invite* our neighbors to hear the gospel. If I may suggest the distinction: a church that is “confessional *istic*” or that is afflicted with “confessional *ism*” likes to confront people and do battle *against* them, while an “evangelical and confessional” church likes to invite people to hear of Christ’s battle *for* them.

At this point let us be warned: The concern that a Christian congregation should not be “against too much,” lest it offend against the proclamation of the gospel, is misleading. The word “too” is too subjective. What is “too” much? At what point should Christian churches say: “We dare not oppose another of the world’s godless opinions, actions, or organizations, or no one will listen to the gospel of salvation? Where is there even a hint of such a concern in the inspired Gospels, Acts, or the Epistles?”

Church history, particularly during the Reformation era, is fraught with controversy, much that would be seen as “negative” and “offensive” to many of today’s churches. And yet, in defending the truth, Luther witnessed to Christ, proclaiming His gospel most clearly. It’s not how much or how many are spoken against by the Christian congregation that is important in our witnessing of Christ, but simply *HOW and WHY* the much and the many are opposed.

Whether or not Christ’s witnesses ought to be “against” yet another teaching, practice, or organization of man, should never be decided on the basis of whether we think we have reached the saturation level of opposition to the things of this world. There is great danger in such subjective reasoning. Rather, may we be led always to oppose *everything* that contradicts the objective truth of God’s Word because of the potential damage to the property of our Lord Jesus — precious, blood-bought souls! In this way the saving truth of the gospel of Christ will be upheld before fallen mankind as a clear and precious jewel from heaven without fracture or flaw, a pearl of great price for which the sinner would gladly sell everything he has.

At the same time, as we teach and preach we must be careful not to give the impression that we are “standing up for Jesus *against* the world.” We are not! Rather, we are “standing up *with* Jesus (i.e., in defense of Him and His saving truth) *for* the world.”³ We need to teach and remind our people that the New Testament does not emphasize the disciples of Christ as “soldiers” over against the world, but as WITNESSES. True, Ephesians 6:10 ff. does picture us as “soldiers,” but only in a *defensive* posture — not as soldiers on the offensive *against* the world, but as soldiers who must “stand against the wiles of the *devil*,” and who do not “wrestle *against flesh and blood*,” “but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

As *witnesses* of the saving gospel of Christ in our preaching and teaching we are anxious to get our message out to all people, including Christians who are in error. But if we are witnessing and confessing what we believe to be *truth*, then by implication, all opinion and teaching to the contrary must be rejected as *false*. Martin Luther and the Lutheran Church of the Reformation in his day gave witness concerning the gospel by also condemning all that opposed it. As the gospel is proclaimed, its *truth* must be defended, so that it does not become distorted and perverted (Galatians 1:7), losing its God-given definition and power to save.

“The faith of Luther and the confessors at Augsburg was Christocentric without being Christomonistic.” The Augsburg Confession does not reduce the Bible to “simple pieties regarding Jesus.” “‘Christ alone’ does not *complete*, but rather *permeates* the teaching of the church, as the church has always confessed.”⁴ The relationship of the proclamation of the gospel to the defense of the truth is similar to the relationship between the gospel itself (*the norma normans*) and the confession of the church (*the norma normata*). Just as the gospel is the standard that establishes the norm of what is to be believed and confessed, and that normative confession is governed by the norming gospel, so also the proclamation of the gospel ought to govern every defense of the truth.

Cast into propositional form, our thinking should be:

Every defense of the Truth is a proclamation of the gospel.

Our thinking should NOT be:

In defending the Truth there may be a proclamation of the gospel.

- ◆ This means, that neither we, nor those who hear us witness in our preaching/teaching/confessing, should need to “dig deeply” to find the proclamation of Jesus as the Savior of sinners. This applies to every “hard saying” that we must defend in our witnessing.
- ◆ This means that Jesus Christ - *Savior* is not an “afterthought” to be plugged into our sermons in order that we may sound positive to our hearers and give them something that will make them feel good before they leave church. We are called to be *witnesses not psychologists*; we are commissioned by our Lord to proclaim the objective truth because it *is their only salvation*, not because it *feels good*.
- ◆ This means that we do not need to determine the “confessional stance” of every one we meet before we make use of an opportunity to proclaim the gospel of forgiveness and salvation in the world’s Redeemer.
- ◆ This means that we ought to train our people to be better witnesses by helping them to recognize that Jesus Christ – *Savior* is the heart and center of our confession of God’s Truth revealed in Holy Scripture. We need to improve the Bible study skills and knowledge of our people, establish or rebuild their understanding of Christian doctrine, and help them to see that our witness is to the evangel--the good news concerning Christ--and nothing less.

