

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



VOLUME 50 • NUMBER 4

DECEMBER 2010

**Seminary Graduation Sermon on
Hebrews 12:1–2**

**Lamb of God: Isaiah 53 in Light of Eden, Passover,
the Day of Atonement, and Good Friday**

Creation, Human Sin, and Jesus

**How False Worldviews Worm
Their Way into Christian Schools**

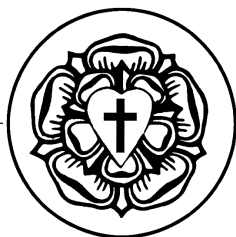
**Ulrich Vilhelm Koren:
The Centennial of the Death of a Saint**

The Melancthon Anniversary (1497–1560)

Note, Book Reviews, and Index

The theological journal of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod
ISSN: 0360-9685

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF..... Gaylin R. Schmeling
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR..... Michael K. Smith
PRINTER Books of the Way of the Lord
FACULTY..... Adolph L. Harstad, Thomas A. Kuster, Dennis W. Marzolf,
Gaylin R. Schmeling, Michael K. Smith, Erling T. Teigen

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Foreword

LSQ Vol. 50, No. 4 (December 2010)

THIS ISSUE OF THE *QUARTERLY* contains a sermon delivered by Professor Michael K. Smith at the graduation service of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary on June 19, 2010. The sermon is based on Hebrews 12:1–2 with the theme *Look Forward to Your Future Ministry*. Prof. Smith encourages the graduates to serve their future flocks in love, abiding and growing in the grace and knowledge of their Lord.

Isaiah 53 is the passion history of the Old Testament. Christ is portrayed as wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. His great sacrifice is accomplished and the bright rays of the glorious Easter morning are evident. The Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux, in his essay “Lamb of God: Isaiah 53 in Light in Eden, Passover, the Day of Atonement, and Good Friday,” provides an excellent exegetical study of this chapter which centers in the Gospel proclamation of salvation. The Rev. DeGarmeaux is a professor at Bethany Lutheran College.

Where did you come from? What are you? What is your purpose? Can you answer these questions? The answer to each of these questions can be found in the first chapter of Holy Scripture. This is the point of the essay entitled, “Creation, Human Sin, and Jesus.” The article was written by the Rev. Matthew Crick, who is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas. This article is closely connected to the essay “God, Creation, and Science,” which was printed in issue one of this volume of the *Quarterly*.

Worldviews certainly affect all institutions of higher learning, even Christian institutions. Christians must always be aware of false worldviews. The danger of false worldviews is the subject of the essay “How False Worldviews Worm Their Way into Christian Schools.” This essay was delivered at the Wisconsin Association of Lutheran Educators, an annual conference sponsored by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod high schools in Wisconsin. The Rev. David Thompson, who is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Audubon, Minnesota, is the author of this essay.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Ulrich Vilhelm Koren (1826–1910). He was the first Norwegian pastor to accept a call to serve west of the Mississippi River, serving most of his ministry at Washington Prairie, east of Decorah, Iowa. Beyond a doubt, he was the leading theologian in the Norwegian Synod. The life and work of this important Norwegian pastor and theologian is summarized in the essay “Ulrich Vilhelm Koren: The Centennial of the Death of a Saint.” This essay was written by the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad, who is pastor of Norseland and Norwegian Grove Lutheran Churches in St. Peter, Minnesota.

The short article entitled “The Melanchthon Anniversary (1497–1560)” commemorates the 450th anniversary of the death of Philipp Melanchthon. He is one of the great enigmas of the Reformation. On the one hand, he is praised as the preceptor of Germany, and Luther hailed him as one of the greatest theologians that ever lived. On the other hand, his fluctuation in doctrine after Luther’s death caused him to be denounced as a rationalist, a synergist, and a traitor to the Lutheran Reformation.

Also included in this issue are two book reviews and a report concerning the 2010 meeting of the Theological Commission of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. The book *Here We Stand: A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews*, edited by Curtis A. Jahn, was reviewed by the Rev. Timothy Hartwig, who is pastor of Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. The book *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, written by C.F.W. Walther, was reviewed by the Rev. James Braun, who is pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Yelm, Washington.

– GRS

Seminary Graduation Sermon on Hebrews 12:1–2

Michael K. Smith
Professor, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
Mankato, Minnesota

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Text: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1–2)*

DEAR FRIENDS, colleagues, delegates, guests, students—especially you men who are about to embark on a new chapter in your lives—all fellow redeemed in Christ:

Think of a number between one and ten. Got it? Now, I'd like to see a show of hands if I may: How many of you picked seven? Seven tends to be a very commonly picked number in such scenarios. I'm not sure why, because statistically you'd be better off picking "five" since it's right in the middle of one and ten. But maybe most people simply think that "seven" is somehow a special number in general.

This evening I think it's safe to say that seven is a special number! You seven men with whom we celebrate this evening are special, not because of who you are or who you know or any special talents or skills you may have. You seven are special because of what the Lord has in store for you!

