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Preachings from Daniel

Paul F. Nolting
Chapter 7

In Christ Jesus, the Son of Man who received the Kingdom, Fellow Redeemed:

This is one of the most amazing prophetic visions in all of Scripture. It traces the history of the Kingdom of God in its ongoing conflict with the kingdoms of this world unto its final and ultimate triumph. Perhaps the imagery is new to you. You may wonder what all this means to you as a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, as one of the saints washed clean in the blood of the

Lamb. The answer is given you in the angel's interpretation of the vision, as recorded in verses 17-18: "Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." The final victory, promised in the Garden of Eden, is ours; we shall overcome! Recall that in the vision of the Great Colossus, which symbolized the kingdoms of this world, a Stone cut without hands completely destroyed the image and then became a great mountain which filled the whole earth. That's the "V" sign from the Lord, THE VICTORY! Here in this vision that VICTORY is pictured in a more personal manner:

The Son of man came to the Ancient of Days and was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. The saints take possession of that Kingdom which is an eternal kingdom. Again that VICTORY flashes on the screen. The final book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John, lifts this VICTORY theme to its most glorious heights, ending with scenes of the eternal Kingdom of Glory. So what are we to carry off from these visions of chapter seven? This truth: **KINGDOMS COME AND GO—DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION!**

BUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD ENDURES FOREVER!

The beasts: Daniel saw a vision at night. He beheld the vast ocean in turmoil, stirred up by the four winds of heaven. The raging sea is the prophetic picture of the people and nations of the earth under the sovereign control of the Lord God. Four beasts arose from the sea. The first was like a lion with eagle's wings. That was Babylon, corresponding to the gold head of the Great Colossus. The wings were plucked off, the lion stood in erect position, and a human heart was given to it. This appears to reflect the humanizing process, following the loss and regaining of Nebuchadnezzar's reason, as reported in chapter four. The second beast was like a bear, raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth. That beast was urged to "arise, devour much flesh." The bear symbolizes the Medo-Persian kingdom which was voracious in gobbling up territory and kingdoms. The third beast was the swift leopard made more swift with four wings to correspond to its four heads. The leopard symbolized the Greek kingdom which under Alexander the Great conquered the world with a speed that amazes historians to this day, but which lasted only a short time before it was divided into four separate kingdoms.

The fourth beast was symbolized by a beast unlike any beast in nature. It has been called a nondescript beast. It was dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. Its distinctive feature was iron teeth with which the beast devoured and broke into pieces whatever came in its way, trampling under foot what it did not devour. This unnatural beast had ten horns. As Daniel kept on watching, a little horn sprouted in their midst plucking out three horns to make room for itself. This "little horn" was human, having human eyes and a big mouth, as we would say, "a mouth speaking pompous words." Each of the beasts represented a section of the Great Colossus, symbolizing the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires which appeared successively on the stage of world history.

The judgment: Next Daniel saw the judgment scene. Thrones were set in place. The Ancient of Days—God the Father—was seated. His garments were white, symbolizing holiness, and His hair like pure wool, symbolizing eternity. His throne was on wheels from which fire issued. The wheels symbolize mobility, as fire symbolizes judgment. God runs, as it were, a circuit court over the face of the earth. A vast multitude, no doubt of angels, stood before Him. The court was called to order "and the books were opened." Truly a most solemn judgment scene.

What was the result of the proceedings of the court? In that solemn court there was one discordant note: The "little horn" kept on spouting off. He showed no respect for the Judge. Did he get away with it? Not at all! The nondescript beast with the ten horns and the "little horn" was slain, its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. The destruction was complete, not like that of the preceding beasts. Remember that the nondescript beast represented Rome, the ten horns subsequent geopolitical developments, the "little horn" the rise of the Great Antichrist. Yet all the anti-*Kingdom of God* kingdoms of this world are pictured as having been judged and de-

stroyed in connection with the fourth empire—Rome.

The coronation: Daniel kept on watching: “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days. And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.” What a glorious scene! The “Son of Man” is the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The big question is, When was this vision fulfilled? When did Jesus receive the Kingdom? Obviously, it was future from the viewpoint and time of Daniel. But is it past or future from our point in time? Has our Lord Jesus already received the Kingdom or shall He receive it in the future?

The great “Suffering Servant of the Lord” prophecy in Isaiah 53 declared that after the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, shall have made His soul an offering for sin, the Lord God “will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong” (Isa. 53:12). To the Victor belong the spoils! Our Lord Jesus suffered, died, and then arose again as the Victor over condemning sin, over the great Accuser, the Prince of this world, and over avenging death. He crushed the head of the serpent! What remained after His victory? To receive the spoils! And those He did receive! Before His ascension, Jesus declared: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). That is the fulfillment of Daniel’s vision in which he saw the Son of Man “given dominion and glory and a kingdom.” The Apostle Paul describes the coronation of our Lord in these words: “He (the Father) raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:20-23). The Apostle John saw the coronation in a vision in which he saw “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb—our Lord Jesus—taking the scroll of history from the hand of Him who sat on the throne” (Rev. 5). As judgment fell upon all the kingdoms of the world in connection with the fourth kingdom, so the eternal Kingdom of our Lord was established in connection with that same kingdom. The judgment on the cross was judgment upon the Prince of this world and all his anti-*Kingdom of God* kingdoms. So also the victory of the empty tomb marked the establishing of the Kingdom of God on earth. At the present moment we see the Kingdom of our Lord only by faith while we see the kingdoms of this world in all their human nobility and beast-like fury. The fact of the matter is that all the kingdoms of this earth have already been judged and are awaiting execution of their sentence, while the Kingdom of our Lord is destined to break forth in all its glory at His coming.

Daniel’s grief: At this point Daniel recorded his own feelings: “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.” What caused his grief? Daniel knew the history of his own people. He was a patriot, even though he had been carried off to Babylon as a youth. He knew the glory of Israel under David and Solomon when Israel, not Babylon, was master of the world. But in this vision of the future Daniel saw nothing of his people, the nation of Israel. In the preceding dream of the Great Colossus there also had been a blackout of Israel. In subsequent visions it was to be revealed that Daniel’s people would be persecuted by the successors of the Greek Empire, that they would be permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, but that the city would be destroyed again. The Kingdom of God would triumph, but the nation of Israel would run its course in history. No glorious future awaited it. Daniel was grieved in his spirit—grieved because of the fading glory of his people.

The interpretation: In his grief Daniel approached one standing by—an angel—and inquired as to the meaning of what he had seen. The angel gave him the interpretation in a nutshell: The four beasts were successively rising kings or kingdoms. Kingdoms would come and go, as they had since the beginning of time. But in the end the saints—all believers who have been

washed clean in the blood of the Lamb and who have been sanctified by His Spirit—shall possess the Kingdom forever and ever. Final Victory for all believers is the bottom line.

But Daniel was especially interested in that fourth nondescript beast which had so ruthlessly destroyed all. What about the ten horns? And what about that “little horn,” which replaced three other horns and which was so human, but also so blasphemous? That “little horn” made war against the saints and prevailed until the Ancient of Days interposed with His judgment.

Daniel received the interpretation that the ten horns were ten kingdoms which would arise from the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire. The entire geopolitical history of the world from the Roman Empire to the end of time is depicted by those ten horns. The era of the British Empire, the Napoleonic Era, the rise of Mussolini and Hitler, and the current super power status of the USSR and the USA are all depicted by these ten horns, for nothing really new has occurred. History merely keeps on recording the rise and fall of the kingdoms of this world.

But what about the “little horn” which shall arise, pluck out three horns, be different from other kingdoms in that it is characterized by a “big mouth,” uttering blasphemies and persecuting the saints? Interpreters are genuinely agreed that this “little horn” is the Great Antichrist described so vividly by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians, where Paul called him “the man of sin . . . the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Again the question is, Has the Great Antichrist already come or shall he appear at the end of time? The great majority today, especially the Dispensationalists and premillenarians, believe that the Great Antichrist will be a charismatic political person arising from a restored Roman Empire which they believe to be symbolized by the ten horns on the fourth beast. Actually this interpretation of the Great Antichrist as an “endtime” political monster in the likeness of a Nero or a Hitler or a Stalin was originated by Jesuit priests. It was an effort to divert people away from the practically unanimous interpretation once held by all Protestant churches that the Great Antichrist is the Roman Papacy. The loss of this interpretation has resulted from the general loss of the gospel and with it the loss of an understanding of the Kingdom. When the Kingdom is externalized and pictured in the millennial scenario of Jesus coming back and sitting upon a tangible throne of David in the localized city of Jerusalem for a period of one thousand years before eternity begins, then the Great Antichrist must be a charismatic political leader, despite the fact that Paul stated that he shall sit in the temple of God.

But when one understands that the Kingdom is spiritual, that Jesus established that Kingdom through His innocent suffering, death, and resurrection, then it becomes clear that the great Antichrist is a spiritual institution headed by a religious political leader. Such a leader has appeared in history in the form of the popes and the papacy, which condemned the salvation which Christ won for us and has given to us by grace through faith, which claims political power such as Pope John is currently exerting all over the globe, and which has historically persecuted the saints. We need but think of the Inquisition. Yet the Kingdom shall prevail! All the “Hitlers” and “Stalins” of this world, also the kingdom of the Great Antichrist shall one day bite the dust. But the Kingdom of our Lord and Christ shall triumph. We are by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord members of that Kingdom. The Kingdom has been given to us. We shall live and reign with our Lord forever and ever. That is the great and glorious and comforting truth vouchsafed to Daniel and preserved in the Holy Scripture for our learning and comfort. Amen.

Chapter 8

In Christ Jesus, who advised His own that the world would hate them because they are not of the world (John 17:14), Fellow Redeemed:

Daniel had a second vision, two years after the first one recorded in chapter seven. In his first vision Daniel had seen the passing of four empires over the stage of history. They were the Babylonian Empire symbolized by a lion with eagle’s wings, the Medo-Persian Empire symbol-

ized by a bear with three ribs in its mouth, the Grecian Empire symbolized by a leopard with four wings of a bird and four heads, and finally the Roman Empire symbolized by a nondescript beast with ten horns, iron teeth, and claws of bronze.

In his second vision the Spirit of God zoomed in on the second and third empires, the Medo-Persian and Greek empires. This time they appeared under different animal symbols. The bear became a ram and the leopard became a goat. Daniel found himself in his vision by the River Ulai. He saw a ram which had two horns, one higher than the other. This symbolized the dual make-up of the Medo-Persian Empire. The ram pushed westward, northward, and southward; no nation or people could withstand the ram. It did whatever it wanted to do. So the Persian Empire ruled the world for some two hundred years. But then Daniel saw a male goat coming from the west at such a speed that its feet didn't even touch the ground. The goat thus corresponded with the swift leopard made swifter with four wings. The goat had a notable horn between its eyes, symbolizing Alexander the Great. The goat charged the ram and broke his two horns, thus completely subduing him. The male goat became very strong, but then the large horn was broken, symbolizing the death of Alexander in 323 BC when he was in his early thirties.

