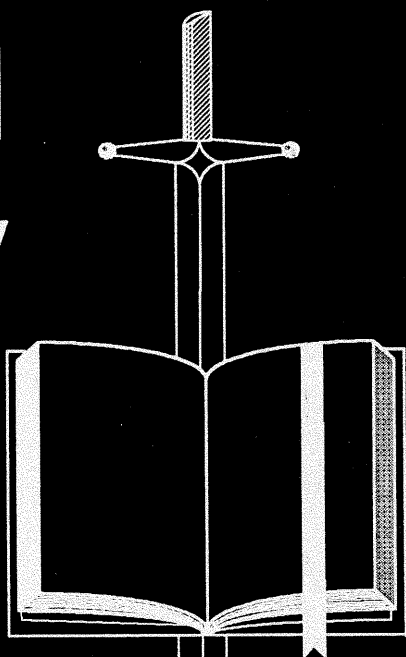


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# Lutheran Synod Quarterly



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# Lutheran Synod Quarterly

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## Foreword

By: Pres. Wilhelm Petersen

This issue begins with an article entitled "The Way of Opgjør" by Reverend Craig Ferkenstad, pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Bloomer, Wisconsin. Opgjør is a Norwegian word which means "settlement." It was the name of a union document which brought three Norwegian Lutheran church bodies into a merger in 1917. A minority of one of the merging churches, namely the Norwegian Synod, did not enter this new church body because it allowed false doctrine to exist alongside the true doctrine particularly on the doctrines of election and conversion.

As many of our readers are aware, this year marks the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the reorganization of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A prominent theologian of the reorganized synod was Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker who was president of Bethany Lutheran College from 1930 to 1950. We are reprinting a synodical essay entitled "The Beatitudes," which was delivered to the 1955 annual Convention of the ELS. Because of illness Dr. Ylvisaker was unable to be present at this Convention. Therefore the essay was read by one of his early students at Bethany College, the Rev. Torald Teigen.

We are pleased to share with our readers an exegetical paper on Joel 2:28-32 by the Rev. Markos DeGarmeaux, pastor of Saude and Jerico Lutheran churches, rural Lawler, Iowa. This paper was delivered to the General Pastoral Conference of the ELS on January 6, 1993. The exegete shows very clearly that this was a direct prophecy of the Day of Pentecost and also points out how this section of Scripture is misused by the charismatics of our day. Our readers will note that this paper was submitted to the Quarterly in memory of Joey and Trisha Anderson, teenage members of Pastor DeGarmeaux's parish, who were killed in

an automobile accident last fall. Joey was considering studying for the ministry.

We conclude this issue with a sermon by Pastor Emeritus Milton Tweit for a young girl, Kristi Busness, who perished in a house fire. Her funeral was held on March 25, 1991, with Pastor Tweit officiating. Because of the redemptive work of our Savior we can confidently declare "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." †

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## The Way of Opgjør

By: Rev. Craig A. Ferkenstad†

The way of Opgjør is an uncertain road. From a distance of eighty years we, today, cannot help but still wonder how such a document could have become the basis for union of a church body which, throughout its history, had stood firm upon the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Only twenty-five years earlier, the Norwegian Synod had chosen to stand firm even when it meant division in a large majority of its congregations and the withdrawal of one-quarter of its pastors.

Even in the midst of union negotiations it was apparent that there was no real unity between the synods. The United Norwegian Lutheran Church charged the Norwegian Synod as being "un-biblical and un-Lutheran." Members of the Norwegian Synod expressed concern at the "great doctrinal difference between the United Church and their own Synod." What happened? Why did the Norwegian Synod choose to follow the way of Opgjør?

We here will attempt to identify four factors which paved the way of Opgjør. This paper is not an attempt to be all-inclusive. This analysis is not as much a presentation

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† Originally presented at the Great Lakes Pastoral Conference on September 22, 1992.

of the history of Opgjør as it is an analysis of the times and feelings that allowed Opgjør to be written and adopted. As we consider these items, however, we must also ask if the way of Opgjør yet is being traveled today.

- **The Desire for Ethnic Unity**

When the Norwegian immigrants came to this country, it was only natural that they should seek each other. They shared a common language, history and heritage. Even though there was contact with other Lutheran bodies, the Norwegians naturally strove for union amongst those from their native land. Seven free-conferences were held for this purpose from 1871 to 1877. Following the Election controversy, the torch again was picked up by the Norwegian Synod in 1892 and 1900 (ELS Publication Board, 23). Finally an invitation for doctrinal discussions came from the Hauge Synod in 1905.

National pride was very strong at the time of the 1905 invitation. In that same year Norway ended its unhappy union with Sweden and reestablished an independent monarchy in Christiania [Oslo]. Only two years earlier, when the Norwegian Synod observed its Fiftieth Anniversary,

written greetings had been sent from the King of Norway (and Sweden). In 1912,

two representatives of the Church of Norway... appeared with special greetings from the king and the church of their homeland. This being the first time that there had been such official contact with the fatherland, it was self-evident that much enthusiasm was aroused, which could not fail to awaken and strengthen in many a desire for a merging of all Lutherans of Norwegian extraction in this country (S. C. Ylvisaker et al., 102).

The desire for Norwegian unity was so strong that even "the presence of [F. A.] Schmidt on the Union Committee and the hesitation of his colleagues to silence him or to apologize for his occasional inexcusable outbursts played little part in cooling union interest among leaders of the Synod" (Nelson in Preus, 21). Even when concerns arose concerning Opgjør in 1913, leaders of the Minority made circulated a petition which began: As children of the Norwegian Synod the undersigned wish from the heart that the Lutherans in our land, and **first and foremost, that the Norwegian Lutheran** bodies, might come to a unity of faith on a scriptural and confessional basis" (Aaberg, 56).

The desire for Norwegian unity was so strong that in 1914, when a *Festskrift* was published, there was a forty page summary of the history of the Norwegian Lutheran

Church in America. That article concluded by saying : "But there are still three Norwegian-Lutheran bodies, who hitherto have held themselves outside this union movement. The church union work must therefore continue until the goal is reached: **One Norwegian-Lutheran Church in America**" (Wist, 244).

It, then, is not surprising that the way of Opgjør was desirable. Neither is it surprising that "for many years members of the Synod had been led to exaggerate the importance of an outwardly united Norwegian Lutheran Church. It was, therefore, no wonder that many did not take pains to examine closely whether the settlement arrived at was fully satisfactory" (Aaberg, 101).

Today one does not hear a call of ethnic unity amongst Lutherans. Rather the call is for the unity of all Lutherans amongst Christians. One hears such statements as: "We are convinced that cooperation with other Lutheran churches gives each of the churches and all of their members opportunity to work in unity and strength rather than in competition and

The way of Opgjør was a path of national pride.

Is not this yet the way of Opgjør?

brokenness" (Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, 135).

- **Carelessness in the Teaching of God's Word**

Christian instruction was very different for the Norwegian immigrant in American than it had been for him in the homeland. There, under the State Church of Norway, public education included religious education. Education, for most people, "had placed the Bible, Luther's Small Catechism, the Bible History, and the Hymn Book as first requisites to a Christian child's training" (Madson, 75).

We need to remember that Norwegians did not emigrate because of religious persecution. Most came to this land because of economic reasons. When they arrived in America they expected a system of religious instruction similar to that which they had experienced in Norway.

The Norwegian immigrant also supported the public (common) schools in their communities. They felt it was important for their children to learn the English language lest they isolate themselves from the "American" community. The immigrants were not proud of their mother tongue and feared their children might become outcasts of society. The clergy of the Norwegian Synod, however, supported

full-time Christian day schools which to them also meant a Norwegian school (Madson, 76). There was friction which naturally developed within the Norwegian Synod; even though the clergy of the Synod supported full-time Christian day schools, that support was not shared by the laity.

The solution was, sometimes, to hire Norwegian-Lutheran teachers for the public schools. There also was an almost universal practice in the Norwegian congregations to conduct two or three months of "Norwegian School" when the public schools were not meeting. These "Norwegian Schools" or "Summer Schools" were conducted in farm-houses, parsonages, and even in the public school buildings. The children were taught the Bible, church history, the Catechism, and hymns. In addition to this there was the custom of "Circuit Meetings" in both the spring and fall.

The purpose of these two or three-day meetings was to instruct and edify the children of God and, by the grace of God, to convert the unbeliever. The pastors and lay delegates from the congregations of the Circuit together with the members of the host congregation and visitors in general usually gathered for two sessions each day. After the carefully prepared, and sometimes too elaborate, presentation of an "introduction" to the subject chosen for consideration, the discussion would be carried on and be participated in by both pastors and laymen. These discussions were not learned theological lectures. They were a simple, informal, practical exposition and

development of some section of Scripture or perhaps a discussion of subjects such as Baptism, the Lord's Supper, family prayers, etc. (Preus, 26).

Yet, even with these opportunities, the clergy of the Norwegian Synod continued to see the necessity of the establishment of full-time Christian day schools. We here shall let President H. A. Preus speak in that regard. In 1873 he reported to the Synod:

A congregation must, therefore, for the sake of Christ's command, for the sake of the children's salvation, and for the sake of its very existence and continuance, provide for the school.

Again he said:

With fear and serious concern must we contemplate what the future holds in store for our children, our land and people. The only thing we have with which to construct a dam which shall save us from the oncoming flood, threatening to carry away everything in its course, **is the Lord and his word** (Madson, 79).

Three years later Preus again was to say: "It is certain that something must be done—something drastic—by our church body if it shall not perish" (S. C. Ylvisaker et al., 79).

The truth of these statements is seen in the way of Opgjør. In the 1880's the laymen (those who had been trained in the religious schools of Norway) expressed great concern about faith and doctrine. This was not as evident

in the time leading up to Opgjør and 1917. By this time individuals (without Christian day schools) had become "accustomed to the idea of letting a few leaders be spokesmen" (S. C. Ylvisaker et al., 103).

It has often been said that of the fourteen Christian day schools which existed at the time of the Merger of 1917 the only three which continued their existence were within the reorganized Norwegian Synod (ELS). Does this not speak of the importance of Christian education for the life and continuance of the church? Rev. N. A. Madson said in 1928: "It would ill become us to rear monument[s] to the memory of a Dietrichson, a Preus, an Otteson, a Larsen without lips, while we with our feet were trampling upon the dismembered corpse of their dearest child [the Christian day school]" (Madson, 81). Rev. J. A. Moldstad said in 1944: "The chief danger of today, as it was previous to 1911 to 1917, is that so many church members are indifferent to the teaching of God's Word" (Moldstad, 23).

Today if children  
and adults are not  
taught the fullness of  
God's teachings, the  
way is open for

The way of Opgjør was a road made smooth with indifference to the teaching of God's Word.



Today if children and adults are not taught the fullness of God's teachings, the way is open for indifference and compromise concerning that which they had never been taught. We can ask,

Has some of the vigor and steam of our forefather's resolve to expend their time and efforts and resources on church schools escaped our vision today? Is there a better way to train our youth so comprehensively in God's Truth that they will be astute to checking doctrinal errors floating in the ecclesiastical alphabet soup around them? How will our youth of 1992 train their own youth some day, if we do not show them at this present time the best educational means we have available as confessional Lutherans" (John Moldstad Jr., 24).

Can we content ourselves with the thought that less than sixty minutes each week is sufficient instruction for our children? Can we say that we have few other options?

Is not this yet the easy road of Opgjør?

- **The Danger of Church Politics**

One cannot study the way of Opgjør without also giving expression to the words of one who personally experienced those turbulent days preceding 1917.

Another danger which threatens to destroy the church is Church Politics. It was an important factor in destroying the old Synod and may also

become a danger in our Synod. The Church Council (Kirkeraad) in the old Norwegian Synod originally served a good purpose but after 1910 it became a dangerous power for the Synod's downfall. The lay people and most of the ministers were kept in ignorance. They depended on the Church Council to lead them (Moldstad, 23)

The way of Opgjør was not a doctrinal solution but a political solution. Rev. S. Gunderson, one of the members of the United Church Union Committee, wrote in 1913: "The United Church has not changed a tittle of its doctrine, neither has the Synod. The Madison Settlement is a compromise" (J. A. O. Preus, 5). Even the president of the Norwegian Synod appears to have realized this. Rev. M. F. Wiese relates a conversation with President H. G. Stub in March of 1912 where Stub says, "Wiese, we must strike paragraph 1 in Opgjør...." Rev. Wiese then says, "He was the first in our ministry who admonished me against accepting Opgjør" (*Beretning*, 1928, 62). Yet two years later President Stub, while still acknowledging there had been no change on the part of either synod simply responded that "all this must now be forgotten and stricken out" (Harstad, 63).

A thorough discussion of Opgjør was hindered even though the document was discussed, in length, at the synod meetings. The regular meetings of the pastoral conference

were not held (ELS Publications Board, 27). The 1915 Synod Convention held in San Francisco, California, was a crucial meeting. One year earlier the Synod had adopted the articles of union which were to lead to merg-

Is not this yet the roadbed for the way of Opgjør?

er; yet there still was a sizable minority opposed to such a merger. However, at the 1915 Convention it had been agreed that the matter of church union should not be discussed; the report of the Union Committee and the proposed constitution were to be read without discussion. Even the synodical president wished to silence the voice of dissidence by saying to the 1913 Convention: "The Synod has established a union committee...to do what it could to clear up whatever difficulties, in its opinion, remain...It was not the concern of other men to take this matter in their hands..." (Aaberg, 57).