Think back to that day almost four years ago when you first set foot in a seminary classroom. What was going through your mind? Fear? Trepidation? Anxiety? Excitement? After that initial shock wore

off, once you settled into somewhat of a routine, you probably started looking forward to this day, this day when you'd be finished with seminary and ready to head out into the pastoral ministry.

Granted, you've had more of a taste of what the pastoral ministry is all about over this past year. Hopefully you know that serving full-time in the pastoral ministry will be.... Well, is it going to be better or worse than what you've been doing on your vicarage? Or might there be elements of both? Whether you're headed out right away to serve as a pastor or even if you have to wait before you have that opportunity, **Look Forward to Your Future Ministry.**

The work that God has set out before you could be compared to a race, a race that really runs parallel to the race that every Christian runs in this life. As you run this race of serving in the pastoral ministry, as you look forward to that ministry, **Use What You Know.**

The writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..." (v. 1). Think about all that you have learned from just part of this "cloud of witnesses" as you have studied in seminary! All of the writers of the Bible; all the fathers of the early Church; Luther and all the reformers; Chemnitz and Gerhard and Walther and Koren and Preus and Ottesen and Pieper and Hoenecke and Lenski and.... And hopefully you've even learned a little bit from some theologians who aren't dead yet! ...your vicarage supervisors, for example. And yes, even your still-breathing professors have tried to guide you on a path of learning that will best prepare you to serve in the pastoral ministry, to give you at least the beginnings of a larger foundation on which you can build your service to your Lord. (Your original foundation God gave you in your baptisms!)

Now, in the years to come, will you use every jot and tittle of every note of every lecture you ever heard? Probably not. There may be times when you're tempted to, however. You may end up being tempted to bestow upon the members of your undeserving flock the full depth of the vast knowledge you have accumulated in seminary, wowing them with exquisite and erudite explanations of the *genus apotelesmaticum* and the epexegetical genitive and the history of every single Christological heresy ever held. And then in your second sermon you move on to....

I think you get the point. Your goal as a pastor should not be to impress people with how much you know. Rather, you need to use what you know to serve your people in the best way possible. Jesus will forgive you for those times you don't show humility. Follow his example

of humility as you draw on what you have learned while you were in seminary.

As you look forward to your future ministry, also **Continue To Grow**. "...Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..." (v. 1). Your future ministry will not be a static entity, never changing with no variation, always encountering the same situations and sins, a mindless rut of a job in which you can sit back and relax because you know everything you need to know and because you can handle every situation perfectly. Or maybe I need to say that your future ministry should not become that way, because if it does it means your approach to your ministry is skewed! It'll be easy at times to slide into such a nonchalant manner of carrying out your ministry, because by nature we are lazy and don't want to work if we don't have to. It's much easier to let our sermons become trite expressions of spiritual-sounding drivel instead of working to preach God's Word with passion and clarity. It's much easier to sit in our offices "studying" and reading blogs than it is to search the highways and byways for those who don't know their Savior. It's much easier to stay in the safety of our own home rather than to be in the homes of our members often, especially when those homes are in need of biblical direction and counsel.

These are some of the sins which "cling so closely" and which you will "lay aside" as you bring them to the foot of the cross! Jesus has already paid the full price for those sins, and he grants forgiveness and restoration to us when we repent and continue our race.

And in doing so, through repentance and faith, you will grow. Part of your growth process will include additional study: study of God's precious Word, the depths of which we can mine from now until we die and never reach its absolute fullness; study of history, so that we know where we've been and can make better plans concerning where we're going; study of systematics so that we can organize what the Bible says; and study of practical ways to put all this knowledge to use in God's kingdom! Perhaps your continued growth will mean formal study as you take classes or pursue another degree. Your continued growth should come in part by regularly attending and taking part in pastoral conferences and synod meetings. Regardless of the method, I encourage you never to stop learning! Not only will you grow as a result, you will also serve your people better.

As you look forward to your future ministry, one last thing: **Love You Must Show!** Now, I know you've heard this from me before, or at

least I hope you remember me stressing this vital aspect of your future ministry, but we need to remind ourselves of it often. You cannot love your people too much!

Yes, there are definitely times when it will be hard to love your people. What about that annoying 7th-grader in your confirmation class that just doesn't seem to care about learning the catechism and is always interrupting you in class and shows disrespect to her classmates? Can you love her? What about that council member who wants to downtalk every idea that someone else has and argues about every decision as if the future of God's kingdom relied on it? Can you love him? What about that young lady that goes ahead and moves in with her boyfriend even after her parents and you tell her not to, and she gets pregnant and then loses her baby? Can you love her?