As Daniel continued to watch, four notable horns replaced the one large horn. And then something extremely strange occurred. A little horn grew out of one of those four horns. It became exceedingly great—so great that “it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.” This is a vivid picture of persecution that was to come upon the people of the Lord God.

In the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had of the Great Colossus, persecution did not come into the picture. Four empires passed over the stage of history and then were destroyed without a trace remaining by the Stone cut without hands that struck the colossus. That dream revealed judgment upon the kingdoms of this world and the ultimate glorious triumph of the Kingdom of God. In the vision of the four beasts, symbolizing the same four kingdoms, persecution became a prominent part of the vision in the form of that little horn that grew among the ten horns, rooted out three of them, and then emerged with a big blasphemous mouth. The “little horn” did not content itself with blaspheming; it also persecuted the saints of the Most High “for a time and times and half a time” (7:25). This persecution was to occur in connection with the fourth beast.

We also noted persecution in chapter six when Daniel became a victim of a special law, enacted for the one purpose of ensnaring him. We noted that the conflict arose from the pagan concept of the king as mediator of the gods and so the mediator of all blessings for his citizens. That conflicted directly with Daniel's faith in the Lord God as the Mediator of all blessings, and so brought persecution upon him.

The persecution, so vividly portrayed to Daniel in the vision in chapter eight, originated from the “little horn” that grew out from one of the four horns on the head of the goat. Those four horns symbolized the four kingdoms into which the Empire of Alexander was divided. The one that sprouted the “little horn” was the Seleucid dynasty that controlled Syria and Babylonia and that conquered Palestine. The “little horn” was the eighth king of that dynasty, known as Antiochus IV, who took the added name “Epiphanes,” the Illustrious. Centuries before it would take place in history, Daniel saw that --

**THE “LITTLE HORN” (Antiochus Epiphanes) FROM ONE
OF THE FOUR HORNS OF THE GOAT (Grecian Empire)
WOULD PERSECUTE GOD'S PEOPLE.**

I. The persecution arose from the attempt to force God's People to conform to this world.

In writing to the Romans centuries after Daniel, the Apostle Paul described the sanctified life of a child of God who has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb as presenting one's body

as a living sacrifice unto the Lord. But just what does that mean? Paul elaborated in the rest of the chapter, but the first thing that he mentioned was not conforming to this world, but rather being transformed by the renewing of one's mind, Romans 12:1-2. In the prophetic vision before us Daniel learned that his people, the People of God, would one day suffer persecution because they refused to conform to this world.

That persecution would arise from a future king who is described as "having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity." That's quite an elaborate prophetic picture. It pictures a ruthlessly successful political leader, a man who fits the description later given by the Italian political writer, Machiavelli, whose book "The Prince" was a textbook for Hitler. The "dirty tricks" of our politicians in political campaigns are "Sunday School capers" compared with the deceit and treachery consistently employed by this king. He entered Jerusalem under the banner of peace and then slaughtered the people and desecrated the temple. Biblical scholars are practically unanimous in identifying this king as Antiochus Epiphanes. The description is so vivid and exact that scholars who refuse to accept the supernatural in prophecy believe it is a historical description of Antiochus by a contemporary.

What goal was Antiochus attempting to achieve? He was a champion of Greek culture with its polytheistic worship. He wanted uniformity and conformity in his kingdom. That meant crushing the worship of One God by the Jews and crushing their adherence to the laws of worship that the Lord God had given His Old Testament people. Antiochus entered the temple and defiled it by sacrificing an unclean swine on the great altar and by washing down the sanctuary with swine's broth. He dedicated the great altar to Jupiter. Then he systematically set out to destroy all the regularly ordained forms of worship—the evening and morning sacrifices, the observance of the Sabbath and the monthly and annual festivals. He forbade the circumcision of Jewish sons and executed those who violated his law. He introduced Greek culture which featured the gymnasium where athletes trained and performed in the nude. Circumcised males were encouraged to reverse their circumcision by plastic surgery. The aim was to remove completely the distinctiveness of God's Old Testament people. They were to conform to the world about them or suffer the consequences, which was death. The historical apocryphal books of Maccabees report the historical fulfillment of what Daniel saw in this and later visions.

But what does all this mean for us today? The Old Testament ceremonial laws by which the People of God lived in Old Testament times and for which many died, have been revoked by our Lord. They are a thing of the past. We don't offer sacrifices or observe dietary laws; nor are we obligated to keep the Sabbath. Circumcision is no longer mandatory. With all of these rules and regulations washed away by our Lord, how are we to be different? Our lives as Children of God can be summed up very briefly—as **faith** resting upon the Lord Jesus as Savior and Lord and **love** toward our fellow man. We have been redeemed! The price was more costly than any possible treasure on earth. It couldn't be measured in gold or silver, precious stones or oil or uranium. It cost the precious blood of the innocent Son of God made sin for us. He washed us clean in His blood. He made us His own by His holy life of love and innocent suffering and death. We belong to Him! How does He want us to demonstrate that we belong to Him? Love one another! Love your fellowman!

Each one of us has his or her own life hopes, dreams, ambitions, fears. But if we live our lives unto ourselves, we are living like the heathen around us. We are conforming to the world. If we adopt the morals of the world about us—that sexual activity of any kind between consenting adults is natural and right, and beyond censure by society or God Himself, then we are conforming to the world. If our response to the population explosion is a license to kill the unborn, then again we are conforming our thinking to the world. If we adopt the consensus thinking about us

that it really doesn't make much or any difference what doctrines or teachings one believes and that there is a similar latitude in morals, then we would again be conforming to this world. That's the easy road. All about us subtle pressures are exerted upon us to conform. Don't stick out like a sore thumb! Go with the crowd! When in Rome or in the D.C. area, do what the Romans or the citizens of this area do! I'm not telling you anything new. All of you are exposed to these pressures from all sides.

What happens if you say "No" to these pressures? What if you tell your boss that you will have no part in a shady deal? What if you tell a boyfriend or girlfriend that you refuse "to go all the way" because that is wickedness in the sight of God? What if you say "no" to alcohol and drugs? What if you dare to rebuke a friend who is sinning with his lips by misusing the holy name of the Lord? Multiply cases and examples in your own mind! What are the results? You will soon experience persecution in one form or another. The world pressures the Children of God to conform to the ways and ideals of the world, because conformity implies approval. Refusal to conform is judgment upon the world. The world reacts by persecuting God's Children.

What will be the outcome of all this? In the prophetic picture, given in this and future visions, the outcome would be as follows:

II. Though many sinned, the People of God triumphed over the persecution.

God permitted His people to be persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes as a chastisement upon them. It would be for a limited time—2300 days. That comes out to a little less than seven years. Remember that seven is the number of God at work. It would appear as though the length of the judgment would be a little less than a full period of judgment of God.

During that time many Jews did surrender to Antiochus by neglecting the ceremonial laws, despising the Sabbath, eating unclean meats, and by not circumcising their sons. The book of the Maccabees reports the falling away of many in Israel. That always happens during times of persecutions. It happens in our day when there is no governmental persecution, but only the pressures of society to conform to the world. We have young people and older people also who go along with sexual immorality, misuse of drugs, and doctrinal or confessional indifference. There are casualties along the way. There is no doubt of that.

But this is also true that God's People shall ultimately triumph over all persecution and persecutors. Antiochus was a scourge upon the People of God. What happened to him? The prophecy says, "But he shall be broken without human hand." History tells us that Antiochus died of some illness while on a campaign to the east.

This morning we are again celebrating the Lord's Supper. We shall eat bread and drink wine; with that oral eating and drinking we shall also be receiving the true body and blood of our Lord in a manner that forever remains a mystery unto us. Why does the Lord give us His body and blood? As a personal seal or assurance of His forgiveness, for His body and blood were given and shed for us for the remission of sins. We come for, and receive, the assurance of forgiveness. But forgiveness is never license to sin by conforming to this world. It is rather also strength to combat sin in our lives, to stand up against the world, to stand up against the snide remarks of those who would entice us, to show in our lives that we are the Lord's—trusting Him for full salvation and reflecting in our lives His love for all mankind. May the Lord bless our communion service unto this end. Amen.

Chapter 9

In Christ Jesus, who confirmed the covenant made with Abraham, Fellow Redeemed:

When we think of the great messianic prophecies, we have been conditioned to think especially of Isaiah 53 with its many familiar verses, as

'Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:4-5).

This morning we wish to implant Daniel 9 in your memories as the chapter containing the great messianic vision of the ‘Seventy Sevens.’ Daniel had been carried off into captivity in the year 605 BC. The first year of Darius was 538 BC, some 67 years later. Somehow the books of the prophet Jeremiah had found their way to Babylon. Jeremiah had prophesied (chapters 25 and 29) that his people would serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. Then the Lord would work his judgment upon Babylon and grant release of His people through Cyrus, whom Isaiah had already named as deliverer, even before Jeremiah (Isa. 44:28). Daniel realized that the time for the freedom of his people to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple had come. But Daniel also knew the spiritual condition of his people—that they had not yet learned the lesson from the judgment that had fallen upon them.

So Daniel turned to the Lord in prayer. The backdrop of his prayer is Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, and 1 Kings 8 in which Moses and Solomon speak of the covenant relations between the Lord and His people. If His people remained faithful to Him, the Lord would bless them. If they became unfaithful, His judgment would fall upon them. If they then repented and cried unto Him, the Lord would hear and deliver His people. Daniel addressed his prayer to the Lord, the covenant name of the Lord God: ‘O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments.’”

Then Daniel made confession: ‘We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly, and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.’ Notice that Daniel made no excuses; he offered no alibis. He simply confessed his and his people’s sin.

Then came his petition: ‘O Lord, according to Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all who are around us.’”

And why should the Lord hear? What was the basis for Daniel’s petition? ‘We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies.’”

The answer to Daniel’s prayer came while he was yet praying. It was delivered by the man Gabriel, who was an angel. The answer was the Vision of the Seventy Sevens. Most translations use the word “weeks,” a common seven -division of time, but then understand years instead of days. Seven is the number of divine activity. In sevens, seventy of them, the Lord would fulfill His covenant promises to Abraham and Israel. So then, the vision proclaimed that –

SEVENTY SEVENS ARE DETERMINED!

To achieve or accomplish what? To keep the covenant which was concerned with the resolution of the problem of sin which had entered the world through our first parents’ disobedience, which had caused the worldwide judgment of the flood and after that the second worldwide judgment at Babel. To Abraham the Lord God had promised to send One from his seed who would bring blessing to all mankind—who would once and for all time solve the problem of sin. Six things would be accomplished during the Seventy Sevens to solve the problem of sin, three negative and three positive. The negatives are:

To finish (restrain) the transgression,
To make an end of (seal) sins,
To make reconciliation of (cover) iniquity.

Daniel had used multiple terms in confessing his and his people’s sin; Gabriel used three terms to describe sin as missing the divine mark, rebellion against the Lord, and as an infecting and condemning evil. Sin is to be finished off, restrained; the verb is used for penning up calves.