The voice of the Minority also was silenced with the written word. The Rev. J. A. Moldstad writes: "The press,

Have we, who now celebrate the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the reorganization of the Norwegian Synod, learned to recognize the way of Opgjør?

both religious and secular, was closed to all who strove to bear witness against the

false doctrine of 'Opgjør' and to warn against union on a false basis. For more than five years the 'minority' was subjected to a terrible spiritual tyranny" (Moldstad, 23). The only exception to this was the *Lutheran Herald* and, eventually, the privately published *Til Retledning og Forsvar* [*For Guidance and Defense*].

Even the Synodical Conference, which President Stub and Rev. J. Ylvisaker addressed in 1912 on behalf of the Norwegian Synod, was not allowed to give its advice to the Synod. The Synodical Conference Committee was denied the privilege to address the Norwegian Synod assembled in convention (Aaberg, 73). The Committee's private attempts to meet with the Norwegian Synod always were answered by excuses (S. C. Ylvisaker et al., 112).

The way of Opgjør was an avenue paved with the danger of church politics.

Finally, at the 1916 Convention, the following statement was published by the Minority:

If the difficulties cannot be removed, there will be enough congregations which will remain in the Synod so that it will be able to live and assert its great principle; 'The Word alone and Grace alone.' No synod resolution can force a congregation out of the Synod and into a new church body. This is a matter

which the congregation alone can decide (in S. C. Ylvisaker et al., 114).

Today, the same threat exists. There always is the threat of overlooking the concerns of a few for the sake of the majority. The temptation exists for the synodical bodies to seek to simplify their organization through increased autonomy of boards and committees. The easy way of deferring, without question, to the reports of committees is always present.

- **The Legacy of a Common Hymnbook**

The Norwegian immigrants did not all carry the same hymn book with them in their rosemalled immigrant trunks. When emigration began there were two hymn books which were popular in Norway: Guldberg's (first published in 1778) and Balle's (first published in 1797).

In the late 1860's, at the height of Norwegian-American immigration, the Norwegian Synod prepared its own hymnbook which was published in 1870 (and revised in 1903). This hymn book was known as the *Synodens salmebog*. Norwegian congregations outside the Norwegian Synod made use of *Landstad's salmebog*.

There, likewise, was no uniformity in English hymn books among Norwegian-American Lutherans. In 1898 the

Norwegian Synod published *Christian Hymns* and, in the same year, the United Church published *The Church and Sunday School Hymnal*.

In 1908 the Norwegian Synod, the United Church and, the Hauge Synod elected a committee to prepare material for an English hymn book. In 1913 this committee both reported to the three synods and received authority from them to publish the new hymn book which was known as *The Lutheran Hymnary*. The preface was written seven months after Opgjør was prepared. It states,

The committee has not felt that its duty was to make a new hymn book, but only to make out of the vast treasury of Lutheran hymnody such a collection of genuine Lutheran hymns and chorales as should satisfy the needs and meet the expectations of our Norwegian-American Lutheran Church people. finally, it is the prayer of the committee, that *The Lutheran Hymnary* may prove no small factor in the efforts made to unify the various Norwegian Lutheran Church bodies of our land (*The Lutheran Hymnary*, 4)

Norwegian Synod President, Rev. H. G. Stub, echoed that thought when he reported to the 1913 Convention of the Synod concerning the new hymn book: "It is of great significance that ... it was composed of a committee of the three fellowships; who have given final adoption to the

common report on the call, conversion and Opgjør" (*Beretning*, 1913, 124).

*The Lutheran Hymnary*, it should be noted, also did resolve a liturgical difference between the various Norwegian Lutheran churches. Unlike the Norwegian Synod, the United Church did not include the words of Absolution in the liturgy. *The Lutheran Hymnary* served as a common ground for unity between the synods.

*The Lutheran Hymnary* prepared the roadbed for the way of Opgjør. It, ultimately, brought an appearance of external unity among the various church bodies. The step to organic unity was then much smaller.

Today similar occurrences still take place. The *Common Service Book* was published in 1917 which coincided with the formation of the United Lutheran

Rather, the path of Opgjør is one of a desire for external unity.

Church in America. The *Service Book and Hymnal* was published in 1958 by the churches which, two years later, were to form the American Lutheran Church. In 1953 preparation began which led to the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* in 1978. The church bodies who formally published this hymn book began steps toward

organic unity four years later (eventually forming the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988).

The way of Opgjør is an uncertain road. It is a road that does not have as a foundation God's clear Word and the Lutheran Confessions. Rather, the path of Opgjør is one of a desire for external unity. It is made smooth with carelessness in the teaching of God's Word. It is paved with the danger of church politics. It has the roadbed of unity in externals rather than substance.

The way of Opgjør was followed by the majority of those within the "old" Norwegian Synod. Its way has not been obliterated by the decades of time. It is yet being traveled today. †

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## The Beatitudes

By: Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker

Beauty is regarded and loved as much according to its familiarity as according to its intrinsic worth. Thus a mother's friendly form and a child's loving and laughing face. This is even more the case when we can say: my mother, my child. The high places of Scripture attract as much by their nearness to our needs and their well worn phrases as by their high-sounding diction and well-formed words. We do not seem to hear these to the point of weariness or recite them so often that we tire of their heavenly beauty and heaven-born grace. Their beauty and their grace are even enhanced by their frequent study as by their diligent use and repetition. As we breathe the air and grow rich in the beauty of the Twenty-third Psalm, the very familiarity of the words has a way of recalling our whole former life as a thing of beauty and grace, because He, the Lord of Glory and King of Grace, has deigned to live there. And thus, too, in the case of the Lord's Prayer and the sacred Beatitudes. We take them along into a troubled and troublesome life as a glowing ember to light the way for us, to warn and cheer and brighten our every turn. And why? They are the

very Word of God by which we live.†

Much misunderstanding, misinterpretation and disagreement has arisen with regard to the proper place of the Beatitudes in the presentation of the message of salvation. Since they are spoken directly by Christ Himself, we may suppose that they show no fundamental difference in meaning from the clear presentation of the rest of Scripture with reference to the way of salvation through faith in Christ and by grace alone. We may suppose without further ado and study that the Lord on this important occasion of His first recorded preaching and detailed revelation of the human heart with its needs, its faults, its sin and shame, and of God's eternal love and care, would speak a clear language to guide the sinner then and the sinner now. As the body of the Sermon shows clearly what He expects of His children, so the sinner would despair if he did not learn to know what he, the sinner, has a right to expect of Christ: pure and free grace, as only He,

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† The beatitudes are so called because each sentence begins with the word *beatus* in the Latin Vulgate translation. They are called makarisms in accordance with the Greek μακαριος, meaning "blessed." They appear early in the Gospel according to Matthew (chap. 5) and in a shortened form in the Gospel according to Luke (chap. 8). It is the form as transmitted by Matthew that concerns us here.

There is undoubtedly a close connection between this Greek word μακαριος and the Semetic root בִּרַךְ (Hebr.-Arab)-בִּרַךְ (Assyr.). Note the meaning of "bless" in all words, and the close proximity to each other of the consonants כ and ר and כ.

the Lord, is able to show it in all its fullness. In other words, we may suppose without further ado that our Lord has stated the Gospel clearly; and only with this as a basis has undertaken to show the clear demands of the Law. It cannot be otherwise. The Bible as a whole as in the specific case has taught us to look for Law and Gospel as an inseparable preaching, the one presupposing the other, the one following upon the other. Is the Sermon the Mount in conformity to this manner of preaching?

Instead interpreters have held the opinion that the Beatitudes present a sort of introduction to the body of the Sermon on the Mount in that the content is essentially a preaching of the Law, or that they present the fruits of faith, or that they are to be considered singly so that the one has no particular connection with the foregoing or the following. In the end the result is a strange confusion, so that a young preacher felt justified when he remarked dejectedly that he had never had the courage to preach sermons with the Beatitudes as a text, although he recognized that here must be a deep meaning even though unclear to him. And thus one student thinks so, another so; and in the end no one is sure either with regard to the sequence, the deeper

connection or the exact meaning and place of the Beatitudes.

On the other hand, we must not let the beauty, richness, and grace of the Beatitudes escape our notice as if these were immaterial. And the purpose of this treatise is that of tracing them singly and as a whole, to show what their plain meaning is, their reference to our Christian estate and to the preaching of Law and Gospel, that we may learn to love this word of our Lord as the word of Comfort which it is.

- **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**

The one word "blessed" is enough to prove that this is a gospel promise. The blessedness which God announces and pronounces is the undeserved riches of God. As the word "Blessed" implies the fullness of God's grace, so the reward of the activity which man shows is exactly nothing and less than nothing. To Abraham, and before he had the opportunity to earn a reward, God says: "I will bless thee, and make thy name great" (Gen. 12). And to David: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Ps. 32. Before all else, forgiveness of sin.

The same contrast is brought out so clearly in the passage before us. It is the contrast which is characteristic of the whole relation between the Law and the Gospel in Scripture: the one shows our worthless deserts, failure, minus quantity: the other reveals the positive, God's gift of grace in Christ. If it were man's earning, we might well read: "Blessed are the rich in money and goods; or, happy are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And how many there are who would put this meaning into the words of Christ, letting the word "blessed" mean nothing more than "lucky," "fortunate," or the like. But the word "blessed" blots out all thought of reward, every hope to earn, every expectation of being paid for work well done.

Note again the contrast: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Poor in spirit" contrasted with "kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit. What man cannot reach, because it is too high and lofty and sublime, this is brought near and actually placed in his bosom as a part of what he owns, and that, now, not at some future date, but now, in the ever-present eternity.

This blessedness extends to all the poor in spirit, as is evidenced by the plural. There is no difference as though

one owns more, the other less of this blessedness. There is no thought of attaining it at some indefinite future time after some condition has been fulfilled. We read plainly, "Blessed are those who have nothing of which to boast, no riches upon which to depend, nothing to make one feel that he is better than the other." Instead the one has lost every chance to look down upon the other. He is made to feel that all others are better than he and that he is poverty-stricken indeed. Stripped of all glory, devoid of every good thing, rich in nothing but his sin, he is informed of the surprising news that heaven itself is his, not to own at some future time, but now as a very present possession. The contrast is between nothing and something, between a negative and a positive, between earning and owning, between a fancied hope and sure riches. The one, poverty, is a possession which is suffered, the other is a possession gained; the one is a threat, the other an overwhelming gift, breathtaking in its beauty and magnanimous grace.

By changing the words the meaning can be changed. But, by changing the words, the promise may be lost. By changing from Gospel to Law the promise is gone to comfort us no more. But the promises of God are yea and amen; and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, more sure than the

promises of the Eternal. Let us remember that this is Gospel in its essence and sure reality. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Thus our Savior teaches us how to preach and teach the Gospel. How blessed are the poor in spirit.

Before we go on, it is well to consider carefully, who are the poor in spirit and to whom is the promise spoken? There is no doubt. In this, as in the following Beatitudes, Jesus is describing the Christian as he actually appears on earth. In other words, he is already a believer and child of God. Of no one else could Jesus say that he is blessed, since this word and designation properly, i.e. in the sight of God, belongs to the Christian alone. For that very reason Jesus speaks of him as poor, not in worldly goods, for then neither Abraham nor Job could be counted in that number. For that reason Jesus adds "in spirit." Not all "poor" are poor in the sense that Jesus uses the word. On the other hand, what a withering condemnation of the self-chosen and hypocritical so-called poverty of money and goods upon which the deluded souls of the Catholic Church have learned to depend for the favor of God! To be poor in spirit is truly a God-given thing. It means to be poor in the sight of God, where money does not count but instead the awful absence



of any good thing by which we may please God. There are the poor in spirit whose possessions are the God-accursed sin and shame which they own as the children of hell that they are by nature. And when the Law is preached to them, it is not that they become proud but that they are pressed the more down into the hell of despair and hopelessness—the sorrows of hell encompass them, as the Psalmist declares. They search in vain for rescue or relief. They are poor in this, too, that they find nothing in themselves or in their own so-called good deeds by which they as by a drop of water can cool their tongue and relieve their torture. When God says "poor in spirit," then He means just that: a spirit that has nothing of which to boast, nothing by which to comfort, nothing to offer God in recompense for sin.

Does our Savior actually speak of these when he says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?" Or does Christ speak to delude us? He seems to make matters worse by adding the promise: "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Note the Greek *αυτοι* and *αυτον*.) Is there merit in our poverty and sin that we can earn a reward by means of them? Nay, this is the language of Scripture, and that is altogether different from the language of men. That is the language of utter surprise, of unsparing

humiliation, but of honest appraisal. Of what can "poor" men boast? And yet, there is the gift, and possibly there is no better way of bringing the truth to light but by way of contrast. And so the Gospel reads: for sin, instead of sin, forgiveness and grace. For poverty, the grace and riches of heaven.