It almost seems that the pastoral ministry would be much easier if we didn't have to deal with people all the time! Imagine what it was like for Jesus as he carried out his ministry: always being chased around by people looking for a miracle or two (or three!); being hounded day and night by the religious leaders of his own people; seeing throngs of people who felt spiritually lost and who needed some strong spiritual sustenance. And all these people who surrounded Jesus were sinners! They only deserved his wrath and condemnation because he is the holy and righteous God!

And yet how did Jesus respond? "...for the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame..." (v. 2). Note that word well: "joy." The joy to which Jesus looked forward was knowing what his sacrificial life and death would accomplish: the salvation of souls, our eternal salvation. That was his motivation. That was what kept him going when he was bombarded with pleas for help. That was the reason he showed love to anyone who came to him: he knew the end result! He wanted as many people as possible to be with him in heaven!

You see, that's what the pastoral ministry, your future ministry, is all about: souls. It's not about how many bodies fill the pews; it's not about how much in offerings is raked in every week; it's not about being popular with your congregation or community. Your future ministry is about Jesus' love for souls, and therefore your deep and abiding love for souls, especially the souls of the people of the congregation you serve, but also the souls of anyone who needs to know that Jesus is their Savior. Show that love as clearly and as often as possible!

Now, I know full well I am apt to repeat myself. (You seven have heard me tell this story before, in other words.) There was a young

pastor who had just completed his first year of ministry. When he came to synod convention, he saw one of his seminary professors and asked, “Why didn’t you tell us being a pastor would be so hard?” And the professor answered, “If we’d told you how hard it was going to be, none of you would have wanted to go out!” I don’t think I’ve ever pulled any punches with you men in that regard; I’ve always been up front with you that serving as a pastor will be a challenge. But I pray I have been equally clear that serving as a pastor is more of a joy than it is a challenge! That’s why I can unabashedly tell you: Look forward to your future ministry! (1) Use what you know: be confident you have a solid foundation of knowledge. (2) Continue to grow: never stop studying and learning! (3) Love you must show: remember what the pastoral ministry is all about. Jesus, the “founder and perfecter of our faith,” will be with you every step of the way. Amen. LSQ

Lamb of God: Isaiah 53 in Light of Eden, Passover, the Day of Atonement, and Good Friday

Mark E. DeGarmeaux
Professor, Bethany Lutheran College
Mankato, Minnesota

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ISAIAH 53 IS THE BIBLE in one chapter. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ in one chapter. It contains Law and Gospel in their thorough strength. The phrases here are as concise, as beloved, and as powerful as John 3:16 in the New Testament. Luther boldly encourages study and memorization of this chapter.

Surely there is no text nor prediction of the Old Testament, which speaks more plainly than this chapter, both of the sufferings and of the resurrection of Christ. Therefore it becomes all Christians to know it well, even by heart, in order to confirm and defend our faith, chiefly against the stiff-necked Jews, who deny this their only promised Christ, solely on account of the offence of his cross.¹

This chapter, the pinnacle of Isaiah's writing, is the reason he is sometimes called the "Fifth Evangelist," because, as Augustine states in no uncertain terms, "This is about Christ."

Isaiah, then, together with his rebukes of wickedness, precepts of righteousness, and predictions of evil, also prophesied much more than the rest about Christ and the Church, that is, about the King and that city which he founded; so that some say he

¹ Luther (Opp. ed. Lips. t. VII. p. 352), quoted in Hengstenberg. Cf. also *Luther's Works: American Edition*, v. 17, 215.

should be called an evangelist rather than a prophet. But, in order to finish this work, I quote only one out of many in this place. Speaking in the person of the Father, he says, “Behold, my servant shall understand, and shall be exalted and glorified very much. As many shall be astonished at Thee.” [Isa. 52:13; 53:13.] This is about Christ.²

This insight was not new or unique to Augustine. Justin, Irenaeus, Cyril of Alexandria, and Jerome say similar things.³ Traditional Jewish interpretation considered this Messianic. Only later did commentators refer this to some other person or persons.⁴

Perhaps it is not blasphemy at first to pose the question: Is Isaiah 53 Messianic, referring to Jesus the Christ? The Ethiopian eunuch asks this very question: “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him” (Acts 8:34–35). After studying this text and its fulfillment in the life of Jesus of Nazareth as described in the New Testament Gospels, to persist in this question or to deny the Messianic nature of Isaiah 53 is nothing but blasphemy.

This very text is one that our Lutheran Reformation fathers considered central to understanding justification by grace through faith for the sake of Christ. The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, in Article XX on Good Works, states boldly and unequivocally:

And there is no need of more testimonies for one who knows why Christ has been given to us, who knows that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. [God-fearing, pious hearts that know well why Christ has been given, who for all the possessions and kingdoms of the world would not be without Christ as our only Treasure, our only Mediator and Redeemer, must here be shocked and terrified that God’s holy Word and Truth should be so openly despised and condemned by poor men.] Isaiah says, 53, 6: The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. The adversaries, on the other hand, [accuse Isaiah and the entire Bible of lying and] teach that God lays our iniquities not on Christ, but on our [beggarly] works. Neither are we disposed to mention here the sort of works [rosaries, pilgrimages, and the like] which they teach.