Who is sufficient for such things?

“But our sufficiency is from God” (2 Cor. 3:5) that He may receive the glory.

So help us, Lord!

ADDENDUM

We of the CLC, beginning with our clergy, must be continually watchful for those “pitfalls of orthodoxy” of which we have often reminded ourselves through our 40 years of grace. However, let us be thankful and praise our God for every evidence that the *witness* of our preaching is both a proclamation of the gospel and a defense of the truth. We mention one example that recently came to our attention.

Our CLC Missions web site begins with this statement of purpose: “It is our single purpose to be a Christian church which strives to proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible, by which alone man can know the true God and the way to eternal life.” Compare with the following “E -News” report from David Koenig our Foreign Missionary on August 9, 2001:

“While at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College in search of Hindi catechisms for our work in the Andaman Islands, I had a chance to witness.

“Gurukul is the seminary for the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of India, which unites ten Lutheran churches here and also has other denominational teachers. The largest Lutheran church in India is in Andhra Pradesh, where the CLCI is located. The Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, part of the UELCI, has perhaps 700,000 members.

“I got into quite a discussion with a few of the students from Andhra on the differences between us. At first one fellow said they agree with what I had said so far. But the more we got into it the more it was obvious they had a different view of the Bible. The one fellow I talked with the most didn’t even want to say there was a hell where unbelieving Hindus and Moslems went.

“The issue of women’s ordination, which has caused us to have contacts in Tanzania, was accepted among these Lutherans in India. Because I had talked of us being conservative, I was asked to explain it.

“The ten United Lutheran churches were not only unionistic among themselves, but with other denominations. We got to visiting briefly about the Lutheran World Federation and the compromising statement on

unity with the Catholic church on justification.

“These and other issues are prompting us to have a friendly lunch when I am back in Chennai for the Uthukottai pastors’ catechism examinations around Sept. 4th. We are sending two good hermeneutics books (principles of interpreting Scripture) to a couple men. They were interested to an extent. Pray that the Word has its effect on these men and that the lunch is a time for feeding not only the belly, but faith with the Word. One man said that these things I had been saying were what he had held to until he came to Gurukul. But now ...!

“Be thankful for what we have, the Word, the Word, the Word.”

NOTES

¹ Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith — Reformers Define the Church, 1530-1580* (Concordia Publishing House, 1991) 24.

² Kolb, 36.

³ For this reason, I have seldom used the well-known hymn, “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus, You soldiers of the Cross!” When used in the worship service, I have explained how it is that we should see ourselves as “soldiers” for Jesus.

⁴ Kolb, 32.

Walk Not As Other Gentiles

An Exegetical Study of Ephesians 4:17-24

David Schaller

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

There is salvation for the Gentile as well as the Jew. This is one of the themes which Paul repeatedly emphasizes throughout *Ephesians*. Salvation is accomplished for all through Jesus Christ and His work as Redeemer of the world. There are no laws to keep or rules to follow under the New Covenant. One need no longer be concerned about the ceremonial laws of the Jews for they were but a shadow of things to come. Having come in the flesh, Christ Himself fulfilled the whole law and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

As Paul now writes to the Gentile Christians at Ephesus, he encourages them to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (4:1). Since the Holy Spirit had enlightened their hearts and minds unto the true faith, Paul wanted to remind them that they would now be faced with a continual struggle between the new man who does God' s will at all times and the old man wh is forever in opposition. It is for this reason that the Lord of the church "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (4:12-13). Christian sanctification is an ongoing process until the time of death. With the help of God, the Christian strives to drown the old man day by day even as the hymn writer says, "Before the dawning day let sin' s dark ~~days~~ be gone, the old man all be put away, the new man all put on" (TLH 68:5). Through the work of the Holy Spirit the Christian Church becomes an ever more unified body in Christ Jesus as Paul concludes in 4:16, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

(Variant readings do not play a significant role in Ephesians 4:17-24. The text here is that of Nestle-Aland 26th

Edition.)