Sin had run rampant causing the murder of the second son of Adam and Eve by their first son, bringing on the flood, causing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, causing the judgment of the captivity to fall upon God's people. It was to be restrained, penned up, shut up! There was to be a restraint of sin, a final solution to the problem of sin. The action was to be official, the solution of the problem signed and sealed. Finally the iniquity was to be covered. The word used by Gabriel is the key word in the 16th chapter of Leviticus which described the great Day of Atonement when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood on the mercy-seat. That was the divine "cover up," not a concealing of sin from the eye of man, but concealing them from the avenging eye of the holy God. Within Seventy Sevens transgression, sin, iniquity was to be shut up, sealed up, covered up! When did that happen? When our Lord lived and died on the cross.

But our God's work is never purely negative. So Gabriel prophesied that three corresponding positive works would be achieved in regard to the final solution of the problem of sin:

To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.

Righteousness is our God's covenant faithfulness. Our God is righteous; we are sinners, unfaithful, liars. God's faithfulness came to a climax in sending His Son to fulfill all righteousness and thereby procure righteousness for us. Old Testament prophets spoke of the LORD as OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 23:6). The last prophet, Malachi, spoke of "the Sun of righteousness rising with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2). Our righteousness is as filthy rags; we need to be covered with a holy, spotless righteousness—the righteousness which Jesus brought in for us. Vision and prophecy were officially sealed up by our Lord. All prophecy pointed to Jesus; all prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus cried out, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Before He ascended, Jesus proclaimed: "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Finally, within the Seventy Sevens "the Most Holy" was to be anointed. The expression is used either of things or persons. Recall Jesus' first appearance in His home town of Nazareth when He opened the book of Isaiah and read: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me" (Luke 4:18) and said that this prophecy was fulfilled in Him. Think of His being conceived by the Holy Ghost and of the Spirit alighting upon Him after His baptism. He was anointed! So Daniel received the assurance that in every way and from every angle the problem of sin would be comprehensively solved, according to the Lord God's covenantal promises.

The vision divided the Seventy Sevens into three unequal groups: seven sevens, sixty-two sevens, and one seven: "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times." The seventy sevens were to begin when the word went forth to restore and build Jerusalem. The going forth of the word was a divine action that manifested itself in the decree of Cyrus permitting any Jew who wanted to return home again. During the first seven sevens Jerusalem would be restored and rebuilt, but in troublesome times. The fulfillment of this portion of the prophecy is recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which record all the obstructions of the Samaritans. Despite these the job was concluded: Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt.

The first period of seven sevens was to be followed by a longer period of sixty-two sevens which came to a conclusion with the appearance of "Messiah the Prince," that is, our Lord Jesus Christ. The vision reveals nothing concerning this passing of time, which is the intertestamental era from Malachi to Christ. The vision recorded in chapters 10-12 gives details of that period, even as chapter 8 was an enlargement of the second and third empires, the Medo-Persian and Greek empires.

Verse 26 reveals that two events shall occur after the sixty-second seven: “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” The first event is “Messiah shall be cut off.” That clearly refers to the death of our Lord. The word used is instructive—“cut off!” The Hebrew idiom for making a covenant is “cutting a covenant” because an animal was cut or killed when the covenant was made. Our Lord fulfilled the covenant made with Abraham and repeated many times to His Old Testament people when He was cut—shed His blood to establish the New Testament which brought the Old Covenant to an end and extended its blessings to all mankind.

The vision also said that the “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” That is He shall have nothing. The scene on Calvary unfolds before one’s eyes. There is our Savior, the promised Messiah, disavowed by His own people, condemned by the Gentiles, and forsaken by His God. He left no estate; His very clothes became the reward of a game of dice. There was nothing for Him! He seemed so weak and helpless.

But the vision also foresaw that the city and temple would again be destroyed. How painful this must have been for Daniel! The destruction would be brought and effected by “the people of the prince.” We know from history that the people were the Roman armies and that their leader was Titus. Many interpreters think that Titus is the prince mentioned here in the vision, but the prince could very well be Messiah the Prince who was cut off and seemingly had nothing to show for His life’s work. The vision speaks of “the prince who is to come.” Recall that before Caiaphas Jesus had testified: “Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64). The Lord Jesus fulfilled the covenant, but He also took vengeance upon the covenant-breakers, even as He had made it clear in the parable of the wedding feast. What was to happen to those who killed the servants bearing invitations to the marriage of the king’s son? The king “sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (Matt. 22:7). The Lord comes with blessing, but if that blessing is refused, He comes with judgment.

Verse 27 reports two events that shall occur in the midst of the final seven: “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” We have already mentioned that the technical term for making a covenant is to cut a covenant. That word isn’t used here. The word that is used here occurs only twice in this form in the Old Testament. It means to confirm an existing covenant, that is, to make it effective. That our Lord did through His holy life of obedience and through His being cut off for our sins. This was achieved during the seventieth seven. The blessings of the covenant were intended for all of Daniel’s people, as well as for all mankind, but only “many” received the benefit. The rest rejected it in unbelief and perished with the destruction of the city.

In the midst of the week He also brought an end to sacrifice and offering—both the bloody and un-bloody sacrifices. You will recall that this was done in a dramatic manner, for as Jesus died on that hill of the skull outside the city, the priests were preparing for the evening sacrifices. It was then that the great curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was torn asunder from the top to the bottom. The significance of that was to indicate that the whole Old Testament system of sacrifices had come to a close. The Spirit of God dedicated an entire book, the epistle to the Hebrews, to elaborate upon the fulfilling of the vision to “bring an end to sacrifice and offering.”

The vision concluded with another solemn announcement of the destruction of the city and temple: “And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.” There is a heaping up of terms! This matter is decided! Desolation is in the prophetic picture. In answer to his prayer Daniel received assurance that the Lord God would surely keep His covenant promise to bring about the final solution to the problem of sin by sending the promised Messiah, but that Daniel’s people would once again experience the destruction of their city and temple because they rejected

the salvation and Savior sent to them. Jesus always comes with blessing or judgment. It is always: He who believes is saved, but he who rejects in unbelief is damned. Amen.

(to be continued)

Exegesis: Proverbs 2:1-8

Paul Naumann

Translation

- v. 1. *My son, if you will receive my sayings,
and treasure my commandments within you,*
- v. 2. *To incline your ear unto wisdom,
and bend your heart toward understanding,*
- v. 3. *Yes, if you cry out for knowledge,
and for understanding lift your voice,*
- v. 4. *If you seek her as silver,
and search for her as for buried treasure,*
- v. 5. *Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,
and find the knowledge of God.*
- v. 6. *For the LORD gives wisdom;
from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*
- v. 7. *He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,*
- v. 8. *Guarding the paths of justice,
and He preserves the way of His godly ones.*

Overview

In chapter one of Proverbs the Holy Spirit has, through the pen of King Solomon, introduced the subject of wisdom. In particular, He has issued a pointed warning as to how wisdom may be lost and folly take its place. In the first part of chapter two, the writer backtracks a bit in order to delve more deeply into the nature of wisdom, its desirability, how it may be acquired and what are its benefits.

It should be stated at the outset that how one defines the term “wisdom” (חֵכְמָה) will in large part determine one’s interpretation of this section, the entire Book of Proverbs and indeed all of Scripture. I have long been convinced that the *terminus a quo* from which all discussion of the Biblical concept of wisdom must proceed is most simply stated in Proverbs 9:10: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

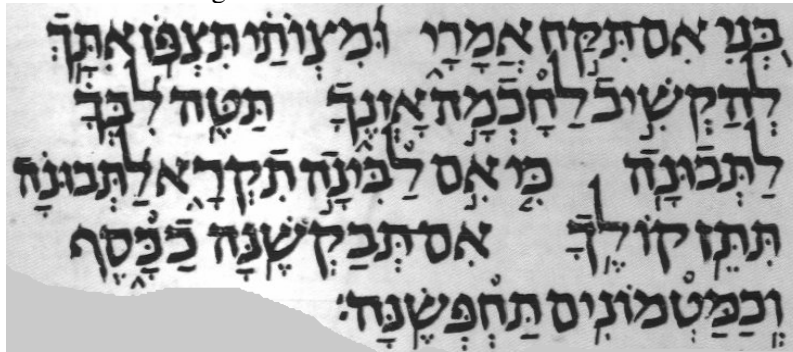
To take an analogous case, one might imagine a treasure map with a whole list of instructions, the first of which is, “Take ten paces north from the old oak tree.” It goes without saying that if that first step in the instructions should somehow be torn off or missing, one could never reach the desired destination. Indeed, the rest of the map no longer matters very much, except as an interesting artifact. One may wander about, digging here and there at random and trying in vain to recognize other landmarks, but one will never find the treasure if one doesn’t know the starting point.

The sad situation outlined above is exactly analogous to those worldly scholars of our age (or any age) whose study of the Holy Scriptures does *not* proceed from a salutary *fear of God*. For them, the Bible is a mere artifact. They may wander about it, digging here and there. They may achieve a certain technical expertise, but they can never reach the goal of true wisdom which is

promised in the Bible, because they did not know the starting point. They did not acknowledge that *the fear of God* is the very *beginning* of wisdom. Only the reverent heart of faith, standing in awe of and giving all glory to its Creator, can proceed via the instructions in God’s holy Word to the treasure-trove of wisdom, and the eternal salvation which such wisdom bestows.

This section, chapter 2:1-8, is the Old Testament lesson for the 20th Sunday after Trinity in the Eisenach pericope. A number of writers have referred to this section as “a mighty text,” and one may easily discern the abundant homiletic possibilities. A working theme might be, “The Lord Gives Wisdom.” As we shall see, the text falls easily into three logical parts: 1) How the believer is invited to seek wisdom, 2) Wherein wisdom consists, and 3) The benefits of wisdom.