² Augustine, *City of God* 18:29.

³ According to Hengstenberg. He also cites Theodoret and Zwingli.

⁴ See Appendix A for a summary of some of this discussion by Hengstenberg.

Martin Luther, thinking himself at the point of death, cites this chapter twice in his *Smalcald Articles*. He places Isaiah 53 alongside key texts like Romans 3 and 4, John 1:29, and Acts 4:12 as powerful evidence from the very Word of God that Christ alone is our salvation.⁵

Context

Isaiah chapter 52 reviews how God's chosen Old Testament people, Israel and Judah, experienced slavery and captivity in Egypt and Assyria, and soon will be taken to Babylon. But the captivity has an end and the chapter begins with this exhortation:

Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion;
Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city!
(52:1. Note the parallelism.)

The chapter also declares God's undeserved love and faithfulness toward His people through His ancient promise. Though God's name is blasphemed every day (52:5), people will know His name (52:6). He still sends forth His messengers with the "good news" and "glad tidings" of "good things" and "salvation." The English is very poetic here; the Hebrew very pithy.

How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news, [מְבַשֵּׂר]
Who proclaims peace, [מְשַׁמֵּעַ שְׁלוֹם]
Who brings glad tidings of good things, [מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב]
Who proclaims salvation, [מְשַׁמֵּעַ יְשׁוּעָה]
Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (52:7).
[Handel's *Messiah* often quotes from Isaiah.]

This section has clearly established the importance of what follows in chapter 53 and sets the tone of Gospel proclamation by using and repeating those concise, almost terse, phrases.⁶

⁵ See Appendix B for the quotations from the Lutheran Confessions that cite Isaiah 53.

⁶ LXX: ὡς ὥρα ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρέων ὡς πόδες εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοὴν εἰρήνης ὡς εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθὰ ὅτι ἀκουστὴν ποιήσω τὴν σωτηρίαν σου λέγων Σιων βασιλεύσει σου ὁ θεός

Like season upon the mountains,
like the feet of one bringing glad tidings of a report of peace,
like one bringing glad tidings of good things,
because I will make your salvation heard,
saying to Sion, "Your God shall reign."

מִבְּשָׂר, מִשְׁמִיעַ שְׁלוֹם, מִבְּשָׂר טוֹב, מִשְׁמִיעַ יְשׁוּעָה

We see here also the central figure of Scripture: Jesus (Savior/Salvation, יְשׁוּעָה), the Prince of Peace (שְׁלוֹם), Solomon's descendant, Isaiah 9:6).

This is in sharp contrast to those who leave the identity of the Servant unknown or consider the reference to Isaiah, the Jewish people, or some other figure. Luis Alonso Schökel in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* accurately describes the height of Isaiah's poetry, but does not answer the question of who the Servant is:

The poet has completely avoided identifying his antihero turned hero. He has wanted neither to smooth over nor to mitigate this tragic, enigmatic, and intense vision. There could be no better poetic expression of triumph through failure, glory through humiliation. There could be no better rescue from the anguish of exile than demonstrating the fecundity of suffering accepted without violence. The poet could not bequeath to posterity a meditation more profound or paradoxical. In order to understand it and accept it, it is necessary to cast one's lot with the anonymous chorus of spectators and participate with them.⁷

This wonderful triumph song follows:

⁹ Break forth into joy, sing together, You waste places of Jerusalem!

For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰ The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations;

And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God. [*chiasm again*]

¹¹ Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, [*parallelism*]

You who bear the vessels of the LORD.

¹² For you shall not go out with haste, Nor go by flight;

For the LORD will go before you, And the God of Israel will be your rear guard. (52:9–12).

[A New English Translation of the Septuagint, ©2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. All rights reserved.]

⁷ Luis Alonso Schökel, *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987), 180.

The last phrases recall the pillar of cloud and fire that protected Israel at the Red Sea. “And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them” (Exodus 14:19).

This recitation of Israel’s slavery and captivity, and the prophecy of the Babylonian exile, set Isaiah 53 into historical context in the same way the Creed sets Jesus’ crucifixion into the reality of time and space with the phrase “suffered under Pontius Pilate,” and in the same way that St. Luke sets Jesus’ birth during the *Pax Romana* with his statement: “there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus.”

But the *effect* of these historical actions transcends time and space, in the same way that John the Baptizer brings the Old Testament sacrifices to a culmination when he points to Jesus and says, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the *world*” (John 1:29), and when St. Paul declares, “Christ *our* Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

In the context of Israel’s captivity we come to this key chapter of the Old Testament, just as the message of the Gospel comes to comfort sinners who are bound and captive to sin.