There is no appeal from this promise of Christ to reason, as there can be no reasonable interpretation of this passage. To us it would appear that where there is a reward, there must also be labor clearly stated. And does not the passage say that heaven belongs to "the poor in spirit?" In other words, heaven is of the poor, not of the rich in spirit. If we fulfill that certain condition of being poor in spirit, then we may attain and secure and own heaven. And even though there is great disproportion between the set condition and the agreed reward, between the labor and the pay, between the stipulated requirement and the stated remuneration, the element and idea of *quid pro quo*, of something for something else and thus eventually of labor and reward, even of being something in order to gain something else, is clearly presupposed as a basis in the bargain. It is well that we discover in time that this is a gospel promise, a reward of grace, an unmerited gift. This is a reaction of the prodigal's

return and of the salvation of the robber on the cross. The publican was in truth "poor in spirit." The robber heard the promise: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

As the poverty is real and the sin is real, so the promise, too, is real: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And as we cannot fathom the disproportion, so we cannot fathom the reality of the blessing. Heaven is above us, beyond us, always more than our every conception in this way or that; but the promise remains true and steadfast. Whether the mind of one explains heaven in this fashion or that, heaven always remains as the realm of God's existence, as the revelation of the beauty and grace of God, as the home of God's perfect love and life. No man who is bound up with this life can understand or form a conception of heaven; for it is of a different sort and nature from the life on earth. And yet, the one is the image of the other as God created man in the image of God. But as heaven is higher than earth, so heaven, being of God, will be discerned only when we are "of God," i.e. belong to God, children of God, born and nurtured of God, heaven-born.

And so the solution remains and is clear: by the teaching of the whole Bible as well as by the contrasting expressions here it is made clear that the attempt to discover anything of

merit in the words "the poor in spirit" must fail utterly. But we note that the natural order of words is "the poor in spirit" are blessed because (in that) the kingdom of heaven is theirs, from which it is clear that, as important as the words "the poor in spirit" are, the word "blessed" is even more so: "for" as the result of the blessing of God the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor. In other words, as much as the unbelieving world may despise the Christian, as much as the Christian may despise Himself and deplore his own fate of being such a "poor" one, and as much as God Himself seems to verify the truth of this description of the Christian, yet the Christian is blessed by God and given the Kingdom of Heaven as an eternal possession. How blessed it is to be found as a Christian though poor in the sight of men and of God!

- **"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."**

Mourning cannot be forced or demanded. It is a natural, spontaneous expression of grief. In other words, it is not necessary to add the words, "in spirit." Mourning is of the spirit; otherwise it is not mourning. It is not a matter of tears as of the eyes. It is not a matter of the mouth, as if sobbing can be of the sound simply. Grief as well as the sob

spirit; otherwise it is not mourning. It is not a matter of tears as of the eyes. It is not a matter of the mouth, as if sobbing can be of the sound simply. Grief as well as the sob cannot be separated from the feeling and emotions of the heart, if grief be real.

Note how inseparably poverty and grief are joined together: poverty is an inevitable condition of the soul as the result of sin; grief and mourning are the accompaniment of that lack, even as the tear and the sob. Poverty and mourning are companions together, the one feeling what the other is; and as the sinner is sick, mortally wounded, even "dead in trespasses and sins," so the mourning is there to declare that sickness and that death, the unhappy and sorrowing procession of the dead.

"Blessed are they that mourn," and we see as in one the company of the sinners as they wend their way along the pathway of life, sorrowing and anguished, under the heel of despair as they contemplate the hopelessness of their lost condition. Can there be any earning of a favor or of a prize by mourning, do you suppose? The earning comes by way of a sharp contrast, "they shall be comforted." That word is not from self; by way of that same contrast, it is from God.

hand as an ever-present reality. By Scripture He reminds us of His substitutionary suffering and death for the sins of all mankind to take away our grief and wipe away our tears. It is He, the Great Succorer Who has come with this as His one purpose, to comfort. Note well, these words have no meaning apart from Christ. In these words, "They shall be comforted," the whole gospel of the Christian religion is laid bare. We may wonder at this that the same Jesus who speaks and promises comfort says nothing about where that comfort is to be found. And yet, He stands before them and us as the source and embodiment of all true comfort. Without Him there is no comfort, true, lasting, real. Where He is, there grief takes its flight and there is peace. The enmity of sin is no more; the sorrow of sin is gone; the warfare and strife of sin is banished, the suffering and pain are wiped away; the guilt of sin is paid; all that implies sorrow on account of, as a result of, in the companionship and association with sin, the unhappiness, the hurt, the anguish, all, **all** has been removed to be replaced by comfort as the gift of Him Who knows no pretended or false or sham words by which to deceive.

These are sacred words whose content cannot be stretched beyond their true meaning. The words permit only

Him Who knows no pretended or false or sham words by which to deceive.

These are sacred words whose content cannot be stretched beyond their true meaning. The words permit only a sense that is in conformity to and in harmony with the comfort which has been spoken so clearly in the rest of Scripture, that comfort which has been bought and wrought for all by Christ. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Is. 40).

And when the sinner cries for more comfort against more, ever more sin, then remember, the comfort of Christ always goes beyond; it is never weary or spent. As Christ's "for all" means just what it says, thus the glory of this promise is equally full: "they shall be comforted."

This Jesus Who comforts is not unknown. He it is Who, standing in their midst, has already accepted the challenge of His office as the Lamb of God. As such He walked the pages of the Old Testament. He comforted our first parents, Adam and Eve, when they had sinned. He comforted Abel when he depended on that same Lamb of God, Who already

then had come by prophecy in the burnt offering. He comforted Abraham and Isaac, who were actually given to see how God miraculously substituted the Lamb of burnt offering for guilty Isaac and thus held before the believing eyes of a sinful people the wondrous promise and comfort of God. The course of the whole Old Testament became as a long wait for the fulfillment of the promise of God. The promise was spoken by one plain prophecy after the other, by type, by command, by gospel comfort-until Isaiah by the Spirit could say in astonishment of faith:

Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Is. 53).

It is this prophecy John the Baptist reechoes when he says: "Behold the Lamb of God," and it is the dedication to



His solemn office the same servant of God announces at the Baptism of Jesus. And this Jesus goes forth delivered into the cruel hands of those who should slay Him as the payment for the sins of all. Here He stands having come into the world by the gracious decree of God Himself, ready and willing to comfort all who mourn. Here is the wiping away of tears and the lifting of eyes to the hills of salvation indeed.

- **"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."**

"The meek" are those who realize their own unworthy state and are not proud. As riches and pride consort together, so poverty and meekness walk hand in hand, the one to make the other rich. The meek are the poor who know their own poverty and the mourners who realize the cause of their own sorrow. They are the sinners who know their sin and yet do not despair; for in the midst of their meekness they find hope which is of God.

Is meekness, then, something of which to boast? By no means. Meekness is rather as a confession of one's own unworthiness. Meekness seeks instead the company of the poverty and the grief just mentioned. But not as if the one degrades the other and debases the other. The one exalts the

other and "exults" the other. Poor mourn-meek: the one rejoices in the companionship of the other, but so that the one does not feel ashamed of the other or feel sorry for the other.

There is a striking Christian progression in these thoughts: "poor," because the sinner realizes his sin; "mourns," because the hurt of sin is there; "meek," because the sinner has nothing of which to boast. But instead of letting each follow the other in a descending scale, the one hal- lows the other, helps to deepen the significance of the other, broadens the conception and dignifies the picture, until he who is poor and mourns and is meek stands before us as the one whom Christ loves so much that He gave His life that he might live.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." There is the like and unexpected contrast, taking us utterly by surprise, the surprise of the gospel. For what can be more unexpected than a reward where there is no earning? pay where there is no labor? "Meek" spells a condition and not a work, and therefore brings a gift rather than a remuneration. So the "blessed" which introduces each sentence and saying is as a kind father who, forgetting that his child has disappointed him grievously, covers the pain with the

healing "Balm of Gilead," the blood of His dear Son, and, remembering His Son, grants the blessing where there otherwise is none. Therefore, too, He describes the gift as an "inheritance" and not as a reward.

But can the expression "inherit the earth" possibly signify or include the heavenly? The sinner could not be satisfied with less. We are reminded in this connection of the passage: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Pet. 1: 3, 4). All promises regarding the spiritual include this present but reach up into heaven, make rich in heaven and on earth, comfort in heaven as well as on earth.

Up to this point the Beatitudes describe the Christian as viewed by the Law and the Gospel: "poor" because of sin, and yet "blessed" by the Gospel and owning the Kingdom of God; "mournful" because of his lost condition, and yet comforted by the sure mercy of God; "meek" in view of this verdict of the Law, but made rich by the same strange and opposite loving-kindness of God in the Gospel. This whole attitude and contrary reward of God becomes the more

surprising and mysterious the farther we proceed in the contemplation of the Beatitudes of Jesus. It is the same strange contrast as we find in the opposing expressions Law and Gospel, sin and grace the same contrast as we find in Rom. 3, 23. 24: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Man's deserving; God's mercy.

- **"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness: for they shall be filled."**

Again the word "blessed" almost frightens us with its marked emphasis. However, we must not be surprised either by Christ's description of the Christian or by the contrast so like that of the foregoing beatitudes.

"Blessed" again covers the whole range of good things that God has to give His children. Nothing is withheld, nothing missed. "Hunger" and "thirst" are spiritual, the hunger and thirst after righteousness, the perfect fulfillment of God's demands as expressed in the Law of God. That righteousness must be a perfect righteousness, even as God Himself is perfect, as this same Sermon on the Mount puts it in another connection: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Anything short of that is not righteousness and cannot be called so. There is no

righteousness which is part righteousness and part unrighteousness.

Therefore Christ uses the expression "hunger and thirst after," the very expression "hunger and thirst" implies a significant change, for it is unattainable by our own "reason or strength." And yet, this appetite is no small thing in itself. This appetite is an evidence of the change that has come with the advent of the Gospel. The Law is cruel in that it in the end not only judges all attempts at fulfilling its demands as imperfect and as failures, but kills and murders all desire and living 'appetite' for the holy life which pleases God. Where that hunger and thirst have returned, there is life in the fervent desire to attain that which pleases God. Where that life is, even though it consist only in the desire and yearning to embrace the perfection which God loves, and to love the righteousness which Christ points out, and hopes for the possession of that for which he now hungers and thirsts. There is faith, the "evidence of things not seen." And faith is that divine activity which in itself is the gift of God.

Let us not despise faith, for it is the key to every blessing of God. Faith is in itself proof that the Holy Spirit has touched the heart with life-giving force. The heavenly seed

has been planted in the human heart, and with heaven-born eagerness a hunger and thirst have set in to bless that same heart. Where man had been 'dead in trespasses and sins,' God has awakened hatred of sin and love of righteousness which is of the Gospel.

A stone or piece of iron has no "hunger and thirst." Therefore food and drink are as nothing to them. Hunger and thirst are evidences of life. But life has its source in God and only in Him. Spiritual hunger and thirst are a proof of spiritual life, a life that only God can create. Thus we begin to realize how blessed that man is in whom God has wrought faith; for that faith has made a separation between man who is "dead in trespasses and sins," who is lost, condemned, banished from God and His favor, and him who, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, shined upon by the Sun of Righteousness, touched by Him Who is Light and Life, has risen to new life in Christ, his Redeemer. In his heart the Seed of God's Word has been planted to bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. That is the promise of Very God. For when Christ says "be filled," He reserves nothing of that which satisfies that hunger and thirst of which He speaks. It is a fullness that signifies and brings eternal life.

7). "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebr. 11:8).

As there is no greater gift than the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, so there is no greater possession than the faith which takes hold of this mercy of God. For faith, though a creation of God, is still the possession of the Christian, whereby all that faith holds and owns becomes his to make him eternally rich. Without faith, the poverty remains; with faith, the blessing remains. What riches faith brings!

- **"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."**

The faith of the Christian is an active thing, producing not wealth of goods or cattle but the fruits of faith, which are these: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22, 23). Faith is a living thing and must be active; it lives unto God and pleases God. It is unselfish, looking unto the other's needs and welfare. It looks with pity on the other's ills and offers help. It loves, remembering God's love toward him.

Mercy is rooted in God's mercy. It forgives, because God has forgiven him. Mercy cannot be forced. It is freely given, even as God has been merciful. Mercy is coupled with goodness (Ps. 23:6) and again with truth (Ps. 95:10). As such it is an attribute of God. When used of God, mercy is the equivalent of loving-kindness (Rev. Vers.) Where God dwells, there is the Mercy-seat, because He dispenses mercy there, even as He says; "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mat. 9:13). As God deals graciously with us, so He blesses those who are merciful to others.

But mercy, being free, must not, dare not contradict its own nature. It does not seek a reward, cannot be repaid. If it is not free, it is not mercy. One cannot buy mercy with mercy as if we can bargain in this wise: I'll forgive you if you will forgive me. Where mercy is involved, the period must be placed thus: I forgive. The Christian being overwhelmed by the loving-kindness and free forgiveness and mercy of God in Christ, as a living tree, bears the inevitable fruit of mercy. His very nature is transformed. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). Where there was no mercy, now there is mercy and all the friends



and companions, the brothers and sisters, the whole holy family of virtues, among whom love is first and foremost.