17 Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ, μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν,

Therefore I say this and insist in the Lord that you no longer walk even as the Gentiles walk in the emptiness of their minds.

Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ

Paul begins this section of encouragement with the particle οὖν. Thus he refers back to the entire preceding section (4:1-16). He wants to show the difference between those who do not know the truth of Jesus and those whom the Holy Spirit has granted saving faith. By reminding the Ephesian Christians that they are members of the body of Christ (the previous verses), Paul sets the stage for the contrasts which he intends to describe. What a beautiful life it is that believers in Christ Jesus are privileged to enjoy!

Therefore that they may work at this completeness and unity in Christ which Paul has already mentioned in 4:13 he chooses not only to state his wishes for them but to insist (μαρτύρομαι) on these same "in the Lord." It is a call to attention. What Paul is writing he writes as an apostle of Christ and so ἐν κυρίῳ. ἐν κυρίῳ also means that he speaks for the Lord' s cause. He tells these things so that the truths of 4:16 might be realized.

μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν

Here the Greek proceeds with indirect discourse as the substance of Paul' s insistence in the Lord is proclaimed. He tells the Christians not to walk after the manner of Gentiles who cast about in the futility of their own thinking.

περιπατεῖν here translated "walk" has a broad meaning. This word carries with it the idea of "a way of life." It includes attitudes, thoughts, and feelings as well as deeds. It includes typical responses to various situations as Hodge points out, "*To walk* in Scripture language, includes all the manifestations of life, inward and outward, seen and unseen. It does not express merely outward, visible deportment" (249). Surely the outward "walk" of the heathen can sometimes appear quite good and it may even lead one to think that such a person might be a Christian. Yet the heathen does works not because of God' s love but with a view toward personal gain and self-satisfaction. This is the "walk" of the world as Paul explains later in more detail. With περιπατεῖν Paul is writing to the Ephesians that they **not be of the same mind** as the Gentiles, but rather be of Christ' s mind as they "walk" through life.

The walk of the non-Christian is a walk of futility; futility of the mind as Paul writes. The Authorized Version translates ματαιότητι as *vanity* (not meaning pre-occupied with one's self, but rather the idea of doing something which will end up being no good; as in the English phrase "done in vain"). It is not difficult to see how accurate Paul' s observation is. There is nothing so striking to the Christian as to see the way the world vainly casts about grabbing hold of anything except the truth of Christ Jesus. The words of Psalm 2 come to mind, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Human beings are on a sinking ship and they know it. For example, the natural knowledge of God suggests to everyone that there is life after death. The world, however, continues to walk in the futility of its mind. Absolute truth is replaced by relativism. Forgiveness of sins and the gospel is replaced by psychological babble that involves the dulling of consciences. Carnal religions turn to work-righteousness in an attempt to appease an angry spirit being such as Allah who shows no personal interest in that which he has created here on earth. No matter how much is poured into these religions, they can never promise eternal life in heaven. "All the rivers run to the sea; yet the sea is not full" (Ecclesiastes 1:7a). This emptiness is the mind (νοῦς; manner of thought) and the unregenerate man' s way of life.

18 ἔσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ, διὰ τὴν ἀγνοίαν τὴν ὄσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, διὰ τὴν πῶρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν

Having been darkened in their understanding, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts

ἔσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ

The contrast between Christians and non-Christians continues. Now a further description of those who are without Christ. They are in spiritual darkness in their understanding. διανοία does not here simply mean a historical knowledge (or understanding) of Jesus and His doctrines. It doesn' t mean simple intelligence. As Arndt Gingrich suggests it is "*mind* as a kind of thinking, *disposition, thought.*" Compare Luke 1:51, "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination (διανοία) of their hearts." Being darkened in understanding is connected with an unbelieving way of life; that περιπατεῖν of the heathen. Note also the perfect

tense here. This darkening in the mind is something which has happened and is still in effect. One can think of original sin here. Everyone by nature has this same darkness in the mind from the moment of conception. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that this veil can be lifted. The heathen who have rejected the Messiah still wander in the darkness even though such a great light has surely shone upon them.

ὄντες, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ, διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, διὰ τὴν πώρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν

The present participle ὄντες again indicated the ongoing nature of this spiritual darkness. This darkness is no small thing. It means to be without God.