Study Translation of Isaiah 52:13–14

Behold, My Servant will act wisely
[prosper, be successful];

הִנֵּה יִשְׁכִּיל עַבְדִּי 52:13

He will be exalted, and lifted up,
and be very high. [*threefold structure*]

יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְגִבָּה מְאֹד

Just as multitudes [great ones]
were astonished [desolate] at You

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים 52:14

So more than [any] man was His
look marred [destroyed]

כִּן־מִשְׁחַת מַאִישׁ מִרְאֵהוּ

And His **form** more than the sons
of Adam [man - *chiasm*].

וְתִאֲרוּ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם

Behold, My Servant Shall Prosper

Isaiah calls for strong attention when he begins, “Behold!” just like John the Baptizer in the New Testament. Olof Olsson notes:

The Old Testament with its law, worship, and sacrifices is a mighty and majestic “Behold,” pointing humanity to Christ,

the Lamb of God. The tabernacle with its altars and vessels, the priesthood and the priestly garments, the high priest with his ephod and his coat of fine linen, the offerings and the feasts—all cry, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The dying groans of the victims, and above all the blood, are a powerful sermon on the text, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”⁸

This “Behold” points us to the Servant, whose identity has already been indicated in chapter 52. The fact that He acts wisely or prospers [succeeds, *יִשְׁכִּיל*]⁹ relates Him to others so described in the Scriptures, such as Daniel, Abigail, and others, but especially to David who acted wisely with regard to Saul and who was a skillful composer of meditative poems [*מִיִּשְׁכִּיל*]. This word also ties with God’s command to the people to keep the words of His covenant that they might prosper or succeed (Deuteronomy 29:9, Joshua 1:7–8). Some passages relate this thought of “act wisely” and “succeed” to being wise in knowing God (Psalm 14:2, 53:2, 64:9, 101:2, 106:7, 111:10).

It is probably wise for us in the 21st century to investigate this word “prosper” or “succeed” just a little more. Many churches today are obsessed with what is called “success theology” or the “gospel of prosperity.” By all earthly standards, the Messiah was not a success nor was He prosperous. He was “successful” in willingly doing the task appointed for Him to do (Psalm 40:7–8, Hebrews 10:7). His “success” was in dying, giving His life as a ransom for the sins of the world. This “message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Luther notes:

⁸ Olof Olson *Salvation in Christ*, (freely translated by Daniel Nystrom) (Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, 1942), 79.

⁹ BDB: *יִשְׁכִּיל* Wise, understanding, act wisely, deal prudently, prosper, succeed

I. *יִשְׁכִּיל* vb. be prudent —

Qal *be prudent, circumspect.*

Hiph. 1. *look at.*

2. *give attention to, consider, ponder:* c. *לֵךְ*; c. *לֵךְ*; c. *עַל*; c. *ב.*

3. *have insight, comprehension:* *לְהַשְׁכִּיל* as subj. = *insight, understanding:* as ’s gift to ruler and teacher.

4. *cause to consider, give insight, teach:* ’s subj., acc. rei, acc. pers.; Gabriel subj., 2 acc.; *לְבַרְכֵם* subj., acc. rei; c. *לֵךְ*.

5. *act circumspectly, prudently:* abs.; *מִיִּשְׁכִּיל* as subst.

6. *prosper, have success.*

7. *cause to prosper.*

The Jews cannot deny that this passage speaks of Christ. They indeed grant the glories of Christ in this chapter, but they are unwilling to grant His cross and sufferings. Yet this is what the text says: This King will be glorious, but after His death. This indicates that this King is different from an ordinary one, since He will begin His reign after death.¹⁰

There is another occasion where this word **הַשְׂפִּיל** has a specific reference to the Messiah—Son of David and from Nazareth:

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord,
 “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
 A King shall reign and prosper, [act wisely, succeed, **וְהַשְׂפִּיל**]
 And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.”
 (Jeremiah 23:5)

The very first time we encounter this word in the Bible is in Genesis 3:6, when Eve saw that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was “a tree desirable to make one wise” [**וַיִּתְהַמְדֵר הָעֵץ לְהַשְׂפִּיל**]. What Eve really desired was the wisdom and knowledge of God which in her perfect state she already had, and, by seeking it elsewhere covetously, she lost that sinless wisdom and knowledge of God. The Servant of the LORD comes now to restore that understanding and knowledge of God. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding [**שְׂפִיל**] have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever” (Psalm 111:10).

Exalted, Lifted Up, Very High

The threefold structure of this second phrase is a common literary device in many languages. It is hard to imagine this as anything but a subconscious imprint of the Holy Trinity. In Latin it is called *tricolon crescens*,¹¹ especially when ascending in intensity. Here the emphasis is clear in the repetition: “He will be exalted, and be lifted up, and be very high.”

יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְנִבְּהָ מְאֹד

Isaiah begins this chapter about the Suffering Servant by firmly declaring His victory from the outset. There is no doubt. Because this

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: American Edition*, Vol. 17 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 215.