A mirror is a remarkable thing. It reflects whatever is placed before it, and that, in its exact shape and size and coloring—but not in its true direction. The image is reversed. Furthermore, the image is not lasting; it remains as long as the object is there before it. If the object is taken away, the image is gone. Thus the image of Christ. So long as He is there in our lives, His image, too, is there to beautify and to bless. In fact, we are not true to our purpose as Christians unless our lives reflect His life, our virtues reflect His virtues. But let us remember the reflection is true only to a point. The only direction an image has is in the reverse. Only in so far as we reflect Him can our image have any direction. The mercy, truth, love, kindness that we may show forth are the mercy, truth, love and kindness which is of Him; but take Him out of our lives, and that same mercy, truth, love and kindness become as a cold and selfish and proud thing, utterly devoid of the love which is warm and life-giving. Oh, the emptiness of the mercy which is without Christ!

We do well to do battle against the conclusion that Jesus in these Beatitudes intends to teach anything that in any way

militates against the teaching of the rest of Scripture that we cannot in any wise earn our salvation by any sort of good deeds, good conduct or good intentions. The Word of God is too plain and clear to make any such interpretation possible—though it may seem very plausible and attractive to man as he is by nature. The word, "for," repeated here so often, may seem to be a stumbling block, however, and may seem to imply a ground or reason for making a stated quality or nature a reason for an inevitable conclusion. Must we, after all, read: If the Christian is merciful, God will show him mercy in return?

However, it is not necessary to look beyond this very text to avoid that shoal. It is evident that the word

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"blessed" has the fullness of meaning of this word, and as Christian hearers and readers we refuse to give up one jot or tittle of the treasury of good things that God has stored up in this Gospel promise. Instead, let us be careful how we read the sacred words. As in each of the several Beatitudes we must also here read with the proper accent, and that accent is in every case on the word "blessed."

In accordance with the explanation established under Beatitude 1, the thought of these five Beatitudes is briefly

this: these believing disciples of Christ, poor in spirit, sinners all and condemned, are in God's sight counted as blessed, and that by grace, and by promise they own heaven itself. They mourn their sins and the effects of sin; but in the sight of God they are blessed and shall be comforted. They are meek, are known by God and men as such; they frankly and honestly admit their lost condition; but they are blessed by God and shall by grace inherit the earth. They hunger and thirst after righteousness and by their love show their allegiance to the Lord's cause, and they are blessed in that their hunger and thirst shall be satisfied. They show that their faith is living and active in that they are merciful; but this very activity of faith is a blessing of God which by promise here shall be continued.

And thus our salvation, our mercy, our day-by-day forgiveness, all that makes a demand on the mercy of God is made to rest securely on Christ, His suffering for us, His death for us, His perfect life for us. Only that will save, only that will forgive, only that will earn the mercy of God and give assurance that it is enough. Only God's mercy in Christ fully satisfies. His cry "It is finished!" covers all my sin.

As a self-evident thing, with no thought of merit and reward for merit, such a Christian by God's blessing brings

forth the fruits of faith. He is merciful to others, even as his Father in Heaven has been merciful to him. But is a thank-offering like a call for a reward? Far be it! It is like the lowly apple which declares that the tree is living and which praises God Who made it so.

- **"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."**

Pure—the very word condemns us all, and when Jesus adds "in heart" we know that He who sees all has already looked into these stark and dark recesses which we have tried so frantically to hide, not only from our fellowmen but from God Himself. But the words stand, and as if God reserves His blessing for the "pure in heart." Is not the natural and inevitable corollary the self-evident: damned are the impure in heart, for they shall not see God?

Thus reason would get in the way of the Word of God and the promise of God. How we need to learn and relearn to read! For if we learn to read with the right accent, the Gospel here, too, would shine in all its glory. "Blessed are the pure" means just what the words say: God has blessed and will bless those who by faith have been purified, and the promise of God is: "they shall see God." And let us be brave to crave the full meaning: they shall see God bodily, i.e. in

the resurrection of the body. Marvel if you will, at the startling glory of the promise of God! As we learn to see the Son by faith, so we shall also learn to "see" the Father according to the promise: "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9).

Again the reward of grace in this case as in the foregoing comprehends all the good things of God. As impurity shuts out from the presence and sight of God in His holiness and justice and righteousness, so purity admits the believer into that purity and holiness which is God. The promise of God brings that purity as the most precious gift it is, and that in its fullness. Sin is moral and spiritual impurity, and its end is hell. Spiritual impurity is the contamination of Satan, and it partakes of the nature of hell. The removal of sin spells the removal of all that divides and separates from heaven. And the salvation that Christ has prepared and made ready means just that; the washing of regeneration of which the Bible speaks, Titus 3:5: "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This is not only negative; it is the positive restoring of purity, it is the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," so that the same passage can say: "according to his mercy he saved us." Thus God wants us to contemplate our

deliverance, the impure having become pure, the damned having been saved and delivered out of hell into heaven. It is the same Jesus, after all, Who has taught us to see all of this in the light of the Gospel promise: "They shall see God."

For this is the very purpose for which He came. He knows that we are impure, and He knows how impure we are. But His mission on earth was none other than just that: to make the impure pure, the sinners saints, the unclean clean, to raise the spiritually dead that they might live in Christ and unto Christ. We cannot and must not and will not forget that work of Christ which lends meaning to His whole coming in the flesh: to redeem me and all sinners. But what is redemption other than cleansing from sin, purifying the impure, offering His holy life as a sufficient ransom for all? As the Scripture says: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2:5, 6).

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Then we who were filled with dread at the very sound of the word "pure" learn who Jesus has [makes] reference to when He says "pure." They are those who by faith have received the forgiveness of sins, the washing which the Son

promises, the cleansing which makes us pure in the sight of God. Who will dare to speak here of earning and reward; of his own purity of body or mind or heart, of hands or eyes or mouth, of thought or wish or ambition, as if we, you, I, anyone in the world of men, could attain to the perfection that Jesus implies here? By His promise, free, full, ever present, He, the Eternal Son, has given us all forgiveness, made us fully clean, as the Lamb of God has by His blood wiped out every guilty stain. God discovers not even the semblance of sin, for that "for us" has settled every accusing account.

Having been purified and cleansed by the blood of Christ, it is a self-evident thing that the Christian gives evidence of his faith by himself being merciful. How can he hide this victory of the Spirit in his life? And so the life purpose of the believer becomes this, as he is reborn as a child of God, that he show by purity of heart, mind, body, by purity of intent and thought, of ambition and striving that the whole person is as a bud that gives the promise of the full bloom of heaven. What can be higher reward than this: "They shall see God?"

- **"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God."**

Three words, but they make the difference between life and death, happiness and hell: blessed-peacemakers-children of God. "The central thought is that the peace-makers are blessed; but how can there be any blessedness apart from that heavenly company of saints described here, the peace-makers, the children of God?"

It is not as though any separation from the foregoing description of the Christian is possible; for the "poor in spirit," they who "mourn" their sinful condition, "the meek," those who long for the righteousness of Christ, those whose sins are forgiven, those who in love are merciful toward their fellows, those who are pure in heart, these all have only one aim and purpose in life: to bring their newfound peace to their fellowmen. The task is plain as the newborn desire is urgent: God Who in Christ has manifested forth His boundless mercy sends us forth into a warring world with the message of the same loving forgiveness, as the children of God to spread happiness wherever we go.

Of Christ Himself the prophet says: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to



bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified" (Is. 81:1-3). Of Jesus in the flesh Matthew says: 'from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17). And again: "And Jesus went about all Galilee. teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." (v. 23) What is more natural and self-evident than this that the Christian in all things follow the example of Christ, and as a thank offering to Him also in this do as He bids: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:15; Is. 52:7). And Paul, the disciple of Christ, can boast: "We preach Christ crucified." And again: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38).

There is no grander title than this, no greater mission, no happier cause. It is a calling so important that none exceeds it, for the eternal happiness of all men is dependent on this. It is a work so dignified that no one is worthy, unless God Himself touches our unworthiness and by His grace covers it with His Own worthiness.

Of a sudden the whole world is transformed before our very eyes. A world steeped in sin, iniquity, corruption and the rottenness of death is called forth by the message of life to new life and by the glad tidings of peace to the bright light of God's Own truth. In this glorious work the children of God shall own a part! What blessedness is theirs! "And he said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.'" (Mark 16:15, 16).

Let our eyes of faith feast day by day on this vision of the Church of God. Though invisible to the natural eye, that Church is beautifully portrayed here as the children of God, who are surely counted every one. For each is numbered among the elect and given his task to do in the household of God. They are called to be peacemakers in the true and real sense; peacemakers between God and men, peacemakers

between man and man, all by the glorious Gospel of a Risen Savior.

Thus the Beatitudes reach a worthy climax: "they shall be called the children of God." There is our origin as well as our goal, our task and our help to do that task, our song and our harp on the way, our food and our drink-all from and of God, all Heavenly and from Heaven. Here the **children of God**; there the **sons of God**. Can there be any worthier goal and title than this.

- **To sum up**

In the Beatitudes Jesus appears as the Master Painter, Who with bold strokes and consummate skill has given us a most striking reproduction of the Christian as he appears before God and the Church: He is poor, because of the presence of sin; he mourns the abuse of the power of sin; he is meek because of the humiliating filth of sin; but he has in the same moment a living hope despite sin; he possesses a merciful heart toward others, because he has himself been forgiven; he possesses a heart that is clean before God, because it has been washed clean by the blood of Christ, and he strives daily to live as an example of purity before his fellows; he is; called by God Himself a "child of God" and

given the high calling of being the helpmeet of God as a peacemaker before God and men. As such a child of God he owns the blessings of heaven and earth, the favor of God, and the assurance that no man or devil can hurt nor harm him against the will of the Father.

In the next following verses our loving Savior pictures the stern future of this Church of God and each member of the same. It shall suffer persecution, be reviled, be spoken against for Christ's sake though falsely, even as the prophets of old: but in the sight of God they shall be the salt of the earth, for by their words and deeds they help to preserve the world from destruction; they shall be the light of the world, for by their word and works they shall help the world to and the way to God and their heavenly inheritance.

And on the way we meet these words without fear and gladly, even thankfully: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat. 5:48). As believers in Christ we walk with the blessing of Very God as our sacred possession, sins forgiven and owning the mercy of God.

Again: Soli Deo Gloria✠

## Exegesis of Joel 2:28-32 (Hebrews 3:1-5)

By: Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux†

*in loving memory of Joey and Trisha Anderson*

## BHS

Joel 2:28-32 — 5-1:3 יואל

28 וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֲשַׁפּוּךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר וְנִבְאוּ  
 בְּנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֶיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם וְקִנְיֹתֵיכֶם חִזְיוֹת יִרְאוּ:  
 29 וְגַם עַל־הָעִבְרִים וְעַל־הַשְּׂקָחוֹת בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה אֲשַׁפּוּךְ  
 אֶת־רוּחִי:  
 30 נִחְתִּי מִזִּפְתִּים בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ דָּם וְאֵשׁ וְתִמְרוֹת עָשָׂן:  
 31 הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לְחֹשֶׁךְ וְהַיָּרֵחַ לְדָם לַפְּנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם  
 יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא  
 32 וְהָיָה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִפְלֹט כִּי בְהֵרֶץ־צִיּוֹן  
 וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּהְיֶה פְּלִיטָה כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה וּבִשְׂרֵי־לָדִים  
 אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה יִקְרָא:

## UBS

## Acts 2

17Καὶ ἔσται ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, λέγει ὁ  
 θεός, ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα,  
 καὶ προφητεῦσουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες  
 ὑμῶν, καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὀράσεις ὄψονται, καὶ οἱ  
 πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνυπνίοις ἐνυπνιασθήσονται. 18καὶ  
 γε ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας μου ἐν  
 ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου,  
 καὶ προφητεῦσουσιν. 19καὶ δώσω τέρατα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ  
 ἄνω καὶ σημεῖα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κάτω, αἷμα καὶ πῦρ καὶ  
 ἀτμίδα καπνοῦ. 20ὁ ἥλιος μεταστραφήσεται εἰς σκό-  
 τος καὶ ἡ σελήνη εἰς αἷμα πρὶν ἔλθειν ἡμέραν κυρίου  
 τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ. 21καὶ ἔσται πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐ-  
 πικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται.

† This paper was presented to the ELS General Pastoral Conference on January 6, 1993.

## NKJV

## Joel 2:28-32

<sup>28</sup>And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My<sup>†</sup> Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. <sup>29</sup>And also of My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. <sup>30</sup>And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fire and pillars of smoke. <sup>31</sup>The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

<sup>32</sup>And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

- **Introduction**

The prophet Joel gives us no historical reference points as far as kings and rulers of his time. It is generally thought that Joel is one of the early prophets because he appears to be quoted by Amos and has passages very similar to those of Isaiah and Obadiah. This would date his prophecy at the end of Joash's reign and at the time of the priest Jehoiada (877-837 B.C.) (Keil-Delitzsch, 10, 169). Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, had become queen of Judah by marrying King Jehoram of Judah. Their son Ahaziah

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† The word *My* in verse 29 is from the Septuagint and New Testament; the Hebrew says *the*.

became King of Judah, but was entirely under the wicked influence of the Queen Mother (2 Chr. 22:3). King Jehu of Israel killed Ahaziah because he was of the house of Ahab and a potential rival. At Ahaziah's death, Athaliah proclaimed herself queen and killed the rest of the royal offspring, although Joash escaped and was kept hidden by his mother in the house of the Lord for six years. The faithful priest Jehoiada gathered the people together and they restored the Davidic line by anointing Joash as king of Judah at age seven. Under priest Jehoiada the people destroyed the temple of Baal and restored the true worship of God. But, sadly, after Jehoiada's death, Joash followed the evil influence of the Judaite leaders and again forsook the Lord: "Now after the death of Jehoiada the leaders of Judah came and bowed down to the king. And the king listened to them. Therefore they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the Lord; and they testified against them, but they would not listen" (2 Chr. 22:17-19).