Spiritual darkness comes about through ignorance (ἄγνοιαν) toward Christ Jesus and hardness of heart. (Again recognize that ἄγνοιαν does not mean simply a lack of intelligence or knowledge, but it is itself a rejection of God' s Word as in Romans 1:28, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.") These things have the effect of "alienating from the life of God." Without Jesus Christ this ongoing spiritual darkness rooted in ignorance and hardness of heart makes for an ongoing separation (ablative case) from the life of God! A person without Christ is separated from the eternal life which is promised by God to those who believe on His name. Such a person also has no power to walk in newness of life; no power to bring forth fruits pleasing to God; no life of God. His heart is blind, unable to see to do God-pleasing works, and having the ability only to do evil, thereby casting himself further and further into the pit of destruction. Romans 11:25: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Here in 4:18 Paul contrasts the blessed state of the Christian with the empty life of the heathen. He thus encourages the Ephesians not to walk as those whose minds are darkened.

19 οἵτινες ἀπηληγκότες ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν τῇ ἀσελγείᾳ ἕς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ.

Which ones being callous gave themselves over to licentiousness to all unclean work with greediness

Paul continues with further description of the non-Christian. One' s mind being callous can only lead to continuous open violations of God' s holy will. ἀπηληγκότες might also be described as "past all feeling." Stoeckhart says that "The heathen, because of their moral degeneracy, have entirely lost all feeling for what is right, decent, and chaste, and have surrendered themselves to the practice of all manner of uncleanness, dissipation, greed, and covetousness" (212). The phrase εἰς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης surely covers a wide range of evils and not only sexual sins. The old man certainly can' t find enough evil things with which to amuse himself. People give themselves over to sin ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ, that is "with a desire for more." Kretzmann notes that "Paul purposely paints a picture from which the converted Gentile will turn with horror."

20 ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν.

But you yourselves did not so learn of Christ

How blessed are those Christians at Ephesus and also every one of us that dark minds have been enlightened! Jesus is not a teacher of all these evil acts, rather Jesus' teaching says things such as "love one another." Jesus preaches the gospel leading to fruits of the Spirit as in Galatians 5. Here in Ephesians 4:20 the heathen and the Christian are shown in stark contrast. In the new man there is no licentiousness, no working of unclean acts, and no desire for more evil. As Robinson says, "That is to say, you are no longer in this darkness and ignorance: you have learned Christ: and the lesson involves a wholly different life" (106).

21 εἴ γε αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε, καθὼς ἔστιν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Since it was He whom you heard and in Him you have been taught even as truth is in Jesus.

Why does a Christian (old man notwithstanding) desire good works rather than evil? Why would the Ephesians be so inclined to turn in horror from the works of darkness as Kretzmann noted earlier? The difference lies in the fact that the Christian is moved by a different message from a different Teacher. Jesus, who never had so much as an impure thought, is the great Teacher instructing Christians ἐν αὐτῷ. The phrase "in Him" implying more than just being taught who He is (cf. James 2:19), but also having true Christian fellowship with Him. The Ephesian Christians were members of the Holy Christian Church. Jesus' teaching was that of justification by faith in Him. Notice how the Greek emphasizes the words αὐτον and ἐν αὐτῷ thereby showing that it is indeed Christ who makes the difference. The word αὐτόν also shows how there is a clear reference to the gospel in this verse. Being in the accusative, it reveals that it is the *content* of Jesus teaching which is being emphasized. The content of Jesus preaching is in passages such as Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I

will give you rest." It is God' s love of mankind through Christ Jesus that has the power to warm the cold sinful heart. Hendriksen comments that Jesus was the Teacher and the theme in one. This is also the thought expressed by: "even as truth is in Jesus." Jesus not only teaches the truth of sin and grace to his children but he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, even in opposition to the rest of the world, as John wrote, "And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (1:5). In Jesus is the absolute true religion after which the world grasps in vain.

So also it is this great love in connection with Christ Jesus which causes Christians to bring forth worthy fruits. Since the Ephesians heard Christ rather than the world, their "walk" was naturally going to be different than that of those whose minds were yet darkened.