¹¹ Consider Caesar's: “*Veni, vidi, vici*,” as well as Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*: “We cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow” and his *Second Inaugural Address*, “with malice toward none, with charity toward all, with firmness in the right.”

is the Lord's Anointed, He shall prosper and fulfill the task He takes upon Himself. And then "He will be exalted, and be lifted up, and be very high." Are we not quickly drawn to thoughts of Easter and Jesus' state of exaltation? An ancient Easter chant is also threefold: *Christus vincit* [or: *vivit*], *Christus regnat*, *Christus imperat* (*Christ conquers* [or: *lives*], *Christ reigns*, *Christ rules*). We are more familiar with the threefold expression of Christ's humiliation (described later): "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted," the title of that beloved hymn [ELH 297] based on this same section of Isaiah (53:4).

Delitzsch describes the progression of thought:

If we consider that רָם signifies not only to be high, but to rise up (Prov. 11:11) and become exalted, and also to become manifest as exalted (Ps. 21:14), and that שָׁמַר , according to the immediate and original reflective meaning of the *niphal*, signifies to raise one's self, whereas רָם expresses merely the condition, without the subordinate idea of activity, we obtain this chain of thought: he will rise up, he will raise himself still higher, he will stand on high.¹²

Delitzsch also comments that "Stier is not wrong in recalling to mind the three principal steps of the *exaltatio* in the historical fulfilment, *viz.*, the resurrection, the ascension, and the sitting down at the right hand of God."¹³ Perhaps it is not too far a stretch to suggest this text as a scriptural source for, or at least a parallel to, the Christian Creeds: "The third day He *rose* again from the dead; He *ascended* into heaven and *is seated* at the right hand of God the Father Almighty."

"Astonished" And "Desolate" [שָׁמַר and מְשֻׁמֵּם]

There is a rather abrupt shift here between second and third person: "The multitudes were astonished at *You*." Hebrew seems to be more comfortable with this than English. The word שָׁמַר can be translated in two ways¹⁴: "astonished" or "desolate/destroyed." The image of desert,

¹² Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 305.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ BDB: *Shamem* [שָׁמַר] vb. be desolated, appalled —

Qal 1. *be desolated*, of Tamar (i. e. deflowered, or deserted; others *appalled*), of pers. elsewhere late; usu. of land, etc. (sts. = *deserted*); pt. fpl. as n. = *desolate places*; = *desolations*.

2. *be appalled, awestruck*, usu. at (עַל) judgments on others; on oneself.

שָׁמַר adj. devastated of sanctuary; of land.

destruction, and desolation is a powerful metaphor in the Old Testament for the consequences of sin. Several passages¹⁵ describe the land being desolate as punishment for disobeying or rejecting God. After the destruction, there is also restoration promised in several passages. The desolate regions will be restored to the people and become abundantly populated:

Thus says the Lord: "In an acceptable time I have heard You,
And in the day of salvation I have helped You;
I will preserve You and give You As a covenant to the people,
To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages." (Isaiah 49:8)
"For your waste and desolate places, And the land of your destruction,
Will even now be too small for the inhabitants;
And those who swallowed you up will be far away."
(Isaiah 49:19)

Chapters 34 and 35 of Isaiah present an amazing contrast of the desolate desert than later blooms and comes to life again. And here again the Messianic character of chapter 35 is very familiar to us:

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them,
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.
(Isaiah 35:1)
Behold, your God will come with vengeance,
With the recompense of God;
He will come and save you. (Isaiah 35:4)
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. (Isaiah 35:5)
Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert. (Isaiah 35:6)
No lion shall be there,
Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it;
It shall not be found there.
But the redeemed shall walk there, (Isaiah 35:9)
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
And come to Zion with singing,

¹⁵ Leviticus 26, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets.

With everlasting joy on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and gladness,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isaiah 35:10)¹⁶

The work of the Messiah is to bring beauty out of desolation, salvation out of destruction. The crowds were astonished at Jesus' desolation, His own innocent suffering and death. Even nature recognized the uniqueness of the death of the God's own Son, as the darkness and the earthquake of Good Friday give witness.

For those who lived in the desolation of illness or disability, Jesus' miracles offered life. The desert of their life blossomed when touched by the healing power of the Lord of nature. Jesus Himself claims to be the Servant of Isaiah's prophecies when He was asked directly about it.

When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me" (Luke 7:20–23).

The One who saved the desolate now appears as the most desolate of all. Already in the early verses of this Song of the Suffering Servant, Isaiah begins to speak of the Servant's marred appearance. More discussion will follow later. Here we simply cite a note from Delitzsch:

The church before the time of Constantine pictured to itself the Lord, as He walked on earth, as repulsive in His appearance; whereas the church after Constantine pictured Him as having quite an ideal beauty (see my tract, *Jesus and Hillel*, 1865, p. 4). They were both right: unattractive in appearance, though not deformed, He no doubt was in the days of His flesh; but He is ideally beautiful in His glorification. The body in which He was born of Mary was no royal form, though faith could see the *doxa* shining through. It was no royal form, for the suffering of death was the portion of the Lamb of God, even from His

¹⁶ With these passages we again often associate the music of Handel's *Messiah* and Brahms' *Requiem*.

mother's womb; but the glorified One is infinitely exalted above all the idea of art.¹⁷

This astonishment is also reflected in our hymns: “Was there ever grief like this?” (“Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”); “Sorrow and love flow mingled down” (“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”).