It was probably during this time of decline that Joel prophesied. His prophecy calls the people to repentance

and to return to the Lord. Chapter 1 through 2:17 describes a terrible infestation of locusts which causes terrible famine.<sup>†</sup> Some commentators understand this to be a symbol of the coming affliction by the Assyrians. Some see both things in this chapter; the locusts being real, but also representing the tragedy of the Assyrians. Chapter 2:18-27 promises the Lord's restoration of the land of Israel. Chapter 3 declares God's judgment on the unbelievers and urges God's people to war: "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears." This word is also appropriate to the Church Militant in its constant conflict with the old evil foe. The New Testament parallel might be Paul's exhortation: "Put on the whole armor of God."

Between these warnings and threats we find the passage before us. Chapter 2:28-32 is something entirely different and distinct from the rest of Joel. Luther says:

Here the real prophecy begins, which we must clearly separate from what has gone before.... You see, it is the custom of the prophets that when they have declared that prophecy for which they had been sent, they put aside what has taken place after the revelation of their prophecy and immediately go on to prophesy about Christ. Although all the prophets were sent to announce some temporal punishment,

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† Several commentators refer to a similar locust plague in 1915, described in *National Geographic* in December, 1915.



yet they would always connect something about Christ to it too (Luther, 18, 105).

Luther shows here his consistent assertion that "the whole Scripture preaches Christ." Whatever other messages the prophets brought to the people of God, their main message was always the coming Messiah, which Luther calls "the real prophecy". Lange calls this "something entirely new, extraordinary, as a wonderful revelation of God" (Lange, 133).

This passage of Joel is distinct because it speaks about a great and general outpouring of the Holy Spirit, such as had never been before and because it prophesies the outpouring of the Spirit on people of all classes of all flesh. This could only be fulfilled during the time of the Messiah, the New Testament era.

- **The Prophecy Itself**

וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֲשַׁפֹּךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר וַנְּבִאֵי בְנֵיכֶם  
וּבָנֹתֵיכֶם זִקְנֵיכֶם חֲלֹמוֹן בְּחֹזֵיכֶם חֲזִינֹת יִרְאִו׃<sup>28</sup>

And it shall come to pass afterward that I shall pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions (NKJV).

• **Afterward**—אַחֲרָיָהוּ

The time of fulfillment of this prophecy must be referred to the New Testament age of the Messiah. Almost all the commentators agree (Calvin, 93; Luther, 35, 319; Kretzmann, 654; Lange, 138; Keil-Delitzsch, 216). † Indeed we must accept this understanding because of Peter's sermon on Pentecost. The Old Testament did not allow such a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit. All were enclosed under the Law until Christ came (Gal. 3:22-3). But even the first few pages of the Gospels reveal to us the more frequent appearances of the Lord's angel messengers to his people: Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, the Wise Men, the shepherds, Simeon. Peter interprets "afterward," אַחֲרָיָהוּ, as "in the last days," ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, and he declares that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled on that first Christian Pentecost Day. When the Apostles began to preach in so many languages, Peter says: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). The time of this fulfillment must therefore be understood as the time of the New Testament era, the whole New Testament age reaching from the birth of Christ until his second coming.

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† Also Calov and Hengstenberg

This also follows from the signs indicated in this prophecy: the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh, wonders in the heavens, and from the parallel passages. The outpouring of the Spirit was not common in the Old Testament. The Spirit of the Lord indeed came upon great spiritual and national leaders such as Moses, Joshua, and the Judges; on David and Saul, and a few of the prophets. But a general outpouring was not seen; in fact, there were times of spiritual drought and extreme rarity of the Lord's word (1 Sam. 3:1).<sup>†</sup> The outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord is seen in the Old Testament only as a prophecy of the greater things to come in the time of the Messiah, only after the return from Babylon (Eze. 39:29, Zech. 12:10). Only "in those days" comes (רוּחַ חַן וְרַחֲמִים) the Spirit of grace and mercy and the peace and safety (בְּטָחָה) which are so commonly referred to in the New Testament. These results are clearly connected with events surrounding the Messiah and his work. "In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of Righteousness; he shall execute judgement, and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely (בְּטָחָה), and this is the name by which she will be called: The Lord

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† The word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.

our Righteousness" (Jer. 33:16). And again: "And I will pour (וְשִׁפְּתִי) on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10). This passage is fulfilled in no one but the crucified Christ, who was pierced by the soldiers. The time of the fulfillment of this prophecy is therefore the time of the Messiah, the New Testament age, when the Holy Spirit is poured out abundantly on all flesh (Titus 3:6).

• **I will pour out my Spirit—אֲשַׁפֵּךְ אֶת־רוּחִי**

שֵׁךְ is an uncommon word in connection with God's Spirit, used only three times in the Old Testament in this way (Calov, 783; Calvin, 92). One other word is used in this way also in Isaiah 44:3: "I will pour My Spirit (אֲצַק רוּחִי) [root יִצַק] on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring." The general usage of שֵׁךְ, "pouring out", is common in connection with blood, water, drink offerings, anger, and dirt for siege mounds. All of these indicate a generous pouring in large amounts, not a sprinkling or rare giving of the material. So also it must be with Joel's words concerning the outpouring of God's Spirit—a general, broad outpouring (Keil-Delitzsch, 210). Calvin says: "שֵׁךְ does

not mean to drip, but to pour out in full abundance" (in Calov, 783; Keil-Delitzsch, 210). Calov describes it as "that which opens all the treasures of that celestial shower, and the charismata which the Holy Spirit wishes to confer on the Apostles more abundantly" (783). Laetsch says: "God gives His Spirit not in scanty portions, but pours it out in abundant measure, an overflowing supply" (128). This is a rare expression in the New Testament as well (Acts 2, Titus 3:6), but its results are seen everywhere.

Perhaps one of the things not so obvious or easily overlooked in this text is the subject: "I." "I will pour out my Spirit." The subject is obviously God. Peter adds the explanatory phrase "says God, λέγει ὁ θεός." In Joel 2:27 reference is to the LORD your God (יהוה-אלהיכם), the God of the covenant. The covenant God is the Blessed Trinity who work so marvelously together, the Creator and Redeemer sending forth the Comforter to do his blessed work (Psalm 104:30; John 20:22).†

As we might expect, Laetsch as a Lutheran commentator sees the Trinity clearly in this context and emphasises it to the utmost. Joel 2:23 has a translation problem which Laetsch sees in favor of a Trinitarian and Messianic

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† Nicene Creed: "who proceedeth from the Father and the Son"

prophecy of our verses.<sup>†</sup> Joel 2:23 has the Hebrew לְצִדְקָה הַמִּוֶּרֶת. The LXX has the not-at-all-helpful τὰ βρώματα εἰς δικαιοσύνην. The Vulgate reads: *doctorem iustitiae*. Luther has: *Lehrer zur Gerechtigkeit*. NKJV has: "He has given you the former rain faithfully" with a footnote: "Or *the teacher of righteousness*." NIV has: "He has given you a teacher for righteousness" with the footnote: "Or *in righteousness the autumn rains*." Laetsch favors the translation "the Teacher of righteousness," adducing as witnesses the Targum, the "Zadokite Fragment," the Vulgate, church fathers, and the ancient Christian Church (Laetsch, 125). Understanding the Messiah in this passage also fits very well the whole context of these chapters of Joel and the history of their fulfillment in the life of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Laetsch comments: "The Messiah teaches a righteousness which He Himself has vicariously procured for mankind by His life, His suffering, His death. And since His words are spirit and life (John 6:63), He appropriates to men by His Gospel His righteousness, and thus is made unto us our Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30; Laetsch 126). And Laetsch ties

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† The Hebrew word הַמִּוֶּרֶת is almost always "teacher," but due to context, some here translate it "earlier rain." Thirty-four manuscripts do read יוֹרֵה. See Laetsch for further discussion.

this all together with the material promise of rain in the rest of Joel 2:23: "The sending of the rain not only manifested the power of God to keep His promise of Sending the Messiah, but was at the same time the guarantee of a second promise, the sending of the Holy Ghost in the days of the Messiah" (Laetsch, 127).

The work and giving of the Holy Spirit is not new or uncommon, but the manner and degree foretold here are extraordinary. The Holy Spirit was active throughout Creation and always worked through the Word to convict sinners of their lost condition and to bring them the glorious promise of eternal salvation. But more than ever, in the New Testament the Holy Spirit was poured out. Luther writes: "The Holy Spirit is poured out in two ways: by manifest vision or revelation and by secret inspiration. Here, then, he is speaking about the Holy Spirit as He is manifestly poured out and revealed with obvious signs" (Luther, 18, 106). The early church was in need of signs to confirm the preaching of the Gospel, to spread its power more quickly throughout the world. God was so gracious in giving those accompanying signs for a time. Luther continues:

When the Gospel had been revealed, therefore, and made well known by the apostles to all the territories

of the earth...—these signs ceased. You see, there is now no doubt about the verity of the Gospel, which was confirmed by such clear and visible signs at a time when there was a need for it, when the preaching of it was still a new thing. We, therefore, must no longer look for signs to confirm the Word, which has already before been clearly confirmed and shown to the world (Luther, 18, 107).

God sent his Holy Spirit to be revealed and poured out on all nations of the earth. So Luther teaches us to sing:

Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord!  
Be all Thy graces now outpoured  
On each believer's soul and heart;  
Thy fervent love to them impart.  
Lord, by the brightness of Thy light,  
Thou in the faith dost men unite  
Of every land and every tongue:—  
This to Thy praise, O Lord, be sung.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

(LHy 375, TLH 224)

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit continues yet today, always through the blessed Means of Grace. The Holy Spirit was given even in New Testament time through the preaching of the Gospel and the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. The three thousand who were converted on Pentecost became believers through the Apostles' preaching and through their Holy Baptism. Only the work of God can perform such great miracles, as Acts also says: "And the Lord



added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

• **On all flesh**—עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר

The first thing to be noted here is the great contrast between Spirit and flesh. Flesh is inherently mankind in all its weakness and frailty since the fall. Flesh is not in itself sinful, but since the Fall one cannot separate the flesh of mankind from his sinfulness until the working of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Without the work of God's Holy Spirit, the flesh must remain weak and sinful. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). "I know that in me (that is, in my sinful flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18).<sup>†</sup> Keil-Delitzsch says: "*Bâsâr*, as contrasted with *ruach Yehovâh*, always denotes human nature regarded as incapacitated for spiritual and divine life" (210). The contrast here is the spiritual corruption of humanity with the life-giving work of God's Spirit. Without the Sanctifier, the Comforter, we are "dead in trespasses and sins," "lost and condemned creatures." This truth of Scripture also speaks against the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian views of infused

† "The basis for Paul's NT usage of 'flesh' is present in the OT in the sense that the spiritual God is contrasted with fleshly man. However, the idea that the principle of sin is somehow resident in the flesh is an intertestamental idea" (Harris, 136).

grace and *meritum de congruo*. There is nothing in man to merit or earn grace or favor from God. Our faith and our salvation is completely the work of the Holy Spirit and an act of grace on the part of our merciful and forgiving God.

All our knowledge, sense, and sight  
 Lie in deepest darkness shrouded,  
 Till Thy Spirit breaks our night  
 With the beams of truth unclouded.  
 Thou alone to God canst win us,  
 Thou must work all good within us.  
 (LHy 34:2, TLH 16:2)

The other key word in this phrase is, of course, "all." Some try to limit the scope and focus of this prophecy to only those of the physical line of Israel, or to the Old Testament people of God (Wolff, 67).<sup>†</sup> In response to some of these objections Calov writes: "On **all flesh** means all men... as the promise is universal, from which no one must be excluded, since God wills that all become participants of the gift of the Holy Spirit, all who do not refuse God, who are taught by God" (John 6:46; Calov, 783; Pusey, 193; Kretzmann, 654; Keil-Delitzsch, 210).<sup>††</sup>

There can be no doubt that the fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Acts 2, because we believe that Scripture is

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† All flesh—means "everybody" in Israel. Concerning other nations a completely different message is forthcoming (4:1ff).