22 ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης

that you put off according to your former conduct the Old Man which is corrupt being according to the desire of deceit

It is here in this verse that the words of Romans 7:23 come to clearly to mind, where Paul says, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." There are certainly many things which tempt the Christian to turn away from Christ and His Word. The world which walks in futility of mind surely makes the futility look flashy sometimes. As for the Ephesians, they had once been outside the Christian Church and had conducted themselves after the manner which Paul listed in 4:19. So we also by nature before conversion were outside of God' s Church. We have now been brought near through the blood of Christ, but that sinful nature is still with us as it was still present among those at Ephesus. Paul explains that the old man and the Ephesian' s former conduct are one and the same and must be put off (ἀποθέσθαι) since such activity is inconsistent with the truth (ἀληθεία) of Jesus stated in 4:21. It is this same old man which also leads to the darkness of mind against which Paul warns in 4:18. This sinful side is entirely corrupt (φθειρόμενον). It' s only goal is self gratification and so it desires nothing but sinful pleasure, here also called "deceit" (The genitive of *deceit* here is debated as to its meaning. It could be a personification of evil desire or it could be saying that the desire is deceitful since it leads one away from Christ). The word ἐπιθυμίας here signifies a desire which is against God' s will. For the Christian it is necessary that he drown the old man daily in contrition, repentance, and forgiveness of sins. Nor let us forget the means of grace which God has given to His church for this drowning. The hymn writer says, "Let us mortify, while living, flesh and blood and die to sin" (TLH 409:3). Paul would that the Ephesian Christians might never forsake the grace and mercy shown to them in Christ Jesus even as Ezekiel (18:31) exhorted the house of Israel saying, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

23 ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν

and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Here Paul speaks in direct contrast to his statement in 4:17. He wants to show how the mind rooted in futility can be a mind transformed and renewed in Christ Jesus. This renewing of the mind is entirely the work of God (note the passive voice). So also Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Through God the Christian "walk" becomes one of willingness and joy in doing God' s will. One' s entire "frame of mind" is changed and he sees things so much differently than before. So Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

24 καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας.

and that you put on the new man which is created from (like) God in righteousness and holiness of truth

Paul states not only the negative, but also the positive. When the old man is put away, the new man is put on at the same time. Colossians 3:10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized have put on Christ." Every Christian is blessed with that part which wants to put away the works of darkness and live to God. The new man is a creation (κτισθέντα) such as only God can fashion. No one can create a will in accord with God save God Himself. This new creature does not follow the futility of the world' s thinking. The new man works in harmony with the Truth. From the *Formula of Concord*. Th. Dec. Art II, 63:

But when a man has been converted, and is thus enlightened, and his will is renewed, it is then that man wills what is good (so far as he is regenerate or a new man), and *delights in the law of God after the inward man*, Rom. 7:22, and henceforth does good to such an extent and as long as he is impelled by God' s Spirit, as Paul says, Rom. 8:14: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*. And this impulse of the Holy Ghost is not *coactio*, or coercion, but the converted man does good spontaneously, as David says, Ps. 110:4: *Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power*. And nevertheless that also [the strife of the flesh and spirit] remains in the regenerate of which St. Paul wrote, Rom. 7:22f.: *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*. Also, v. 25: *So, then, with my mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin*. Also Gal. 5:17: *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*.

What an incredible creation! This new man which the Christian puts on is from God and like God (κατὰ θεόν). As Habeck writes, "The new man is like God in righteousness and holiness of the truth." It is created from God' s perfect, master blueprint even as Adam was created in God' s image (Genesis 1:27). The use of *κατὰ* here certainly seems to be a bit striking as Dana-Mantey, Hanna, and others point out. In Hanna: "There is a unique usage of *κατὰ* in the clause τὸν ... κτισθέντα which means 'the new man who has been created in accordance with God.'"

δικαιοσύνη in this context then would seem to refer to righteousness with regard to God' s standards of right and wrong. This righteousness is the opposite of that corruption mentioned in 4:22. Here Paul says that the new man is created in "righteousness and holiness of truth." Stoeckhart sees the genitive τῆς ἀληθείας as covering both the terms righteousness and holiness. It is a bit difficult to determine exactly how this genitive is functioning and translations differ at this point. Perhaps it is simplest to view it in relation to 4:22 as Robinson, "The familiar story has perpetually repeated itself in human experience: 'the old man is corrupt according to the lusts of deceit', and a fresh creation after the original pattern has been necessitated: it is found in '*the new man which after God is created in righteousness and holiness which are (in contrast with 'deceit') of the truth*'" (110). This new man, of course, is intimately connected with the person and work of the Redeemer Jesus Christ, "even as truth is in Jesus" (4:21). For the Christian, Jesus Christ Himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Thanks be to God that He has made us "children of the day" and granted us the grace to put on the new man and follow Him in truth!