Study Translation of Isaiah 52:15–53:2

So He shall sprinkle [startle]
many peoples [Gentiles];

כִּן יִנְהַ גּוֹיִם רַבִּים ^{52:15}

At Him kings will shut their
mouths,

עָלְיוּ וּקְפָצוּ מִלְּכִים פִּיהֶם

For what was not told to them
they **saw**

כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-סִפֵּר לָהֶם רָאוּ

And what they did not hear they
understood.

וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבוּנָנוּ

Who has **believed** our report?

¹ מִי הֵאֱמִין לְשִׁמְעָתָנוּ

And upon whom has the arm of
the Lord been revealed?

וְזָרוּעַ יְהוָה עַל-מִי נִגְלָתָהּ

And He has gone up before Him
like a shoot [“suckling,” tender
plant]

² וַיַּעַל כַּיִּזְנֵק לְפָנָיו

And like a root from the dry
ground.

וּכְשֶׂרֶשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צְיָה

He has no **form** and no honor;

לֹא-תֹאדָר לוֹ וְלֹא הָדָר

And [when] we **look** at Him,
there was no **look** that we should
desire Him.

וְנִרְאָהוּ וְלֹא-מִרְאָה וְנִחְמְדָהוּ

Kings Shall See

Hengstenberg: “The sense: as the humiliation of the Son of man was the greatest possible, as he was abhorred by all those who beheld him in that condition; so will his glorification also be equally remarkable; people and kings will submit to him with the deepest reverence.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Delitzsch, 307, footnote #1.

¹⁸ E.W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Predictions of the Messiah by the Prophets*, Vol. I (Alexandria: Morrison, 1836), 500–501.

Perhaps we tend to simplify historical events in our minds and to minimize the power of God's words and actions. We ask why the Jewish people did not believe in Jesus after His great miracles and His rising from the dead. We lump them all together in one category. There were many who did believe. The crowd of Pentecost were Jews and proselytes who through the power of the Holy Spirit in the disciples' preaching came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. There is that often overlooked statement in Acts 6: "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, *and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith*" (Acts 6:7). This should not surprise us too greatly. They knew the prophecies so well. They could not help but see their fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And many of them believed, though the majority of the Jewish people did not.

A parallel occurred also at the time of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. When Jeroboam instituted his non-Levitical priesthood and rival worship with golden calves at Dan and Bethel in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, there were many faithful priests and Levites who emigrated to Judah for religious reasons. They were "astonished" by the brash blasphemy of this self-appointed king, who became the exemplar of evil in Israel, as David was the paradigm of piety for the kings of Judah.

And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with him [Rehoboam]. For the Levites left their common-lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the Lord. Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made. And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong for three years, because they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years. (2 Chronicles 11:13–17)

Consider also the words of the centurion at the cross. These events of Good Friday were so astounding that he exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." Not until we reach heaven will we fully understand the extent of the power of these words and events. Pilate himself became dumbfounded at the events of Jesus' Passion. Eastern Orthodox churches

even have a tradition that Pilate and his wife, after seeing all that had happened, came to believe in Jesus as the Savior. Ultimately, of course, we have the examples of Emperor Constantine and Charlemagne as kings who recognized the Christ as the Son of God. “Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.”

He Shall Sprinkle – נִזָּה (נִזְּה)¹⁹

When God instituted the covenant with Moses and Children of Israel, it was signified with the sprinkling of blood on the altar, on the people, and on Aaron the high priest, with these words: “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words”²⁰ (Exodus 24:8). Of course, that phrase draws us quickly to the Last Supper and Jesus’ institution of the Sacrament of the Altar: “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Sprinkling was also an important part of the ritual for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in Leviticus 16. Recall the uniqueness of that day. Once a year the high priest alone, dressed in a simple linen tunic, entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it on and before the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant.

He [Aaron, the high priest] shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle (וְנִזָּה) it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. (Leviticus 16:14)

וְלָקַח מִדָּם הַפָּר וְנִזָּה בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ עַל־פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת קִדְמָה

וְלִפְנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת יִזָּה שֶׁבַע־פְּעָמִים מִן־הַדָּם בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ

Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. (Leviticus 16:15)

¹⁹ I. [נִזָּה] vb. spurt, spatter; Hiph. sprinkle —

Qal *spurt, spatter*, alw. of blood: וַיִּז מִדַּמָּהּ אֶל־הַיֵּל and some of her blood spurted against the wall; so וַיִּז נִצְחָם (c. וַיִּז rei, in metaph.).