†† Also Luther and Calvin.

its own interpreter, and there Peter says: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). What happened that day was certainly extraordinary. It was marked with heavenly sounds, the rushing mighty wind and the word of God in so many tongues. There were also physical signs: the tongues of fire on the heads of the godly. These events were noted by the whole city: "When this sound occurred, the multitude came together; and they were astonished, because everyone heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6). These outward signs also show the broad and universal fulfillment of Joel's prophecy because the tongues of fire "sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:4). Lenski comments: "Luke means 'on each single one,' not a single one being excepted, men, women, old, young" (59). The word "all" is explained and emphasised in Joel with the specification of "sons and daughters, young men and old men." This is also seen in later episodes of Acts, where the Holy Spirit was poured out on all, even on the Gentiles (Acts 8:17; 10:44; 11:15; 15:8; 19:6). The integrity and dignity of the office of the public ministry was maintained, however, when Peter stood and preached as the spokesman for all. This was no chaotic revival meeting or wild "Pentecostalist" gathering. The Holy Spirit spoke his Word publicly through

his servants, as always from the time of Seth until the present day, working faith in the hearts of the hearers through his blessed means of grace. The great event of Pentecost was also the fulfillment of the wish and prophecy of Moses in Numbers 11:29: "Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament brings this blessing not only to a few, but to all believers, so that not in a representative priesthood or school of prophets, but in the whole Christian Church, in every believer is the grand outpouring of God's Spirit in Jesus Christ, so that all flesh together sees the glory of God, so that we are indeed "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people" (Is. 40:5; 1 Pet. 2:9).<sup>†</sup> In his proper place and calling every Christian has opportunity to show forth the work of the Holy Spirit:

All of God's people can read this revelation and teach it to others. God gives his Word to all of us, boys and girls, men and women, old and young, even the simplest, lowliest Christian. Through the Word God pours out his Spirit on all his people, creates and strengthens their faith in Jesus, produces fruits of faith in their lives and enables them to speak

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<sup>†</sup> In contrast with the Old Testament order where "there was a certain respect for persons" (Luther 18, 106). Now Luther says, "All will be teachers and priests of God."

his revelation to others in the world (Eickmann, 162).

"On all flesh" also indicates that this event is not to be hidden or secret, but the Lord reveals his glory and pours out his Spirit manifestly and clearly to be seen by all, as Luther says:

The whole world saw that manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Apostles when they taught and preached the Gospel. But the gift did not come to all. You see, Isaiah speaks in the same way and says (*Cf.* Is. 49:26): "All flesh shall see the Salvation of our God." Simeon also says in his song (Luke 2:31): "Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all people." This means: Christ has been prepared, revealed, and placed to be seen by all flesh (Luther, 18, 107).

The Lord does not work in secret, but shows his power to the world. God spoke openly to Adam and Eve; he proclaimed his word to all Israel through Moses; his prophets spoke to all the nations. That is how the wise men from the East knew of the coming of the Christ Child; that is how so many believers from all over the world were gathered in Jerusalem for the first Christian Pentecost: Parthians, Medes, etc. This also indicates that if God were going to give some new revelation or instruction today or any time, he would make it clear and obvious to the whole world. Luther writes:

After all, if Christ, is going to establish a new kind of preaching, He will not do this in darkness nor in the heart of one or another person. Rather, He will declare it with an open sign, lest anyone be able to have doubts about it (Luther, 18, 108).

Anyone who claims to have new revelations, dreams, or visions in fulfillment of Joel, must show that at the same time the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh with his dream or vision. With this great challenge Luther responds to the fanatics of his day: "Because they cannot do this, ... let them with us remain students of Holy Scripture" (Luther, 18, 108). The same is true of the enthusiasts and Pentecostals of today. Though the Spirit is poured out on all flesh, there is no indication that all will receive all the gifts of the Spirit. Even in the early Church not all were prophets or teachers, not all prophesied or performed miracles; those were especially connected with the work of the Apostles. The Apostles and a few others did receive special gifts of visions and dreams in fulfillment of this passage. We immediately think of Ananias' vision (Acts 9), Peter's vision of the unclean animals (Acts 10), Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia (Acts 16). And of course, the greatest vision of the New Testament is the Apocalypse of John. But there was no promise of a continuous giving of these special gifts. Rather Paul says: "Whether there are prophecies, they will

fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge; it will vanish away.... Tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe" (1 Cor. 13:8; 14:22). The generations succeeding the Apostles did not boast of or look for visions, but relied on the written Word that God had given them through his chosen Apostles. Those who claimed new revelations and promoted Enthusiasm were condemned and rejected by the orthodox Church.<sup>†</sup> All things must be tempered by Christian love and all teachings must conform to the Word of God.

• **Prophecy**—נְבִיאִים

The words "prophecy" and "prophesy" are perhaps some of the most misunderstood and misused by fly-by-night Bible interpreters. To prophecy (נְבִיאִים) is a most general term in Scripture as indicated from its wide use and possibly even its etymology.<sup>††</sup> It does not inherently indicate

† Montanus was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 381. The Messalians were condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431 (See *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, XIV, 186 and 240-1).

†† Harris, Archer and Waltke, 544: Possible etymologies: 1) Arabic root, *naba'a* "to announce"; 2) Hebrew root *naba'* softened from *naba'* "to bubble up," hence pour forth words; 3) Akkadian root *nabû* "to call," hence one who is called [by God]; 4) from an unknown

ecstatic utterances or foretelling of future events, but rather to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pt. 4:11). The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says: "The essential idea in the word is that of authorized spokesman" (Harris, Archer and Waltke, 544; Ex. 6:28-30; Nm. 12:1-2; Dt. 18:9-22; Keil-Delitzsch, 211; Lange, 134; Wolff, 66; Kretzmann, 654).<sup>†</sup> This was certainly the position of the Apostles, for Jesus says: "He who hears you hear me" (Luke 10:16).

Calov comments: "They find nothing here of the Anabaptist and fanatic spirit, nothing of the new prophets, ...and men of similar skin for immediate revelations which they boast. For extraordinary and immediate revelations are not promised here." And he quotes Luther:

For he does not mean new revelations by dreams and visions, but simply that gift of the Holy Spirit who purifies hearts by faith, and governs souls...

For true knowledge of the Son of God brings knowledge of the Father, brings remission of sins, brings guidance that we are not led into temptation nor that sin rules us, it brings in the end that eternal life. Since the gift of prophecy of future events may also be among the wicked, such as Bileas, and the prophet of Judah who predicted to King Jeroboam concerning Josiah and afterward was torn apart by a

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Semetic root.

† Lange—to proclaim the revelations of God. Wolff—"Joel also hardly expects a nation of ecstasies." Kretzmann—prophecy is openly proclaiming the great deeds of God.



lion, indeed Satan himself often predicts the future from the instruction of causes which he sees. This gift however, which is promised here, is of that kind which indeed brings eternal life... What therefore pertains to the present passage of prophecy is that prophecy, vision, dreams are one, indeed the knowledge of God through Christ, whom the Holy Spirit makes known through the word of the Gospel (Calov, 784).

Each Christian in his proper place does prophesy, does speak the word of God. The universal priesthood is carried out by fathers and mothers who teach their children as the Lord commands them: "Bring up your children in the training and admonition of the Lord"; by Christian husbands and wives who pray for and set a Christian example for their spouse; by any Christian who speaks as the Lord gives him opportunity (Eph. 6:4; Dt. 6:7; 1 Cor. 7:16; 1 Pt. 3:15). This too is a fulfillment of the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. The outpouring of the Spirit today is greater and broader too, because we live in the time of fulfillment, when we can see in substance rather than shadow, in full rather than in part, in light rather than in darkness:

What a revelation of unknown truths would the story of Bethlehem, of Gethsemane, of Calvary, as told by little children, be to Moses and Micah and Isaiah and Jeremiah! *Cp.* Luke 10:24; 1 Peter 1:10f. Any Christian can prophesy, foretell, the events occurring before and on the great Day of the Lord in

far greater detail than did any of the Old Testament prophets (Laetsch, 128).

• **Menservants and maidservants—**

וְגַם עַל-הַעֲבָדִים וְעַל-הַשִּׁפְחוֹת

This is a startling revelation, announced by the emphatic: וְגַם. The broad and general outpouring of the Spirit on "menservants and maidservants" is an astounding testimony to the fullness of God's grace and mercy. That God would be so generous with his grace as to give it to lowly slaves was so much against the proud Jewish mind, that the Septuagint translators had to add their own interpretation, that God must here be speaking of his chosen people as *his* servants (Lange, 134).<sup>†</sup> But the text does not really indicate that. Peter in Acts quotes basically from the Septuagint and accepts the translation: *My* servants.<sup>††</sup> Therefore we must accept this translation, but also in light of the rest of

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† The unheard-of shall happen—...something so unheard-of that the Jewish translators could not deal with; so the LXX make the menservants and maidservants, the menservants and maidservants of God. Cf. Keil-Delitzsch 212. Wolff p. 67 calls this "social revolution. The ancient law of God in Israel had already accorded special attention to the rights of male and female slaves, providing that they, too, should freely share the joy to be found in the presence of Israel's God. ...In the coming age they shall be incorporated fully into the community of the free, by being deigned worthy of the highest distinction along with all the rest" (Kretzmann, 655).

†† We must remember that Peter is here speaking to Jews in Acts 2.

Scripture which indicates that the usage here is broader and more general, because the outpouring of the Spirit was not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles, not only for the free, but also for the slave. For in the New Testament age "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

- **In those days**—בְּיָמֵי הַהֵמָּה—  
**Before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD**—לְפָנַי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא:

The time of fulfillment of this prophecy is also shown us by Peter's sermon on Pentecost. Joel's prophecy was fulfilled by what happened in Jerusalem on that day and it continues to be fulfilled throughout the days of the New Testament era (Laetsch, 130; Eickmann, 163). The plural "in those days" shows the continuation of that time in which God pours out his Spirit on all flesh, the time when the sons and daughters, old men and young men, menservants and maidservants, prophesy and dream and see visions. This is the time of the preaching of the Gospel, the new era ushered in by the coming of the Messiah. Calov writes:

Following that day of the first coming of the Lord is the preaching of the Gospel and salvation in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem (of the Jews) Lk.

24:47, and also in the remnant whom the Lord calls, the Gentiles, since the Apostles were sent out into the world to preach the Gospel, beginning in Jerusalem. For these things were done at the day of the first coming, when by Scripture the Law went out from Mount Zion, and brought about the calling of the Gentiles, not at the day of the second coming, Is. 2:2, Mi. 4:1, Is. 60:1ff, etc. (Calov, 785).

And he also says:

This is no other day of the Lord, than the day of the Lord's advent, nativity, passion, resurrection, and ascension, or that universal time of bringing salvation to the world, by which salvation is given to us... That day is indeed great, indeed terrible and venerable. A great day, because in it the greatest works are achieved, the race of mankind restored, the head of the old serpent trampled, the sin of the whole world expiated, heaven opened to mortals, and the greatest mysteries shown in it, God is made manifest in the flesh: the Son of God, the Lord of the Law, is made subject to the Law, the Lord of glory is crucified, the Author of life is slain, death swallows up death, restores life, the dead triumphs from death, and establishes immortality, the one cursed before God gains the blessing for the world, and gloriously ascends into heaven unharmed by the sorrows of hell,—what can be considered more eminent or greater than these indeed miraculous works and indeed sublime mysteries (Calov, 785)?

Sacred Scripture sees the time of the New Testament, the Messianic age, as a complete and whole unit. True, we can speak of its beginning with the Annunciation and its culmination with the Parousia, but all in all it is one. For this

same reason, the Lord Jesus speaks at the end of the gospels of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the coming of Judgment Day in the same breath. They are of the same substance and character, leading to the same point and end. So we are living "in those days" of the New Testament and in the "Day of the Lord," and yet we await that "great and awesome Day of the Lord" when he will bring us to our heavenly home. This prophecy of Joel must be referred to Messianic times. Even the Jews see it as such. And the parallel passage of Malachi 4:1 is clearly Messianic because it prophesies the "Sun of Righteousness." And just as with the great Day of the Lord, the Second Coming, Jesus says both: "Be ye ready" and "Lift up your heads," so Joel sees the twofold message of that day. He speaks of foreboding signs of blood and fire and smoke, but also he tells of the salvation and deliverance and rescue to come. That day is terrible indeed: אִנּוּן. It is a terrible, horrible day, to be feared when seen through the eyes of Satan or the unbelieving world. But it is also a day to be honored and revered, even venerated and eagerly awaited as we know the true outcome of that day, as the Church sings: "*Salve festa dies toto venerabilis orbi*—Hail thee, festival day, blest day to be hallowed forever" (*Lutheran Worship*, 125; 148; 159; *LHy*,

379).<sup>†</sup> Both thoughts are contained in the Hebrew word.

אָרֶׁׁ embraces both servile fear and filial fear (Calov, 785).<sup>††</sup>

Only the Day of the Messiah deserves this name "great and terrible," "great and awesome" because, as Calov says:

No greater day has been than the day of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, and of the Gospel of Christ, against the furors of the devil and the world, of sending into the whole world the abrogation of the priesthood, and the Mosaic polity, the abolition of the idolatry of the Gentiles" (Calov 786).<sup>†††</sup>

• **Signs / Wonders**—מוֹפְתֵי־אֱלֹהִים

When the Lord does such great and terrible things, he accompanies them with clear and unmistakable signs, to afford every opportunity for his grace and mercy, and so that there is no excuse for the unbeliever. The "signs" here refer back to the plagues in Egypt, blood and clouds and darkness, reminders of God's certain wrath and judgment on the hard-hearted. Of the Hebrew synonyms for "sign," the Holy Spirit chooses for Joel the one most striking in its usage. Wolff writes:

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† Latin hymn by Fortunatus

†† Calov even connects the etymology with the Greek *τεπος* and the German *Ehren*. Cf. the usage in Gen. 28:17: "How awesome is this place!"