Hark, a thrilling voice is sounding!
"Christ is nigh!" we hear it say;
"Cast away the works of darkness,
O ye children of the day!" (TLH 60:1)

BOOK REVIEW

Cleone H. Weigand: **Creation**, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2000, paperback, 176 pages, one of the books in the "People's Bible Teachings" series.

All of the books in this series are purposely written in a simple style for ordinary people, and this book on creation succeeds very well in this aim. Even the chapter headings are simple, consisting of one word only. The author, a now-retired parish pastor, shows from Scripture that God made the following (these are the chapter headings): soul, life, mind, body, atoms, light, baby, land, sea, sky, time, order, love, word, and rest.

Remarkably the specific days of Genesis One are not spoken of in detail until the second last chapter. In this connection Pastor Weigand shows that "Jesus regarded the creation account as literally true," and "if God has said it, we know it is true because God does not lie" (p. 144). The text of Genesis as well as common Hebrew usage indicate plainly that the days of Genesis are "24-hour" days. The Christian who trusts his Bible as God's Word has no problem with this fact.

Likewise, the Bible makes it plain that death among animals as well as among humans is the result of man's sin. "There was no death among any of the animals before sin appeared" (153). Sad to say, some Christian teachers who teach the historicity of Adam and Eve, such as John Stott, are nevertheless willing to allow the possibility of thousands of years of animal life **and death** before God's creation of Adam and Eve (see *Authentic Christianity from the Writings of John Stott*, edited by Timothy Dudley-Smith, InterVarsity Press, 142). Why can't we just accept what the Bible says and let the evolutionists and their "Christian" followers who want to be regarded as wise in this world, make fools of themselves? All true science is in perfect agreement with Holy Scripture.

Pastor Weigand has been interested in science since his college days. During his time of active service in the parish ministry he also served for a time on the board of directors of the Lutheran Science Institute. Therefore it is not surprising that interesting scientific facts are interspersed with the commentary on Bible teachings. For example, Pastor Weigand includes discussions of such matters as the creation of the island of Surtsey off the coast of Iceland in 1963, the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in 1980, and the noxious spray of the bombardier beetle. He points out that many scientists through the years have been Bible-believing creationists rather than evolutionists, and the same is still true today.

In reading this book I found only one sentence that I seriously questioned. Pastor Weigand says that "animal life ceases at the point of physical death" (10). It seemed to me that this statement does not perfectly agree with Romans 8:21, where it says that "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

In reply to my question Pastor Weigand, a college classmate of this reviewer, pointed out that 2 Peter 3:11 says that "all these things," including all created things, "will be dissolved." Of course this does not include mankind, made in the image of God, who will indeed continue on either in heaven or hell. Pastor Weigand was willing to enlarge on his brief statement that "animal life ceases at the point of physical death" by the following comment he sent to me (which I printed out in full in my personal copy of this book):

Animal life dies and all animals will be destroyed in the destruction by fire in the end times. However, God will build anew and restore a new creation in which everything again is perfect and death absent. The details of this reconstruction we leave up to God because we do not have enough Scriptural information to fill in the details. Passages that give us a basis for speaking in this way are:

2 Peter 3: 11-13 - **"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."**

Romans 8: 19-23 - **"The creation waits in eager anticipation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."**

Even though this book is about creation, rather than redemption, there is one chapter entitled "Love" that includes a brief reference to God's redemptive love in Christ Jesus. God created lambs in the knowledge that He would one day send His own Son as **"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29). The last book of Scripture delights in depicting our Savior as the crucified, risen, and ever-reigning triumphant Lamb.

In conclusion, I recommend this little book on creation as a welcome addition to every church library and the library of every Christian. We pray that all the many Christians in danger of being taken in by man's complicated evolutionary hypotheses might rather hold to the simple teachings of the Bible as summarized in this book.

Note: Previous reviews of books in the People's Bible Teachings series may be found in *Journal of Theology* March 1998 (*God's Providence*) and *Journal of Theology* September 1998 (*Civil Government*).

- David Lau