Verses One through Four



בְּנֵי אִם־תִּקַּח אִמְרֵי וּמִצְוֹתַי תִּצְפֹּן אִתָּךְ
 לְהִקְשִׁיב לְחֻכְמַת אֲזִנְךָ תִּטֶּה לְבָבְךָ לְתַבּוּנָה
 כִּי אִם לְבִינָה תִקְרָא לְתַבּוּנָה תִתֵּן קוֹלְךָ
 אִם־תִּבְקֹשֶׁנָּה כַּכֶּסֶף וְכַמְטָמוּנִים תִּחְפְּשֶׁנָּה

- v 1. My son, if you will receive my sayings, and treasure my commandments within you,
- v. 2. To incline your ear unto wisdom, and bend your heart toward understanding,
- v. 3 Yes, if you cry out for knowledge, and for understanding lift your voice,
- v. 4 If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for buried treasure,

Noun masc pl + 1 com sing pron suffix; <i>speech, words</i>	אִמְרֵי [אמר]
Qal impf 2 m sing; <i>hide, treasure, store up</i>	תִּצְפֹּן [צפן]
Hiph inf constr + pref ל־; <i>hear, be attentive, heed</i>	לְהִקְשִׁיב [קשב]
Noun fem sing + pref ל־; <i>wisdom</i>	לְחֻכְמַת [חכמה]
Hiph impf 2 masc sing; <i>extend, stretch out; incline; bend</i>	תִּטֶּה [נטה]
Noun fem sing + pref ל־; <i>understanding</i>	לְתַבּוּנָה [תבונה]
Qal impf 2 m sing; <i>call, call out, recite, read</i>	תִּקְרָא [קרא]
Piel impf 2 m sing + 3 fem sing pron suff; <i>seek</i>	תִּבְקֹשֶׁנָּה [בקש]
Noun masc plur + pref כ־ + pref ו־ ; <i>treasure;</i> from $\sqrt{\text{טמון}}$ <i>hide, conceal, bury</i>	וְכַמְטָמוּנִים [מטמון]
Qal impf 2 m sing + 3 fem sing pron suff; <i>search, search for; disguise o/s</i>	תִּחְפְּשֶׁנָּה [חפש]

Grammar:

Masorah: The notes in this section are interesting. In v. 2 a reference to *לְחֻכְמַת* in Aleppo has the note, “Three occurrences.” In BHS, however, the note reads “Two occurrences in this book.” Upon inspection, both notes are true – the spelling occurs one other time in Proverbs

(7:4), and once in Ecclesiastes (2:13). In v. 3 BHS notes that the word כִּי “Occurs 20 times with this accent at the start of the verse.” This note is not present in Aleppo, and is probably not present in the actual manuscript of Leningradensis, either. G.E. Weil was the editor of the masorah in BHS and he, for better or worse, added many notes to the masorah parva in order to make it more consistent. Also in this verse, the word לְחַבּוּנָה is noted as occurring twice – the other occurrence again being in Prov. 7:4. The word וְכַמְטָמוּנִים occurs three times (interestingly with *different* spellings in Job 3:21 and Jer. 41:8).

Variants: The word חִטָּה in v. 2 is a somewhat irregular Hiph'il form. BHS proposes to amend to חִטָּה, the normal Qal imperfect. This is unnecessary, and there is no manuscript support for such an emendation. In v. 3 there is a more interesting variant. Instead of כִּי אֵם (“Yes, if you cry out for knowledge...”) two manuscripts of the Targum have כִּי אֵם (“If you cry to the *mother* of knowledge ...”). This is intriguing, but two mss. of the Targum hardly warrant accepting the variant.

Note: the first four verses of this section comprise the first part or premise of an extended conditional sentence. “IF YOU DO THIS (vv. 1 -4) THEN THIS WILL HAPPEN (vv. 5-8).”

Comments:

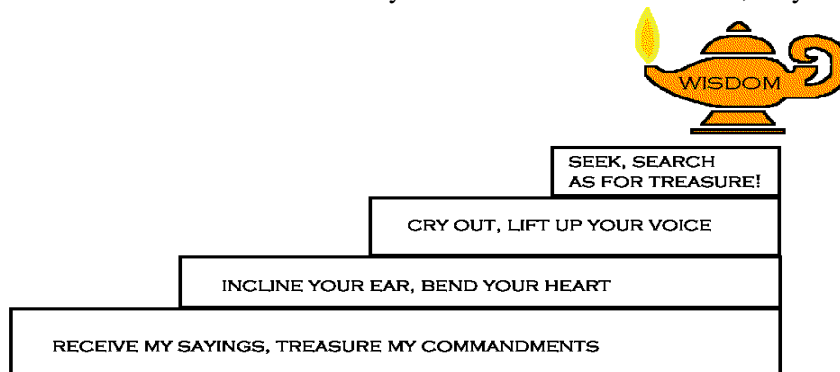
The first word, בְּנִי, is crucial and must be commented upon. We should note that the precious counsel in this section is directed to “*my son*.” Solomon possibly had in sight his own son and successor, Rehoboam of unhappy memory. Some scholars suggest an even more superficial interpretation: “Solomon may be understood as addressing himself to...youth in general, under the designation of paternal affection, as one that felt all a father’s interest in their well-being.”¹ But this is not the main intent of the Spirit’s choice of words here. These words of wisdom are directed at the Sons of God, the believers, His saints and His own dear children. Elsewhere in Scripture God has words for the unregenerate – *Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near, Turn from your evil ways, and I will receive you, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, etc., etc.* Here however, God speaks to His dear child. This section is for believers. It is for those who have already grasped by faith the truth of the Gospel and are seeking to strengthen their grip, to improve their understanding, and to deepen their knowledge of the gracious will of God.

There are a number of synonyms for “wisdom” in this section, including חִכְמָה, תְּבוּנָה, בִּינָה, חִבּוּנָה, תְּוֹשֵׁבָה and דְּעַת, usually rendered “wisdom,” “understanding,” “knowledge,” “sound knowledge” and “discretion (or knowledge),” respectively. There are different shades of meaning among these words, and a detailed comparison is no doubt worth the effort. However, here as elsewhere in the poetic books, these are used primarily as poetic synonyms for the main thematic vocable, חִכְמָה, or “wisdom.”

There is a definite progression noted as one works through the first four verses. So graceful is the poetry here, so uniquely perfect the progression of thought that one Lutheran writer was moved by this section to a rapturous excursus on the subject of divine inspiration. Each word seems to be the perfect word, in the perfect place. No human writer, he said, could attain so perfect an expression of the steps by which wisdom may be attained. When the Christian studies this passage closely, he can only come to the same conclusion.

How sadly different is the verdict of the higher critical scholars of our age! R. N. Whybray, a Church of England minister and professor of Hebrew at Oxford University, says that only verses 1, 9 and 16-19 of chapter two are original, and all the rest has been added. *His* assessment, in contrast to that above, is as follows: The chapter, he says, “Abounds in difficult grammatical connections and changes of subject. It is also extremely repetitive: ‘wisdom’ and synonyms for wisdom occur nine times in vv. 1-11 and words for ‘path’ nine times in vv. 12-22; and the same thought is often wearisomely repeated.”²

Scorning critics notwithstanding, this is a perfect and very beautiful progression. Its steps, to be climbed one after another by the seeker of divine wisdom, may be illustrated as follows:



The ultimate wisdom, of course, is the knowledge which leads to salvation. And one needs to bear in mind that this knowledge is something which is acquired immediately even by the first weak flickerings of faith in the regenerate heart at conversion. “The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not snuff out.” The knowledge of Christ as one’s Savior is not a progressive knowledge. However, in many places in Scripture God promises a deepening of spiritual knowledge to those believers who earnestly desire it, a greater appreciation for the wonders of our God’s gracious plan. *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:5.* The cultivation of this knowledge IS a progressive experience – a function of Christian sanctification – and it is this process to which vv. 1-4 of our text refers.

תִּקַּח אֶמְרָי, “*receive My sayings,*” is important. It reminds us that the revelation of true wisdom is to be found in the WORDS of the Lord – the Bible – and nowhere else. The first step is for the person to receive the Word and treasure it. *Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. – James 1:21.* Simple *receiving* of the Word is the important initial step, as was recognized by Mary of Bethany, who sat at Jesus’ feet and simply received His words.

Next we store away those words in our hearts, we *treasure* the commandments of God within us. Here, of course, the Reformed commentators see the word מִצְוֹת, “commandments,” and they immediately jump onto their old hobbyhorse of *obedience*: saying that by obeying the commandments we may please God and render the service due our Sovereign Lord. Lenski says plainly, “Please put away all ideas of legalism and work-righteousness because neither Proverbs nor any other book of the Bible teaches anything of the kind.”³ This sort of commandment is that Gospel-motivated directive which the redeemed child of God happily and eagerly fulfills, not because it is a duty but because the love of Christ compels him. It is best exemplified by our Savior’s words, *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. – John 13:34.*

This the first step in the believer’s quest for a deepening spiritual wisdom. Of the word “treasure” we will hear more presently.

With each progressive verse the process becomes more intense. The seeker is told to *incline his ear* and *bend his heart* toward understanding. Receiving the Word may be a somewhat passive activity, but when the hearer is excited and motivated by the Word he receives, he then begins to actively *incline* toward the word, to seek it out, to extend his ears and heart to meet it.

In verse three, the desire to get more heavenly wisdom can no longer be quietly contained, but begins to break out into raucous crying: *Yes, if you cry out for knowledge, and for understanding lift your voice!* There is a determination to secure more and more of this precious gift, and it is a desire which cannot keep silence. Blind Bartimaeus comes to mind: *Many warned*

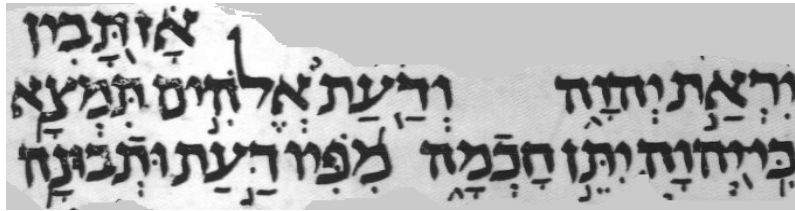
him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" – Mark 10:48. All of us pastors can think of examples of devout parishioners (often elderly), who literally clamor to take advantage of every opportunity of hearing the life-giving Word, and of deepening their own spiritual knowledge.

Finally, at the apex of the process, one *seeks for wisdom as for silver, and searches for her as for buried treasure*, – v. 4. Silver (often meaning ‘money’ in Scripture) is a significant metaphor. Money is the one thing in any society almost constantly sought by almost everyone. This is the point in the sanctification process where the material is completely overcome by the spiritual, and the acquisition of heavenly knowledge becomes dearer by far than any amount of silver or gold. Here, indeed, the supplicant has reached the point where he will stop at nothing to further his knowledge of God’s Word. He is possessed with such a desire to achieve this knowledge that it is to him like a buried treasure.

One commentator reminds us that, while there were treasures during Biblical times, there were no banks. A great treasure must be hidden – often buried in a field – and there were many such treasures lost owing to happenstance, or the death of the owner in war, etc. Finding hidden treasure was the passionate dream of every impoverished peasant. The concept gives life to Jesus’ simile concerning the kingdom of God: *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.* – Matt 13:44. So many devout Christians of our acquaintance have *sold everything that they have* for the divine knowledge, and none have regretted the sacrifice, or indeed been aware that they have made a sacrifice!

After this extended description of the process whereby wisdom is sought, Solomon moves on to define and describe this wisdom itself.

Verses Five and Six



אז תבין יראת יהוה וידעת אלהים תמצא:
כי יתן חכמה מפיו דעת ותבונה:

v. 5 *Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.*

v. 6 *For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Grammar:

Masorah: The margin of BHS notes that the phrase, >ידעת אלהים, *the knowledge of God*, occurs three times (the others are Hosea 4:1, without prefixed □, and Hosea 6:6, WITH prefixed ׀).