††† Cf. Ps. 118:24; Mal. 4:5; Jn 8:56; Is. 61:2; 63:4; Zech. 3:9

While אֵיזָה ("sign") need not indicate anything extraordinary, and פֶּלֶא ("extraordinary thing") need not refer to a sign; מוֹפֵת is that which is completely out of the ordinary and as such has sign character. In the time of Joel the word מוֹפְתִים ("wonders, portents") was known especially as applied to the terrible events associated with the plagues that came upon Egypt. Just as these terrors upon Egypt were signs which preceded the liberation of Israel, "blood, fire, and mushrooms of smoke," and eclipses of sun and moon shall be signs preceding the terrible Day of Yahweh (3:4b) which is now to come upon the world of nations (4:1ff, 12ff, 15ff) and which will, at the same time, bring deliverance to Jerusalem (Wolff, 67).

- **Blood, fire, darkness—**

הַשָּׁמַשׁ יִהְיֶה לְחֹשֶׁךְ וְהַיָּרֵחַ לְדָם וְנִתְחַלּוּ מוֹפְתִים  
בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ דָּם וְאֵשׁ וְחִימָרוֹת עֵשֶׂן:

<sup>30</sup>And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fire and pillars of smoke. <sup>31</sup>The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.

The Lord gives clear signs as he promises, but our human minds are not always so apt to see and identify them as we should. The miracles of Pentecost and the early Church agree with the signs of this prophecy and are, no doubt, a direct fulfillment of them. But to pinpoint all the exact fulfillments may not be possible. Of the sign of fire, Luther writes: "No doubt this was when fire came down from

heaven and cloven tongues, as it were, of fire appeared on the apostles on the Day of Pentecost" (Luther, 18, 109). Luther is much less sure about the other signs and leaves them quite open for discussion as to how they occurred or will occur and also the time of their fulfillment. But he does say: "You see, we know that at the time of Christ's Passion the sun was hidden and that perhaps many other signs occurred which the evangelists, nevertheless, did not write about" (Luther, 18, 110). He also allows that the references may all refer to the Day of Judgment. There are great parallels here with the judgment texts of Christ in Luke 21 and Matthew 24:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Mat. 24:29-30).

All this is part of that great and terrible day of the Lord, from the Annunciation to the end of time, and as such exhibits common signs and markings and events. As Pusey says:



These wonders in heaven and earth "began in" the First Coming and "Passion of Christ", grew in the destruction of Jerusalem, but shall be perfectly fulfilled toward the end of the world, before the final Judgment, and the destruction of the Universe. At the birth of Christ, there was the star which appeared unto the wise men, and the multitude of the heavenly host, whom the shepherds saw. At His Atoning Death the sun was darkened, there was the "three hours" darkness over the whole land; and on earth the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened: and the Blood and water issued from the Savior's side. After His Resurrection, there was the vision of Angels, terrible to the soldiers who watched the sepulcher, comforting to the women who sought to honor Jesus. His Resurrection was a sign on earth, His Ascension in earth and heaven. But our Lord speaks of signs both in earth and heaven, as well before the destruction of Jerusalem, as before His second Coming (Pusey, 197).

This gives us a great overview of some of the many great signs which accompany the great Day of Christ. But these signs will be come even clearer and more frightening as the day of the Second Coming nears (Lange 134). But even before that, there are continual signs, given to us as reminders of the coming day of Christ, both as warning and as encouragement. Even ordinary eclipses and catastrophes in nature, wars and distress of nations, are reminders for us that the Lord will keep his word and promise (Luke 21:25).

The signs are: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." Hebrew uses the concrete nouns, where we might use adjectives: "The sun shall be darkened and the moon become bloody" (Luther, 18, 110). This happens through eclipses and through other disasters and catastrophes (Wolff, 68).

These signs indeed frighten us regarding God's judgment and the punishment which we as sinners deserve so much. But as believers and children of God, as the remnant whom the Lord calls and who call on the name of the Lord, we have the certain word and promise of God that shall be saved and delivered.

• **Escape and deliverance—**

כִּי בְהִרְצִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּהְיֶה פְּלִיטָה כְּאֲשֶׁר  
אָמַר יְהוָה וְהָיָה כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה  
יִמָּלֵט וּבְשָׂרֵי־יָם אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה קִרְא:

<sup>32</sup>And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

The believer awaits the Day of Christ with joy and eagerness. Nothing could be better for the Christian than to be taken from this vale of tears and to enter into eternal heavenly bliss with all the saints. It is truly the greatest

escape and deliverance. The words יִמְלֹט and פְּלִיטָה have synonymous roots מלט and פלט, both meaning to escape or to deliver. פלט is used here in the noun: פְּלִיטָה. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* describes the use of פְּלִיטָה in this way:

The primary use of this noun is to refer to the remnant of God's people... But those who have escaped do not owe their survival to simply fortuitous circumstances or luck. Their survival is only of God's mercy. As a matter of fact, *p<sup>l</sup>ētā* means not only "escape" but also "deliverance," as in II Chr. 12:7. "In a little while I will grant them deliverance." Cf. also the statement of Joseph (Gen. 45:7): "God sent me before you to make sure that your race would have 'survivors' in the land" (Harris, Archer and Waltke, 725).

Of מלט it says:

Although *malat* may denote escape from court services to see one's relatives (I Sam. 20:29) or deliverance of the needy from affliction (Job 29:12), the most prominent facet of meaning is of deliverance or escape from the threat of death, either at the hands of a personal enemy (I Sam 19:11; 23:13) or a national enemy (II Sam 19:10), or by sickness (Ps. 107:20). The usual emphasis is on the role of Yahweh in deliverance.... His salvation is for the righteous... but his judgment on sin cannot be escaped.... Deliverance is possible only for those who call on him (Joel 2:32 [H3:5]). He is the protecting, delivering God (Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 507).

But deliverance is possible for all those who call on him, possible and assured. For the Christian Church the day of Christ is a promise, an eagerly awaited deliverance, as we confess in the Nicene Creed: "I look for (προσδοκῶμεν, *expecto*) the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." Christ himself promises: "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:35-37).

Jesus himself uses the thought of "escape" when he warns his disciples to be watchful and to prepare for the day of his return: "Our Lord uses the like word of the same Day, *Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* Those who so call upon Him in truth shall be heard in that day [Luke 21:36]" (Pusey, 198).

The concept of "escape" is continued in the word: יְיָ-בְשָׁרַי "among the remnant." The remnant is not simply those who are left, those remaining, but those who have been spared and rescued by the almighty power and grace of God, those who have been delivered by the great heroic

work of the true Redeemer and Rescuer. *שָׁרִיד* is used most in Joshua to indicate that there were none who escaped from Israel's wars of conquering the Promised Land. But under the grace of God there is escape and deliverance for all who call upon him.

*שָׁרִיד*, one who escapes on the battlefield or from a punishment, who is made an exception from the fate of most, thus in the context of a small number. ... These are not simply those who are saved, who are spared, but those who are met by misfortune and are afflicted in the same, but then—yet indeed barely—"escape." Therefore this escape is also expressly at a call by the Lord, thus attributed to a special act of grace, without which they too would indeed be lost (Lange, 135).

The Lord Christ preaches this narrow escape, this small remnant, these few who are spared: "Many are called, but few are chosen.... Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matt. 20:16; 7:14).

This deliverance and salvation is found "on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem" *בְּהַר־צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם* and *בְּשָׂרֵי־לֵדִים* "among the remnant." Here, as in other places of Scripture, the terms Zion and Jerusalem are names given to the Holy Christian Church, to the gathering of the remnant of believers, both Jews and Gentiles, throughout the world. Isaiah 2 has a strong parallel:

Many people shall come and say: "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us his ways, and we shall walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.†

And Jesus with the Samaritan woman acknowledges that: "salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:22). The Holy Christian Church, the kingdom of God in heaven and on earth, is the Jerusalem above which is free, which is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26). Those whom the Lord calls to salvation are the true Israel (Ro. 9; 11).

• **All who call on the name of the LORD—**

כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה

וּבְשֵׁרֵי לֵבָיִם אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה קָרָא:—**Whom the LORD calls—**

Those who receive the Lord's deliverance and salvation are those who call upon him, whom he first has called to himself. Though Joel mentions this part last, it is integral to his message that the Lord will pour out his Spirit on all flesh. It is basic to the understanding of our Christian faith: that we are lost and helpless before God by nature; that Christ has redeemed us from all sin; that the Holy Spirit

† Likewise Is. 2:3; Jer. 23:6; 32:16; Zech. 12:10

brings us that redemption through the means of grace, as Luther's explanation of the Third Article states: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel..." And one of Luther's great hymns attributes this work only to the Holy Spirit, the blessed Light:

Shine in our hearts,  
 Thou blessed Light,  
 Teach us Jesus Christ to know aright,  
 That we all may surely,  
 In His grace confiding,  
 Be with Him securely  
 Evermore abiding.  
 O have mercy, Lord!

*LHy 39:2, TLH 231:2*

Though Peter does not quote this whole passage (Joel 2:32, omitting the phrase: "among the remnant whom the Lord calls"), yet he does express the same thought later in his sermon: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). He makes it clear that this deliverance is not for the Jews only, not for the sons of Abraham only, but for all whom the Lord calls. This phrase of Joel is a further explanation of the earlier "all flesh."

Here it becomes clear that not merely through physical membership (cf. "flesh" [בשר] in 3:1!) in the

people of Jerusalem is deliverance guaranteed, but only by the confession of loyalty to Yahweh, by being responsive to his new call.... the stress lies on the fact that "all" (כָּל in 3:1a and 5a) who await the future from Yahweh will, at the time of the world catastrophe, find refuge in the community of God on Mount Zion (Wolff, 69).

Our view of the Old Testament Church as the people of Israel, the chosen people of God, must not be so narrow as to forget all those others whom the Lord called to himself and grafted into Israel already in ancient times: Keturah, Zipporah, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, and many others. The promises were made to Abraham and to his seed, so that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). This was repeated in the regulations of Passover, that all the household were part of the covenant people, and also those who joined the people of Israel in the true faith: "he shall be as a native of the land" (Ex. 12:48).

When the Lord has called his people to himself, then they in faith and trust call upon his name in worship. "'Call by the name of Yahweh' (קרא ב, Ex 33:19) means veneration through worship generally (Gen 12:8), especially the confessing of Yahweh among those of other faiths (Is 41:25; 44:5), worshipping him in the midst of the world of nations (Is. 12:4; Ps. 105:1; Zech. 13:9)" (Wolff, 68).



"To call upon the name of the Lord" is first used in Genesis 4, the time of Seth, regarding the public worship of God. In its simplest form and use, it means simply "to believe," "to call upon in prayer," which implies faith. The Apostle Paul, it seems, brings this passage and this concept to its fullest explanation in Romans 10: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation... For whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved." And Paul has already explained in Romans 9: "They are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'Isaac your seed shall be called.' That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed." "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is the promise of salvation by grace through faith for the sake of Christ, the Gospel message of the Scriptures for all people of all time.

- **Conclusion**

The prophecy of Joel is unique because of its very direct prophecy of the Day of Pentecost. Its misuse by Pentecostalists and Enthusiasts is completely unwarranted when it is read as the Holy Spirit intended and viewed according to the analogy of faith and the entire Scriptures. Our Lutheran Confessions denounce the fanatics and enthusiasts for their denigration of the written Word and the work of the Holy Spirit through God's appointed and chosen means of grace. The following examples are a good review for us:

It is good to extol the ministry of the Word with every possible kind of praise in opposition to the fanatics who dream that the Holy Spirit does not come through the Word but because of their own preparations. They sit in a dark corner doing and saying nothing, but only waiting for illumination, as the enthusiasts taught formerly and the Anabaptists teach now. (Ap XIII 13)

In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts—that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure.... The papacy, too, is nothing but enthusiasm, for the pope boasts that "all laws are in the shrine of his heart" [*Corpus juris canonici* Book VI I 2 c.

1].... Even so, the enthusiasts of our day condemn the external Word, yet they do not remain silent but fill the world with their chattering and scribbling, as if the Spirit could not come through the Scriptures or the spoken word of the apostles but must come through their own writings and words. Why do they not stop preaching and writing until the Spirit himself comes to the people without and before their writings since they boast that the Spirit came upon them without the testimony of the Scriptures? (SA III VIII 3,4,6)

Likewise we reject and condemn the error of the Enthusiasts who imagine that God draws men to himself, enlightens them, justifies them, and saves them without means, without the hearing of God's Word and without the use of the holy sacraments. (FC Ep II 13. Also SD II 4, SD II 80)

The prophecy of Joel brings us great comfort and edification when we through the power of the Holy Spirit with this Word of God understand and learn its true teachings of faith and salvation through the Promised Savior. The Lord through Joel promises us the great blessings of the gift of the Holy Spirit, deliverance from all sin, and salvation in Zion and the New Jerusalem, in the kingdom of God's glory. As we study this text and preach on it for the Third Great Festival of the Church, we will indeed be blessed through its message of comfort and assurance, and we will be encouraged to pray for the Lord's early return that we might experience sooner the peace and safety that he is preparing for

us now. The Lord has spoken his Word; he has given it to us through his prophets and through the Holy Scriptures. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever, and it promises us: "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls."†

*Gloria in excelsis deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis—*  
 Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on

• **Grammatical Notes**

- אֲשַׁפֹּךְ ..... Qal 1 sg. imperfect: "I will pour out"
- וְנִבְּאוּ ..... Niphal 3 pl. perfect with vav: "And they shall prophesy." Usually in the plural it refers to false prophecy. This is the only exception.
- מוֹפְתִים ..... "signs," extraordinary events that have sign character
- וְתִמְרוֹת ..... (palmlike) columns or pillars
- יִהְיֶה ..... Niphal 3 sg. imperfect "it shall turn"
- וְהַנּוֹרָא ..... adjective "terrible, frightening" from the verb נָרָא
- יִמָּלֵט ..... Niphal 3 sg. imperfect "he shall escape or be delivered"

פְּלִיטָה ..... Noun - "escaped remnant" or  
"deliverance"  
וּבְשָׂרֵי יָדַיִם ..... שְׂרִיד = "survivor"

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Funeral Sermon for Kristi Ann Business:

March 25, 1991

By: Rev. M. E. Tweit

• **Prayer**

O God the Father in heaven, have mercy on us!

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us!

O God the Holy Ghost, true Comforter, have mercy on us!

Gracious and Merciful Triune God. In wisdom and love you have taken to yourself the soul of our dear child, Kristi Ann. We thank you that in her Baptism you regenerated her to a new life of faith in Jesus her Savior, making her your own dear child promising her an inheritance with her Savior in your glorious heavenly kingdom. You have kept your promise to her. Her soul is with Jesus her Savior in the perfect peace and joy of heaven. May this assurance from God regarding Kristi Ann be for you true comfort in your bereavement and sorrow. God be merciful to you and bless you, we pray in Jesus name.

- **Text**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).

- **Sermon**

Dear parents, brother and sister, grandparents, relatives and friends of Kristi Ann, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

God is good! God is love! Our dear heavenly Father is always gracious and merciful toward each of you. Our blessed Savior Jesus Christ is full of love and compassion for each of you. The Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier seeks at all times to give you hope and comfort by His Word. This is what the holy and true Word of God teaches clearly and emphatically. Yet it is often difficult for us with our vision and mind darkened by sin to grasp this precious truth and to rely implicitly on the promises of God in His Word. Mark well! There is nothing accidental in God's care for you who are his children by faith in Christ Jesus. Nor was there anything accidental in His care for Kristi Ann. In the Word of God before us, He promises you to make all things work together for your good. He keeps that promise with the greatest concern and with loving care. He is wise enough to



know at all times what is best for you and mighty enough to do all things.

True, this life is full of pain and suffering, of tribulation, sorrow and death, all of which comes because of sin and transgression, "For all sin," as Paul writes in Romans 3:23. To Christians also, there often come many things which seem otherwise than good, things which may cause us to cry out, "Why? Why this?" That question may have crossed our minds as we come to lay to rest the body of your beloved Kristi Ann. I will not speculate upon or seek to delve into the hidden yet good will of God, as to why He took your dear child to Himself in heaven at such an early age and in the manner in which it took place. I remind you of the words of Jesus to His disciples when He said, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know hereafter" (John 13:7). But I can tell you of a certainty that this too "works together for good to you who love God and are the called according to his purposes."

The Holy and eternal Word of God has many passages, verses, statements and incidents which assure you of the tender and intimate care for you his children. Our text begins: "For we know." How do we know that God's promise is true and will be brought to completion? First of all,

because it is God who makes the promise; God who is the truth and cannot lie, as St. Paul writes in his letter to Titus, Chapter 1, verse 2. Jesus while He was visibly here on earth, by many words and by illustrations, gave full and definite assurance of the intimate connection and the care of God for His own. In Luke 12:7-8 Jesus states, "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins and not one is forgotten of God. But the hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore: You are of more value than many sparrows." So intimate and full of loving care is God for each of you. So it was also for Kristi Ann.

We have examples also of God's people questioning God's care for them and then how God answered them. In Isaiah 49:13-16 we read, "Sing O heavens, be joyful O earth! And break out in singing O mountains for the Lord has comforted His people and will have mercy on His afflicted. But Zion said, (that is God's people, His Church) The Lord has forsaken me and my Lord has forgotten me." Listen now how God answers. He declares, "Can a woman forget her nursing child and not have compassion on the child of her womb? Surely they may forget. Yet I will not forget you. See I have inscribed you in the palms of my hands. Your walls are continually before me." What a

striking and comforting statement! Kristi Ann was not at any time or any moment separated from God's loving care. Much as we love our children we cannot have them continually in mind. When a mother has nursed her child, she will lay it in the crib and go about her work. And while she may think of her child from time to time, her mind is not with her child continually. Not so with God, He is continually mindful of His children. What a blessing that this was so with Kristi Ann.

The clinching proof that all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose are these words, which follow shortly after our text. Paul writes, "What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." See, that is the key to understanding of the abounding love of God for you and for me. By our sins, we too, are under the condemnation of the Law of God. Because we are utterly and completely unable to save ourselves from the wrath of God over sin, therefore, because He loved us, God made His Son to be sin for us and made His Son bear the curse of sin in our place. "In Christ we have redemption through His

blood the forgiveness of sin" (Col 1:14). See your Savior hanging on the Cross, nails through hands and feet and it is certainly true that you and Kristi are inscribed in His hand and continually under His love.

While Jesus was visibly here on earth, He showed Himself as a compassionate Lord, full of love and mercy. There was a situation during His earthly ministry much like yours today. There was a man named Jairus, a ruler in the synogue, who came to Jesus and begged Him to come and heal his daughter who was at the point of death. Jesus went with him at once. While they were still on the way, a servant of Jairus came and said to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher." This is typical isn't it? The servant thought that Jesus too was helpless over against death. Therefore Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; only believe and she will be made whole." When they came to the house, they found the people grieving and mourning. Jesus said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping; and the people laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead." Jesus took the dead girl by the hand and said, "Little girl, arise. Her spirit returned and she arose immediately" (Luke 8:40ff).

So Jesus comes to you today, Daryl, LuAnn, Chad, Nicole, grandparents and relatives. Jesus has the same compassion and love for you as He had for the parents and family of that little girl. He has the same love for Kristi as He had for that little girl. While He will not here in our presence come and raise Kristi back to live an earthly life, yet He still has her in His care, for she is sleeping in Him as St. Paul writes 1 Thessalonians 4:14. She is sleeping in Jesus. Mark it well. At the last day, at the end of the world He will raise her body from the grave and take her body also to be reunited with her soul and spirit. So shall she ever be with Christ her Savior.

That is the final and glorious purpose for which God called her. When you brought Kristi to Baptism, the Holy Spirit by water and the Word created in her a new life of faith in Christ Jesus and she became a child of God (See Gal 3:26-27). When you taught her to believe in Jesus her Savior and to pray in His name, you did so because you wanted her to be saved and have eternal life in heaven. That was God's purpose in calling her in Baptism and it is God's purpose in calling you. Kristi is at home with her Savior. It is well with her. Christ has her in His care, no one can snatch her out of His hand (John 10:28).

Will you join her in heaven when you die? Yes, as surely as you remain in faith in Christ as your Savior from sin. To keep you in faith God has given you His Holy Word, the Bible, and also Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Use these faithfully and the Holy Spirit will through them sanctify and keep you in faith unto life eternal.

May your confession and mine be the confident confession of Paul with which he closes this Chapter: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus says to you, "Do not weep or be afraid, only believe I have Kristi in My loving care."†

Book Review:  
By: Adolph Harstad  
of  
People's Bible: Second Corinthians  
Author: David J. Valleskey

The author is professor of Pastoral Theology and New Testament at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. He is also co-author of the adult instruction course, "New Life in Christ."

In his commentary on St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the author gives

<i>The People's Bible: 2 Corinthians</i>	
Author:	Prof. David Valleskey
Cost:	\$8.99
Size:	254pp.
Date:	1992
Publisher:	Northwestern Publishing House

us a through and clear exposition of the book and applies its message very well to the needs of the Christian today.

His outline of the book is especially helpful to the reader. Following the introductory verses (1:1-11), he divides the book into three parts: A Look to the Past (1:12-7:16), A Look to the Present (8:1-9:15), and a Look to the Future (10:1-13:10). Each of the three parts is followed by a brief but adequate listing of the contents according to the chapters and verses. It is helpful to the reader to refer

occasionally to that outline on pages 7 to 9 in order to follow the development of St. Paul's message.

In the opinion of this reviewer this is an excellent commentary. There are many statements that would be worthy of special mention, but space will permit us to refer to only a few passages.

Commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:10, Valleskey states:

At the judgment seat of Christ one will receive either good or bad, not because of, but in accordance with what he has done in the body. The cause of eternal life is not one's works, but the Christ before whose judgment seat we will stand. He himself once stood before a judgment seat, that of Pilate, and then went on to Calvary so that we never have to fear to stand before his judgment seat (81).

His comments on the words "For Christ's love compels us" (2 Cor 5:14) are also very helpful:

The *NIV*'s translation, "Christ's love," is a good one. The original Greek says, "The love of Christ." This can mean either the love Christ has for us or the love we have for Christ. The question that needs answering, then is: What is it above all that compels Paul to carry out his ministry with such intensity and devotion? Is it the love he has for Christ? Or is it the love Christ has for him?

In the context of this verse it is apparent that Paul is talking about what precedes the Christian's response of love for Christ. What comes first is Christ's love for him, as expressed in the words "One died for all."



Valleskey gives a very good evangelical exposition and application of the beautiful section beginning with verse 14 and ending with verse 21 of chapter 5 on pages 87 to 98 of the commentary. In that passage St. Paul sets forth the comforting doctrine of the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ.

In Part Two of the book (chapters 8 and 9) St. Paul speaks of the stewardship of money. The author of this volume points out the importance of the spiritual aspect of Christian giving. Our offerings must be motivated by the Gospel, not the Law. We are to give cheerfully and generously as God has prospered us. Pages 160 to 167 of this volume can serve as a helpful guide for us in that aspect of our Christian life.

The author's comments on Paul's defense of his ministry against the attacks of his enemies are very helpful to the reader. They can remind him that the great apostle faced many great challenges and difficulties and endured numerous hardships and dangers in his ministry. †

Book Review:  
By: Adolph Harstad  
People's Bible: Genesis  
Author: Prof. John Jeske

This reviewer is confident that the reader will find the entire volume well worth reading and re-reading.

The author is professor of Old Testament and Homiletics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. He is also the Old Testament Editor of the *People's Bible* and the author of the previously-issued volume on Daniel.

Professor Jeske capably defends and upholds the Mosaic authorship of the book. He frequently refers to the author of Genesis as "Moses" and he rejects the multiple authorship that is proposed and taught by higher critics. The author of this volume communicates the message of this first book of the Bible in language that is simple and clear. His quotations from Luther's great commentary on Genesis are an added bonus.

In his concluding paragraph under the first part, The Creation of the World, Genesis 1:1-2:3, Jeske emphasizes God's love for His children in His work of creation. Most commentaries overlook that important truth.

The author's comments regarding God's taking Enoch to heaven alive (Genesis 5:24) are worth noting. "Here is

significant evidence that already at the time of the Old Testament God's people were aware of the fact that there is another life beyond the grave. God's taking Enoch (as he did his faithful prophet Elijah centuries later) must surely have strengthened the faith of those Old Testament saints in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" (72).

Jeske capably defends the historicity and universality of the Great Flood. He devotes about fifteen pages to that im-

portant portion of Genesis.

The last and longest part of the book of Genesis treats of the history of the patriarchs (Genesis 11:27-50:26). Professor Jeske devotes pages 115 to 406 of

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 Jeske  
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 House and  
 Concordia  
 Publishing

this commentary to that segment. Following the formula in the book of Genesis itself, he divides those chapters into five parts: the accounts of Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau and Jacob. It is interesting to note that the dominating character in the section entitled "The History of Terah" (Genesis 11:27-25:11) is his son Abraham. Similarly the central

character in the history of Jacob (37:2-50:26) is his son, Joseph.

The Joseph account is of interest to all who read it, and Professor Jeske's comments on that closing section are very helpful to the reader. This reviewer heartily agrees with the author in his comments on the list of names of the family of Jacob who went down to Egypt (Genesis 46:8-25). Jeske states: "What we have in these verses is clearly not a passenger list of all those who traveled to Egypt with Jacob's caravan" (373). He mentions that it is rather a geneological table, listing almost exclusively the sons, and mentioning only two daughters of Jacob's sons. It would be a mistake to conclude that a traveling company consisting almost exclusively of men would settle in Egypt to establish families. The geneological list in chapter 46 as well as the earlier lists in chapters 5, 10 and 11 is not intended to be used to determine an exact number of people. Undoubtedly many names were omitted from those lists.

This reviewer finds himself in full agreement with most of the statements of the author in this volume on Genesis. On one passage, however, he feels that the author was rather non-committal. That passage is Genesis 49:10. The *NIV* reads: "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the

ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs." Jeske mentions that the King James Version translates those words until Shiloh comes. This reviewer strongly prefers the translation in the King James Version to that in the *NIV*. He wishes the author had been more critical of the *NIV*. To his credit, however, Jeske does refer the passage to the Savior to come, Jesus Christ (394-5).

This volume of *The People's Bible* is an excellent one, and is recommended for private study, for devotions, for group discussions and for Bible classes. A ninety-three page study guide by the same author can serve as a very helpful tool in studying this book, discussing it and applying it to the life of Christians. †