Variants: In verse six, instead of MT “*From His mouth come...*” the LXX has “*From His FACE comes knowledge and understanding.*” (προσώπου αὐτοῦ). The editor of BHS suggests either וּמִפְּנֵי or וּמִלְּפָנָיו. I don’t think the variant is worth adopting – it hasn’t much support and it would render the picture rather less clear.

You note that there are no vocables given in this verse, because they are all easy words. The fruits of the pursuit of wisdom are so simple in their magnificence that they may be expressed with the simplest and most common of terms, terms known and understood by every child.

Comments:

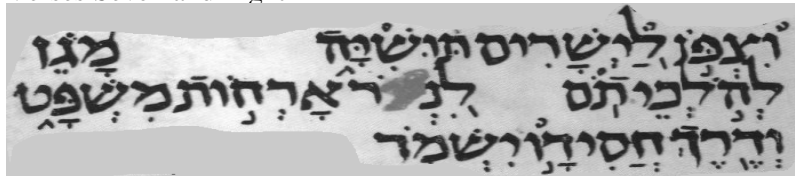
Vv. 5-6 are the answer to vv. 1-4; they are the “THEN” part of the extended “IF...THEN” conditional sentence. If the believer follows the course of pursuing wisdom which is prescribed by God’s Word, then this is the goal he may expect to achieve – these are the rich rewards he will reap. *He will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.*

What is the height of achievement in the search for wisdom? To find *the fear of God*. Much might (and has) been said on the subject of the verb *to fear*, as it is used of man’s attitude toward God. The *יִרְאֵת יְהוָה* is not, needless to say, the quivering and slavish fear of the condemned man toward the judge, though many on the last day will feel that type of fear. Rather to fear God is to have a Spirit-worked understanding of His loving nature and His gracious plan in Christ Jesus, and thus to stand in absolute awe of his undeserved kindness and love, his power and might to save. Lenski says that it is “...so to reverence the Lord of the covenant that we will abide in that covenant, its grace, pardon, countless blessings, and in no way depart from that covenant.”⁴ As Scripture says, *Perfect love casts out fear*. Or in the words of the old adage, “Se r- vile fear fears when God comes; childlike fear fears when God leaves.”

דַּעַת; “...is knowledge proceeding from practice and experience, and thus not merely cognition (German: Kenntnis), but knowledge (Erkenntnis).”⁵ And true knowledge is not only *about* God and His grace. Scripture makes clear that God is also the only *source* of true knowledge and wisdom. *For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Mouth, of course, is an anthropomorphism. And yet it communicates something important, for it underlines the truth that the words of the Bible truly are the “sayings” of our Heavenly Father (v. 1). They are words which come directly from the mouth of God, however various may be the penmen whom He utilized to write them down. *For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* – 2 Pet. 1:21. God is the *fount and source of all wisdom*, as we acknowledge in our liturgy, and those who seek true spiritual insight must seek it only in Him.

Verses Seven and Eight



וּצְפַן לְיֹשְׁרִים תּוֹשִׁיָּה מִן לְהִלְכֵי תָם:
לְנֹצֵר אֲרָחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְדַרְךְ חֲסִידוֹ יִשְׁמֹר:

v. 7 *He stores up sound knowledge for the upright;*

He is a shield for those who walk in integrity,

v. 8 *Guarding the paths of justice, and protecting the way of His saints.*

Grammar:

There are a couple of interesting notes in the final two verses. It is unusual to have *Kethib/Qere* situations in two successive passages, but that is what we have here. You will recall that *Kethib/Qere* was the device used by the masorettes to call attention to an error in the text without actually modifying the sacred text itself. They did this by leaving the consonants of the *Kethib* (“it is written”) in the text but giving them the vowel pointing of the *Qere* (“to be read”). The result is normally unpronounceable, and immediately calls the reader’s attention to the margin, where the consonants of the correct reading are noted. In the example in v. 7, the *Kethib* is

וַיִּצְפֹּן, “and He stored up,” which is clumsy and introduces a perfect into a string of imperfects. The *Qere*, or suggested correction, is יִצְפֹּן, “He stores up,” utilizing the imperfect tense. If you’re wondering how a *yodh* could be mistaken for a *waw*, you need only look at the reproduction of this passage in the Aleppo Codex, above. As you can see, in the hand-copied manuscript the *waw* has only a slightly longer tail than does the *yodh*. Obviously this is not the case with printed, square-script Hebrew. ..The second *Kethib/Qere*, in v. 8, has to do with a simple difference in number. The *Kethib* has *saint* (singular), which the *Qere* corrects to *saints* (plural). The plural is clearly intended, and is more coordinate with the plural of v. 7.

Also in verse eight is the rather difficult construction לְנֹצֵר אֲרָחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט, *guarding the paths of justice*. The infinitive construct with the prefixed *lahmed* is a little unexpected here, and makes the sense somewhat obscure. The BHS editor clears this up by emending with no versional support whatever to לְנֹצֵר, which turns it into a present participle with inseparable preposition, *for him who guards the paths of justice*. Of all possible emendations, the ones that emend only the vowel pointing and leave the consonants alone are the most credible, the consonantal tradition being more ancient than the vocalized text. Again, however, there is no manuscript or versional support, and the change from singular number in v. 7 to plural in v. 8, while not unheard of, renders the suggested emendation less likely.

Comments:

In these final two verses we see the outcome of the striving after heavenly wisdom. Here is revealed what God accomplishes through the wisdom-getting process he prescribes for man. His Word becomes a *storehouse of knowledge for the upright*, and working through His Word He Himself is *a shield for those who walk in integrity*.

Something must be said of לְיֹשְׁרִים and לְהַלְכֵי תֵם. These two descriptors appear frequently in parallelism in the Old Testament. One example is the description of Job uttered by God Himself: אִישׁ תָּם וְיֹשֵׁר, *a man blameless and upright*. When one understands what God meant by that description, one will understand what these words mean in our passage in Proverbs, and in other contexts in Scripture. It does not describe a human being who, on his own, has a perfect record of sinlessness. It does describe a person who possesses an imputed righteousness by faith in his Savior. It does describe someone who by the quickening might of the Holy Spirit is empowered to live a sanctified life to the glory of his Lord. The terms used here are used in parallel with, and are basically identical to the term *saints*. For such we are by faith in Christ. Not paragons of virtue by our own right, but humble sinners, rejoicing in the redemption won for us by Christ.

Sadly, this passage among others has historically been abused by the “holiness” branch of the reformed denominations in support of their “perfection theology.” One of the meanings of the adjective תָּם is *perfect*. In an article on “Perfection” in *Sacramentum Verbi*, Alfons Deissler writes, “Man is ‘perfect’ when he walks with God or in God’s way, and avoids any way which is sinful and so leads him away from God. Often too *tom* is used of the state of the heart in the sense of a pure and sinless conscience.” One can easily see how such scholarship might lead to the abuse of teaching that perfection is something attainable in the Christian *life*, something which merits the *favor dei* by virtue of the human’s own effort, rather than something imputed by God to the poor sinner for the sake of Christ. It is of course the latter upon which the hope of every true Christian is built.

V. 8 is the final comfort and reassurance that God’s Word will *accomplish the purposes whereto He sends it*. One of these purposes is to *guard or maintain the paths of justice*. In order to better establish the parallelism with *His saints* of the next clause, NIV renders *He guards the course of the just*. This may be another example of the paraphrasing tendency of NIV – admittedly more prevalent in the New Testament than the Old - for while מִשְׁפָּט may indeed mean *justice* in an abstract sense, I don’t see how it can be personified to mean *the just*, no matter how

convenient such a rendering may be in the circumstances.

No, God uses the seeking of wisdom by His saints also to *maintain the paths of justice*. In other words, by prescribing this specific path for His people to follow in their lives (the path of seeking God's wisdom), the Lord maintains a visible example of righteousness in the world from generation to generation. Lenski puts it well: "He keepeth these trodden paths, watches them so that they remain intact, and do not by non-use become obliterated. ..It is remarkable, this way of preserving right among men, by actually having men live right in a sin-infested world."⁷

God *protects the way of His saints*. May we rejoice – and compel our people to rejoice – in this blessed guarantee of security, vouchsafed to us in the inviolable Word of God.

Endnotes

¹ Wardlaw, Ralph. *Lectures on the Book of Proverbs*, Vol. I. Pg. 52.

² Whybray, R. N. *Wisdom in Proverbs*, pp. 40f.

³ Lenski, R.C.H. *Eisenach Old Testament Selections*. p. 967.

⁴ Lenski, 975.

⁵ Delitzsch, Franz. *Proverbs of Solomon*. p. 77.

⁶ Deissler, A., "Perfection," in *Sacramentum Verbi*, II, 1970, p. 659

⁷ Lenski, 981.

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The Place of Apologetics and Polemics in Our Preaching

Michael Schierenbeck

Introduction

Of all the different callings in life, the pastoral ministry has to be one of the most diverse. On any given day the pastor may find himself visiting a member in the hospital, giving marriage counseling, instructing children, instructing adults, or seeking out a member who is straying, and the list goes on. There is relevant Scripture for each situation.

Just as there are a variety of applications in which a pastor will use the Word of God during the week, so also there are a variety of types of sermons that are preached. "Every sermon therefore [according to 2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 15:4] will have as its purpose to teach, or to rebuke, or to correct, or to train in righteousness, or to encourage hope." With the wide diversity of Scripture we would not limit the purposes of a sermon to the above, but it is a good general guideline. The text will dictate the direction of the sermon, and the needs of the flock will also influence the type of sermon that is preached.

In this diverse ministry there will be times that the pastor will feel that it is necessary to make a defense for the truth of God's Word, and attack what is false. He will do this often in his ministry outside of the pulpit. The question before us is, "To what extent should this be done from the pulpit?" On Sunday mornings the pastor will reach more people at one time than at any other time during the week, so much thought and care should go into how one will use such an opportunity. We will look at the Scriptural definitions and guidelines of apologetics and polemics, and examine the necessity and the pitfalls of using this defense of the Word and offense against false teachers in our preaching.

I. Definition of terms

Warfare on this earth consists of both offensive and defensive measures. Spiritual warfare is no different. "**Polemics** [are] the Christian witness in the attack mode. It is the partner of **apologetics**, the defense of the gospel from attacks from the outside."

There should be no doubt that as Christians we are engaged in warfare. The devil walks about like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8), the world hates the children of God (John 15:19), and we even have a struggle within as we battle the old man (Rom. 7:23). We live in enemy territory, and the battle will continue until Judgment Day, at which point our enemies will no longer be able to reach us.

The stakes are high in this warfare. The soul is being fought over. Since saving faith comes through the Word of God, the Scriptures are the focus of attack. From the very first temptation Satan has sought to twist God's Word, and to deceive people by adding to or subtracting from it. The precious Gospel message of "sins forgiven in Jesus" is Satan's target, and even though an attack may seem to be peripheral to the Gospel, it will find its way there eventually if left unchecked. For this reason the Lord would have us test the spirits (1 John 4:1), and engage in the defense of His Word, and also go on the offensive when necessary.

We derive the term apologetics from *απολογία*. I have a handwritten note in *Christian Dogmatics* which defines apologetic as "defending our position over and against the world." This word is used several times in the Bible and has to do with giving a defense or giving an answer. It is used often in the book of Acts as Paul defended himself before rulers and judges. It is also used in particular in speaking of giving an answer or a defense of the Gospel. We note the following passages:

Philippians 1:7 Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the **defense** and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Philippians 1:17 But the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the **defense** of the gospel.

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a **defense** to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

We see the defense of the Gospel particularly in the Epistles. As soon as congregations were established, false teachers soon followed peddling a different Gospel. The pure Gospel had to be defended for the safety of souls. This is done properly with Scripture. Recall how Peter in his Pentecost sermon used the Old Testament to show to the crowd that the Christ would be exalted. In the letter to the Galatians Paul defended justification through faith by the example of Abraham. Although we may use reason to put together passages and use the easier passages to interpret the more difficult ones, we dare not use reason and logic as the defense of the Gospel. "The best apology of the Christian religion is its proclamation." More on this thought later.

We also find that the origin of the word polemics in the Greek language (πολεμew, πολeμoν). The meaning of the word is to war and fight. The term is used in Revelation 13:4,7 to describe the war between Jesus and Satan. While we do not find πολeμoν used in the context of going to war against false doctrine or false teachers, the idea of going on the attack with the sword of the Spirit is most certainly presented to us. We consider the following passages from Galatians:

Galatians 1:6-8 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Galatians 5:12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

In the ecumenical age in which we live, the idea of polemics is a very foreign concept. It is more and more popular to accept all teachings as equal, regardless of the source. However, as we proclaim the truth we also condemn what is false. If we are for the Lord, then we will be for what He is for, and also against what He is against. What does God say? "Behold, I am against the prophets," says the LORD, "who use their tongues and say, 'He says.'" (Jer. 23:31).

The Lord's instructions to Titus through the apostle Paul include these words: *Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort [παρκακαλειν] and convict [ελεγγξειν - bring to light, expose, set forth; convict, convince, point out, reprove, correct] those who contradict. {10} For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, {11} whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain* (Titus 1:9-11). The message of God's grace and mercy, the news of salvation for lost sinners through the shedding of Christ's blood is of such importance that at times we must go on the offensive, and reprove not only the false teaching, but also the false teacher. Note in verse nine it is the teachers who are being corrected, not just the teaching. Their mouths "must be stopped" for the safety of God's flock. Our Lord is by no means advocating violence, but He is letting us know that we need not be afraid to identify those whose mouths must be stopped for the sake of His Word.

II. The necessity of apologetics in our preaching

It is important to bear in mind that we are not really the ones who are being attacked by the "insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers." It is not **our** message that will cause the enemies of Christ to react. "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me," (Luke 10:16). God's Word is on trial. The doctrines of creation, verbal inspiration, the virgin birth, to name just a few, are constantly being bombarded. We are faced with such battles daily from inside and outside Christianity. It is as when Paul warned the elders of Ephesus at Miletus in Acts 20, "For I know this, that after my depar-

ture savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

The Christian’s reaction is not to become a spiritual punching bag and absorb every blow unanswered. The Lord wants His Word to be defended as Paul testified in the letter to the Philipians that he was appointed for the “defense and confirmation of the Gospel.”

In this election year, as usual, there have been numerous attack ads. Politicians will respond in defense of themselves and their records. If they let a false accusation stand without refutation, then it may gain ground. The same is true when it comes to God’s Word. The attacks of false teaching cannot be allowed to stand. These attacks may and should be addressed from the pulpit. Many of the epistles lend themselves readily to such preaching because they are apologetic in nature. As shepherds under Christ it is part of our duty to equip God’s flock to make a defense of the truth for their own benefit and for the benefit of the people with whom they come in contact. In preaching the truth of God’s Word every week you will be an apologist whether you know it or not. By proclaiming the truth you are helping prepare people to distinguish between what is true and what is false. In the teaching role that we have as ministers of God’s Word there are ceaseless opportunities to educate from the pulpit. Apologetics is thus an integral part of preaching.

III. The pitfalls that may come with apologetics in the pulpit

1) Putting reason over Scripture in our defense

In studying the references to apologetics in Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics*, I got the impression that Pieper was at the point of being anti-apologetic. Evidently one pitfall that was prevalent in his day was that Scripture was being defended by extra-Scriptural sources. Logic and reason were being used in an effort to convince people of the truth. That is nothing new. In 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 there is the warning against elevating the wisdom of man above that of God “*that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,*” (1 Cor. 2:5).

2) Putting science over Scripture in our defense

This may especially come into play when defending creation against evolution. No doubt evolution is unscientific, and science cannot refute creation, but creation is still a matter of faith. Science does not change hearts. That only occurs through the Spirit working through the Word. There is nothing wrong with pointing out the flaws of evolution and disproving the theory by means of scientific fact, but our belief in creation rests on the Word of God alone.

We also may be tempted to fall in love with archeological evidence when it comes to Old Testament Bible history, or the physical evidence of the flood. There was a hoax circulating on the internet which claimed that by using astronomic observations and calculations NASA scientists were able to prove that the sun stood still, and that in the day of Hezekiah the Lord caused the sundial to go backwards ten degrees. This is a prime example of what can happen when we put science over Scripture in our defense of God’s Word.

3) Letting apologetics dominate our preaching to the detriment of other topics

There is the danger of putting too great an emphasis on apologetics. This is especially true in the midst of a controversy. During the recent discussions of semi-religious organizations it would have been very easy to allow that topic to flavor any text that we came across. We need to remember that even in the midst of a doctrinal controversy, in the pews before us there will still be those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, those who are sick themselves, those who are visitors and children who need milk and not meat. Preaching the whole counsel of God does not allow for sticking to just one pet topic.

4) Spending too much time explaining errors rather than proclaiming the truth

Though at times explaining error is necessary, it can also be overdone. In one of my earliest confirmation classes we were comparing creation to evolution, and to my surprise the students did not know what evolution was. We did talk about the subject because I knew that they

would be confronted with it very soon in their lives, but it did seem odd that I was in a way teaching evolution, then refuting it.

On a larger scale our members may have never been introduced, for example, to the error of predestination in view of faith, even though that error caused a rupture in Lutheranism. In such a case it may be that our limited time in the pulpit would be better spent proclaiming the gracious truth about election, and letting that truth serve as pre-emptive apologetics.

5) It may be more difficult to use apologetics in preaching as opposed to situations where there is a dialogue

While there is the necessity of using apologetics in our preaching, we may find it more difficult to lay out the material without the feedback or visual aids more common in a Bible Class discussion, or a one-on-one conversation. One remedy might include the incorporation of a handout (or power point presentation) so that more people could follow along as they listen. There is always the opportunity to follow up in different settings, but to restrict apologetics solely to a Bible Class discussion usually guarantees that we will reach fewer people with the message.

These possible pitfalls may well serve to underscore the words of Franz Pieper quoted earlier: "The best apology of the Christian religion is its proclamation." Preach the Gospel!

IV. The necessity of polemics in our preaching

In the pulpit we must have offense as well as defense. The Formula of Concord was very precise in defining what was accepted and what was rejected. The lack of refutation of what was false was at the root of the problem with the 1930 Common Confession. Two contradicting teachings cannot stand side by side. If this is allowed, then the truth is eventually swallowed up by lies.

At times we not only have to name the teaching, but - for the protection of souls - also to name the source of that teaching. Paul refuted Peter personally in a public assembly as seen in Galatians 2:14, *But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"*

The following quotation from *Christian Dogmatics* demonstrates the necessity of polemics from the pulpit, and a proper way to go about it:

Again, only he is a fit minister of the Church who is able to refute false teachers. That is listed as one of the necessary qualifications of an elder or bishop: "Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers whose mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:9-11). The popular demand that the public teacher refrain from polemics is not supported by Scripture. Scripture admonishes pastors to "avoid foolish questions and genealogies and contentions about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:9). Nor dare we engage in polemics from carnal motives, in carnal zeal. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh" (2 Cor. 10:3). It is also to be noted that in Titus 1:9 the words "able by sound doctrine to exhort" precede "able to convince the gainsayer." That means that the clear presentation of the true doctrine must come before the refutation of the false doctrine. The hearers will thus be in a position to see that the polemics are *justified* and will be able to make the condemnation of the false doctrine on their own. And they will hardly suspect the teachers of being contentious and unjust. Scripture thus warns against false polemics. But the demand that polemical theology be excluded from Christian theology is contrary to Scripture. The duty of refuting false doctrine and rebuking false teachers is laid upon the teachers of the Church in Titus 1:9-11 and many other passages of Scripture. All Prophets and Apostles and Christ Himself have both proclaimed the true doctrine and condemned the false doctrine.

Walther does not go too far when he writes: "A man may proclaim the pure doctrine, but if he does not condemn and refute the opposing false doctrine, does not warn against

the wolves in sheep's clothing, the false prophets, and unmask them, he is not a faithful steward of God's mysteries, not a faithful shepherd of the sheep entrusted to him, not a faithful watchman on the walls of Zion, but as the Word of God says, an unfaithful servant, a dumb dog, a traitor. The terrible consequences of the minister's failure to use the *elenchus* are before our eyes — many souls lost and the Church deeply hurt. Polemics are absolutely needed. Not only because a doctrine is more fully comprehended in the light of its antithesis, but mainly because the errorists so craftily mask their error behind a show of truth that the simple Christians, if not forewarned, are despite their love of the truth only too easily deceived. The pastor cannot wash his hands in innocence, pleading that he has always preached the full truth, if he did not at the same time warn against the error and, when necessary, identify it by naming the errorist; if his sheep, either while he is still serving or after he had to leave them for another field, become the prey of the ravening wolves in sheep's clothing, he is guilty of their blood." (Walther, *Pastorale*, p. 82f. [Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*, 1945 p. 336f.]

V. The pitfalls that may come with polemical preaching

1. There could be the tendency to forget why we engage in polemics.

We should do so out of love for souls, wanting not only to warn the flock that we are shepherding, but also to present a clear witness even to the false teacher himself. If our motivation is not love, then polemical preaching easily degenerates into a vitriolic tirade which pridefully and Pharisaically seeks to elevate oneself ("Thank you Lord, that we are not like this synod").

2. We could become known as a pastor (or a congregation or a synod) that is only against things.

Yes, it is necessary to preach polemically, but that should not dominate our preaching. Just as an overabundance of apologetics will be unhealthy for a congregation, so also with polemics. We do want to take into consideration all the needs of the congregation.

3. Inaccuracy

Sometimes we are so eager to show that another group has erred that we quickly broadcast any information that we hear without checking its validity and accuracy. Care should be taken to quote the false position directly rather than to make assumptions that are not substantiated. An example of this which I once witnessed was a pastor reading directly from the ELCA dogmatics textbook while in the pulpit to point out a doctrinal error being taught in ELCA seminaries.

VI. A positive approach to polemics

We close with a summary of the practical suggestions offered by Rollin Reim as to the manner of our polemics:

1. Be honest and fair
2. Be objective
3. Be loving
4. Put the best construction on everything
5. Be constructive in purpose
6. Be anguished in spirit for those Christians who are victimized by false teachers
7. Be humble
8. Be discriminating as to what is a difference in doctrine and a difference in judgment
9. Be wise.

"There is a time and a place for everything including polemics. In the pulpit perhaps not always the best place. The Bible Class is a more promising arena, since dialogue is possible. One-on-one is even better."

When we keep in mind the value of God's Word, and the value that God assigns to souls--no less than the blood of His Son!--the defense of God's Word and the attack of false doctrine

will be a Christian response. It is important to keep this in mind lest the devil lead us to a vindictive and loveless approach. While we will engage in apologetics and polemics on an individual basis, and situations where there is a dialogue, it is still necessary at times to do the same from the pulpit. May God lead us to do so to the glory and honor of His name!

BOOK REVIEWS

Two Expository Preachers

Iain H. Murray: *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones – The First Forty Years 1899-1939*. The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1990. Hard cover, 394 pages.

Iain H. Murray: *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones – The Fight of Faith 1939-1981*. The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1990. Hard cover, 831 pages.

Timothy Dudley-Smith: *John Stott – The Making of a Leader – A Biography – The Early Years*. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1999. Hard cover, 513 pages.

Timothy Dudley-Smith: *John Stott – A Global Ministry – A Biography – The Later Years*. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2001. Hard cover, 538 pages.

A certain Professor Horton Davies, writing in the early 1960s, is quoted in one of the foregoing books as saying: “At the present time the two largest congregations in London have been gathered by expository preachers. One is the congregation of Westminster Congregational Chapel under the ministry of a former Harley Street physician, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and the other is All Souls, Langham Place, where the Rector is the Rev. John R. W. Stott” (*John Stott – The Making of a Leader*, p. 233).

Remarkably, these two expository preachers, Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) and Stott (1921-), are still preaching today by means of their many books and tapes of expository sermons and evangelistic messages. Each has been considered worthy of a two-volume biography. Lloyd-Jones’ biographer is Iain Murray, a younger associate and assistant to Dr. Lloyd-Jones. Stott’s biographer is Timothy Dudley-Smith, an Anglican theologian and hymn-writer. (Three of his hymns are included in the *CLC Worship Supplement 2000*.)

Both Lloyd-Jones and Stott were involved in the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF) and in student evangelism. Both Lloyd-Jones and Stott had and have an international following, and their works are still being published and purchased in great quantity. They are both known for their gift of making the Bible’s message clear to their audiences. Both of them had a high view of the authority of Scripture. Both of them were primarily evangelists, whom the Holy Spirit apparently used and is still using to bring multitudes to faith in Jesus Christ.

Lloyd-Jones’ background was Welsh Calvinistic Methodism. He studied to be a medical doctor, but just at the point when he was beginning to come into his own as a doctor, he chose to offer himself as an evangelist instead. Because of his early medical experience he was known as the Doctor all his days; in fact his spiritual method was similar to that of a medical diagnostician. Why did he change course? As a young doctor Lloyd-Jones had a deep experience of sin and grace. Therefore he believed it was more important that he do something for man’s soul rather than for just his body. He later confessed: “I am a Christian solely and entirely because of the grace of God and not because of anything that I have thought or said or done” (*D. Martyn Lloyd-*

Jones — The First Forty Years, p. 64).

At about the same time that he changed his own course, he also changed the course of a young female doctor, Bethany Phillips, who became his wife and his life-long partner. His first call into the pastoral ministry was to a congregation in Aberavon in Wales. Amazingly he accepted this call into the ministry without attending a theological seminary. He trained himself by constant study of the Scriptures and the writings of others.

After eleven years at Aberavon Lloyd-Jones accepted in 1938 the position of assistant preacher at London's famous Westminster Chapel, seating as many as 3,000 persons. When the senior pastor retired, Lloyd-Jones became the senior pastor and continued in that office until he retired in 1968. Thus Lloyd-Jones was the preacher at Westminster Chapel through the years of World War II and the difficult years that followed.

James Packer, the Anglican theologian, attended some of Westminster's services in 1948 as a recent convert, and this is what he later wrote in an introduction to a book of Lloyd-Jones' sermons: "If any reader fails to find in these messages as majestic an exposition of the everlasting gospel as he, or she, has ever met, I shall – to put it mildly – be surprised. They impress me as among the ripest fruit of the greatest period of a great man's ministry" (Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *The Heart of the Gospel*, pp. 8-9).

John Stott was the son of a doctor, and it was hoped by his family that he would attain some high position in the government. But during his student days John Stott was converted to Christianity through the ministry of an evangelist named E. J. H. Nash, who was commonly known as Bash. Stott's father was very much upset with his son's decision to train for the ministry in the Church of England, especially because at the same time he did not want to serve in the military in World War II.

After finishing his training and being ordained, John served as a curate (assistant) at All Souls Church in London. When the Rector died, young John Stott became the Rector even though he was only 29 years old. He remains at All Souls still today, with the title of Rector Emeritus. John Stott has remained single to the present time. His single status has made it easier for him to get involved in the global ministry for which he is known around the world.

John Stott later wrote about his early years as a pastor in the Church of England: "When I was ordained in 1945, soon after the end of World War II, there were few evangelicals in the Church of England. For over a century Anglo-Catholic thought had predominated, though weakened by liberal theology. ... There were no evangelical bishops and no evangelical theological teachers in any university. ... The evangelical movement was despised and rejected. Since the Reformation there have been three strands or parties within Anglicanism: Evangelical, Catholic and Liberal, which are sometimes amusingly described as 'low and lazy,' 'high and crazy,' 'broad and hazy,'" (*John Stott — The Making of a Leader*, pp. 217-218).

John Stott became a hard-working (not "lazy") leader of the evangelicals, with a firm belief in the authority and power of Scripture. He led his congregation in the attempt to bring persons of all kinds to faith in Christ. He was especially active in student evangelism, making week-long trips to various colleges and universities, first in England and then later in all English-speaking countries and finally almost everywhere in the whole world. Partly through his work evangelicalism became more popular and influential in England and elsewhere.

Since both Lloyd-Jones and Stott were evangelical, expository preachers in congregations in London, they knew and admired one another. But they also had their differences. No doubt their greatest difference was in their relationship to the ecumenical movement. Lloyd-Jones believed that evangelical Christians should separate themselves from denominations and congregations that tolerated obvious false teaching, such as those groups that were members of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The Church of England, of course, was such a church.

Stott, on the other hand, remained loyal to the Church of England, even though he disagreed with many of its leaders. He believed that he should remain in the group to do as much as

possible for the reformation of the church. He would leave only if his own views were not permitted. In fact, he said he would be willing to stay in and fight for some time even if the official view of the church was wrong. Stott also freely participated in ecumenical discussions and debates with all kinds of persons with differing views, even Roman Catholics and deniers of the authority of the Bible.

The biographers of both men include a discussion of a meeting in 1966 that pitted Lloyd-Jones and John Stott on opposite sides on this very question. The occasion was the opening meeting of the Second National Assembly of Evangelicals on October 18. John Stott was the chairman of the meeting, and Lloyd-Jones was the opening speaker. Lloyd-Jones spoke of the need for evangelicals to join together as evangelicals even as the Reformers of old. This was understood by some as an appeal to leave the Church of England and band together with evangelicals to form a new united evangelical church. When Lloyd-Jones ended his speech, John Stott felt it necessary to disagree publicly with the speaker. He said he did so because he was afraid that some of the young Church of England pastors would immediately leave the Church of England on the strength of Lloyd-Jones' arguments. Stott went so far as to say: "I believe history is against what Dr., Lloyd-Jones has said. ... Scripture is against him, the remnant was within the church not outside it. I hope no one will act precipitately" (*D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones — The Fight of Faith*, p. 525).

Alister McGrath summarized the results of this meeting as follows: "A broad division opened up within English evangelicalism over the specific issue of whether evangelicals within mainline denominations should stay inside or leave. A bitter dispute arose, where there had hitherto been friendly disagreement. Rightly or wrongly, Lloyd-Jones was criticized for wrecking evangelical unity. It is no exaggeration to say that the 'shadow of 1966' has lingered over English evangelicalism ever since" (quoted in *John Stott - A Global Ministry*, p. 69).

We believe that God Himself has answered this question concerning fellowship, and that neither Lloyd-Jones nor Stott are in perfect agreement with God's revelation. *Concerning Church Fellowship*, available from the CLC Book House, shows clearly from the Bible that Christians are to steer clear of any group that permits false teaching of any kind.

In view of this the question may be raised as to why we should spend any time or use any space in this journal for a consideration of the lives of these two men. They were not confessional Lutherans, nor did they have much contact with confessional Lutherans. Both of them wrote and spoke against the Bible's teaching on the Lord's Supper. Lloyd-Jones even believed and spread the story about Martin Luther that he changed his views on the Lord's Supper before he died. We read in his book, *The Puritans — Their Origins and Their Successors* (p. 227): "Luther just before his death in 1546 read a little book by John Calvin which bore the title *A Little Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord*, and having read it this is what he said to Melancthon: 'In this matter of the sacrament we have gone much too far, I will commend the thing to the Lord. Do something after my death.' Pathetic, is it not? But it was too late, the damage had been done; and though he had now come to see that they had gone much too far the position had become hardened." How hard Martin Luther worked before his death to make sure something like this would never be said! Somewhere this lie arose, and Lloyd-Jones fell for it.

John Stott's teaching on the Lord's Supper can be obtained by searching the Internet. On the web-site for the John Stott Ministries the teaching on the Lord's Supper is given in this fashion. It is asked: "How do we participate in Christ's body and blood? The Catholic answer to this question is that the 'inner reality' of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ (traditionally called 'transubstantiation'), so that to eat and drink the elements is *ipso facto* to partake of Christ. Lutheran churches teach 'consubstantiation,' which is somewhat similar. The Anglican Articles reject this, however."

It is clear that both of these Bible scholars do not really know what Martin Luther taught and what the Lutheran Confessions teach concerning the Lord's Supper as well as many other

doctrines. Or if they do know, it is clear that they do not accept this teaching. Therefore we must be on our guard when we read their writings.

At the same time it seems evident to me that on those teachings of Scripture where they are correct in their teaching both Lloyd-Jones and Stott do a good job of explaining and applying the Scriptures in clear language. Timothy Dudley-Smith, Stott's biographer, has compiled examples of Stott's teaching on various topics and put them together in a book entitled *Authentic Christianity*, an Inter-Varsity publication of 1995. Here are some quotations from Stott on the general topic: Proclaiming the Gospel (*Authentic Christianity*, pp. 332-337).

"We are stewards of what God has said, but heralds of what God has done. Our stewardship is of an accomplished revelation; but an accomplished redemption is the good news which we proclaim as heralds."

"The elect obtain salvation in Christ not apart from the preaching of Christ but by means of it."

"The only preaching God honors ... is the preaching of a man who is willing in himself to be both a weakling and a fool."

"Before we preach the gospel we must preach the law. Indeed this has never been more necessary than it is today when we are witnessing a widespread revolt against authority. ... To bypass the law is to cheapen the gospel. We must meet Moses before we are ready to meet Christ."

"There is of course such a thing as false guilt. But guilt feelings which are aroused by wrongdoing are healthy. ... Thus conscience is our ally. In all evangelism, I find it a constant encouragement to say to myself, 'The other person's conscience is on my side.'"

"The 'stumbling block of the cross' remains. Sinners hate it because it tells them that they cannot save themselves. Preachers are tempted to avoid it because of its offensiveness to the proud. It is easier to preach man's merits than Christ's, because men greatly prefer it that way."

"Christian preachers who refuse to distort or dilute the gospel of grace have had to suffer for their faithfulness."

Stott is at his best when he is explaining a section of Scripture in its context. Kenneth Kantzer, former editor of *Christianity Today*, had this to say about Stott's gift of exposition: "He simply teaches the Bible! How, you ask, could anyone hold the minds and move the hearts of students from Anchorage to Ouagadougou, and from Belgrade to Boston by simply teaching the Bible? John Stott does it. ... When I hear him expound a text, invariably I exclaim to myself, 'That's exactly what it means! Why didn't I see it before?'" (*John Stott — A Global Ministry*, p. 335).

As for Lloyd-Jones, his biographer has this to say: "His mind was the greatest of his gifts, with its enormous capacity, clarity and energy 'sufficient to drive several turbines.' Whereas most men see issues in fragmented parts, Martyn Lloyd-Jones could often see the whole; and he had the ability to state general principles in a manner which could put a mass of seemingly confusing details in their proper perspective" (*D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones — The Fight of Faith*, p. 759). It seems he was at his best when he was working his way through the epistles of Paul, for example, his 230 sermons on the letter to the Ephesians (available now in eight volumes).

In order to give Lloyd-Jones equal space with John Stott, let me quote here two of many paragraphs from Lloyd-Jones' sermons that could be quoted. These are from his eleven sermons on Psalm 73 as published in *Faith on Trial* in September of 1965:

"You and I are people who have been called by God out of this present evil world. We have been purchased at the cost of the shed blood of the only begotten Son of God on a cross on Calvary's hill, not merely that we may be forgiven and go to heaven, but that we may be delivered from all sin and iniquity, and that He may 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works' (Titus 2:14). He has done that, and that is our claim. I say, therefore, remember that, and whenever any perplexity arises or anything that tends to shake you, take it and put it in

the light of that. Though you do not understand the thing itself, you must at that point say, 'I do not mind, I am content not to understand. All I know is that as a child of God, bought with the blood of Christ, there are certain things that I cannot do and this is one of them, and therefore I will not do it, and whatever the consequences are, I will stand firm'" (*Faith on Trial*, p. 30).

Later in the same set of sermons we hear Lloyd-Jones say: "We are Christian not because we are good people; we are Christian because, though we were bad people, God had mercy upon us and sent His Son to die for us. We are saved entirely by the grace of God; there is no human contribution whatsoever, and if you think there is, you are denying the central biblical doctrine. If you feel at this moment that there is anything in you to recommend you to God, you do not believe the gospel of this Psalmist or the gospel of the New Testament" (*Faith on Trial*, p. 89).

We may wish that both Stott and Lloyd-Jones had been confessional Lutherans, and that their great gifts could have been used in the promotion of complete orthodoxy in Christ Jesus. We should not have invited either of them to preach in our pulpits. Nevertheless, to the extent that their teaching glorified Christ and His Gospel, we can say (*Statement of Faith and Purpose of the Church of the Lutheran Confession*, p. 12): "We are indeed edified and heartened by every testimony, written or spoken, which truly confesses, teaches, preaches and glorifies the Gospel of Christ. ... We do not deny, but joyfully acknowledge that the Lord knows His elect, even though some are unwitting captives in false-teaching churches where, by their membership, they are partaking of a confession of error and are subjected to grave spiritual danger. We pray that all who now truly believe may persevere in that faith to the end and thus obtain everlasting life."

Old, Hughes Oliphant, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church. Volume 4: The Age of the Reformation.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. 556 pages, paperback, \$45.00.

In an ambitious series of seven volumes this is the first one that I have read. What Hughes Oliphant Old, a teacher at Princeton Theological Seminary, has set out to do is examine in some detail the preaching style of Christian preachers and the content of their sermons from the age of the apostles to the present time. What an abundance of material there is for such a study! Imagine attempting to read representative sermons in various languages from all the different times and places and divisions of the Christian Church! Then imagine trying to make succinct and trenchant comments on all these preachers and their sermons! In a brief preface the author says: "Having gotten to volume IV of the planned seven volumes of this work, I find myself feeling rather relieved. More than half of it has appeared. Most of the remaining three volumes is written. It is coming out *Deo volente!*"

Of course what is of greatest concern to us is the viewpoint from which Old makes his judgments. What does he regard as a beneficial, God-pleasing Christian sermon? In Volume 4 the most favorable comments are made concerning a German Lutheran preacher in the age of orthodoxy, namely, Heinrich Mueller (1631-1675). The *Lutheran Cyclopaedia* says concerning him: "In Mueller orthodoxy and personal piety were most happily united. He was a very popular preacher." Old agrees most enthusiastically: "He was a plain -style preacher who was content to preach the Scriptures in a simple and direct manner. ... For myself, Heinrich Mueller is about as fine a preacher as ever mounted a pulpit" (p. 393).

Four of Mueller's sermons are examined in some detail (pp. 393-408): a Christmas sermon on Luke 2:1-14, a Lenten sermon on Matthew 4:1-11, an Easter sermon on Luke 24:13-35, and a Pentecost sermon on the first verses of Acts 2. After his description of these sermons Old remarks: "Sermons like these can be preached only by a preacher who has lived with his Bible for long years, but it is just as true that they can be heard only by a congregation which knows the Bible almost as well. ... It is a tribute to orthodox Lutheranism that it had produced congregations like these. ... Somehow we are going to have to learn to preach like this again. Somehow we have to learn to listen to the Word of God with the same devotion. These sermons are as rich to-

day as they were in the seventeenth century. They are even worth the eyestrain of reading them in that old-fashioned German Gothic print” (pp. 407-408).

I have to admit that I knew nothing about this Lutheran preacher, Heinrich Mueller, before reading this book by a Princeton professor. Apparently Mueller’s sermons have not been translated into English, and Old says there is not even any modern German edition of his sermons. Old was dependent on a collection printed in 1891.

Old is generally positive in his comments about the sermons he surveys. This volume includes samples from such preachers as Martin Luther, John Brenz, Philipp Nicolai, and John Gerhard among Lutherans; Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and John Cocceius among the Reformed; Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine among the Roman Catholics; Hugh Latimer, Thomas Manton, and John Donne among the Puritans and Anglicans.

Old disapproves of sermons that are marked by moralism and fail to convey the good news of Christ and what He has done for us. He disapproves of high oratory that calls attention to itself. He seems to favor expository sermons over topical sermons. He remarks favorably on the practice of many preachers to preach through books of the Bible in series rather than follow the standard pericopes.

Volume 4 begins (pp. 1-43) with a fine summary of Martin Luther’s teaching and practice in the field of liturgics and homiletics. In fact Martin Luther’s work is praised almost as much as that of Heinrich Mueller. “Luther was a master at putting profound ideas in a simple way” (p. 22). “For Luther, to preach was to preach the Word of God, and that meant nothing less than to teach the Scriptures. . . . For Luther the heart of Scripture is the good news about Christ’s victory over sin and death” (pp. 38-40).

This book is especially recommended to teachers of homiletics and liturgics and all those interested in such topics.

Scudieri, Robert J., *The Apostolic Church - One, Holy, Catholic and Missionary*. The first book in a series to be published by the Lutheran Society for Missiology, 1996, 91 pages, paperback.

The Series Introduction (pp. i-ii) informs us: “The purpose of the Lutheran Society for Missiology Book Series otherwise known as Lutheran Mission Books is to make available to the Christian community missiological material and resources which are clearly from a Lutheran perspective, resources that are not available from any other source.” The Lutheran Society for Missiology (LSfM), which has a worldwide membership of over 200, is a new society organized to help Lutherans become more involved in the great work of seeking and saving lost sinners. The leadership seems to be made up of members of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS).

This volume by Scudieri, LCMS World Missions Area Secretary for North America, examines the meaning of the word *apostolic* as it is used in the Nicene Creed. Although he recognizes that the word as now used refers especially to the teaching of the original twelve apostles, Scudieri shows by ancient writings that the word *apostolic* originally referred especially to the mission aspect of the work of Jesus’ apostles. As Jesus’ apostles were sent out into the world with the gospel, so the whole Christian Church is *apostolic* in the sense that the whole Church is sent into the world to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Thus the title of his book changes the “one holy catholic and apostolic Church” of the Nicene Creed into the “one holy catholic and missionary Church.”

After taking up the usage of the word *apostolic* in the early days of the Church, Scudieri guides us on a journey to some of the early church councils, the Council of Nicea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381) to try to determine how the word *apostolic* was used in the early creeds. His conclusion: “The emphasis on *orthodoxy* for the phrase *apostolic church* is a necessary one. But *apostolic church* has other facets, and held up to the light of the Word of God, we can see a missionary emphasis, an emphasis needed today” (p. 72). Again Scudieri says (p. 73):

“*Apostolic church* refers to the nature of the church as continuously embodying the mission of the Savior of the world. Jesus was sent on a unique mission: to bear witness to the love of God. This is what the church is sent to do today. This is the *apostolic church*.”

The last chapter of the book is especially thought-provoking. The author says: “Each year hundreds of churches in the cities of North America shut their doors for the last time. They do so after dwindling to a group too small to maintain basic services. ...Many of these congregations had closed themselves off to the people around them. The mission of the church had become the preservation of the building. Shiny waxed floors and perfectly preserved stained glass windows became victims of steel wrecking balls after a Christian congregation no longer knew how or no longer cared to bring the message of Christ into its neighborhood” (p. 78). Scudieri is hoping that a congregation that recognizes that it is part of the *apostolic* or *missionary* church will think less of the preservation of the outward building and more of its mission to bring the good news of Christ to others. “Evaluation of a congregation’s work will be done on the basis of how well it has carried out Christ’s mission. All other activities carried on by a congregation will be secondary to the mission enterprise” (p. 80).

St. Patrick went back to Ireland as a missionary in 432, and even though he was opposed and persecuted, those who heard the gospel from him spread it to others so that by the time of Patrick’s death in 461 Ireland was mostly a Christian land. In just this same way Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire in the early centuries because the early Christians commonly recognized themselves as missionaries and spontaneously spread the good word (the gospel of Christ) wherever they went. “The Christian community has been left on earth for the purpose of reaching those who are without salvation and incorporating them. But so much time and effort is spent on the corporation” (p. 81).

– David Lau