Hiph. *cause to spurt, sprinkle* upon, in ceremonials: c. acc. + וַעֲלֵה pers. (water), + וַעֲלֵה rei; וַעֲלֵה rei; obj. oft. מִן partit., or implied in context; sq. וַעֲלֵה (all of blood); (oil); (water), (both blood and oil); sq. וַעֲלֵה (blood and water), וַעֲלֵה (blood); sq. וַעֲלֵה (blood), (oil); once without prep. מִזָּה the sprinkler of the water.

²⁰ The word used in Exodus is not נִזָּה but a similar word נִזְּה.

Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. (Leviticus 16:19)

Many people have found the word “sprinkle” in Isaiah 52 difficult to fit into the context. The Septuagint has a different reading:

So shall many nations be astonished at him,

and kings shall shut their mouth,

because those who were not informed about him shall see

and those who did not hear shall understand. (Isaiah 52:15)

They find a parallel with “astonish.” But Delitzsch says the parallel for יִזְרֹק (He shall sprinkle) is actually in Isaiah 53:11 with the word יִצְדִּיק (He shall justify).²¹ Both are third person singular imperfect Hiphil forms.

So He shall sprinkle many peoples [Gentiles]; כִּן יִזְרֹק גּוֹיִם רַבִּים (52:15)

My just Servant shall justify many; יִצְדִּיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים (53:11)

Even the NIV, which perhaps too often follows the Septuagint, here translates “sprinkle.”

Sprinkling is a form of cleansing and purification. In the Christian church we think of Baptism and perhaps other rituals when we think of sprinkling, and a text from Ezekiel seems to tie together this concept of sprinkling with a foreshadowing of Baptism:

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:25–26)

Compare also the Baptism hymn, “Baptized into Thy Name Most Holy”:

²¹ Delitzsch, 308.

Depart, depart, thou prince of darkness!
 No more by thee I'll be enticed.
 Here is indeed a tarnished conscience,
 But sprinkled with the blood of Christ.
 Away, vain world! O sin, away!
 Lo, I renounce you all this day.

The reading “sprinkle” here also fits because of the many parallels with Leviticus 16. The New Testament itself connects for us the Day of Atonement and other Old Testament events with Christ’s sprinkling and cleansing us with His blood. Scripture is a whole—from Eden to Sinai to Calvary to the New Jerusalem.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people. (Hebrews 9:19)

Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. (Hebrews 9:21)

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled** from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22)

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7).

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and **sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ**: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1 Peter 1:2)

To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:24)

This sprinkling theme is also used in missionary contexts, such as the hymn:

Savior, sprinkle many nations;
 Fruitful let Thy sorrows be;
 By Thy pains and consolations
 Draw the Gentiles unto Thee!
 (TLH 510, *Lutheran Hymnary* 186)²²

²² Gustav Polack’s altered stanzas are an improvement over Coxe’s originals.

Who Has Believed?

“Who has believed our report?” The Apostle Paul tells us, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). The Lord has sent His messengers, those who “preach the good Gospel” [מְבַשֵּׂר, מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב] and those who “cause people to hear peace and salvation” [מְשַׁמְּעֵי שְׁלוֹם, מְשַׁמְּעֵי יְשׁוּעָה]. But who has believed our report, our proclamation, the things that we caused to be heard [שְׁמַעְתֶּנּוּ]:²³

Those who do not hear do not believe. And even some of those who hear have eyes and ears that are closed. God’s judgment comes on those who reject Christ, stumble at Him, are “offended” at Him. Others believe, but are afraid to speak their confession.

Though He had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in Him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

*“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”*

Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

*“He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their heart,
lest they see with their eyes,
and understand with their heart, and turn,
and I would heal them.”*

Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. (John 12:37–43)

Jesus’ preaching was not a unifying or unionistic message. It is an offense to anyone who trusts in himself. Yes, Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He gives us peace which the world cannot give (John 14:27). But He also says, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). Think of the bloodshed, the division, the damage throughout the centuries and around the

²³ It is interesting that the words “hear,” “listen,” “obey,” and “belong” are related in many languages. For example: ἀκούω, ὑπακούω; hören, gehorchen, zubören, gehören; høre, tilhøre, etc.

world because people did not and do not believe the report, the message, about Jesus, or misunderstood it either genuinely or willfully. Delitzsch reminds us here that the message is the important thing and not the preachers. Isaiah does not ask: "Who has believed us?" but "Who hath believed our preaching, i. e., the preaching that was common among us?"²⁴

The sad truth is that, after Jesus' death, the preaching of the Gospel turned quickly to Gentiles because so many Jews refused to believe, which causes us on the one hand to rejoice in the rapid spread of the Gospel and on the other hand to continue to pray that God would "open the door of faith unto all unbelievers and unto the people of Israel" (Prayer of the Church, *ELH* p. 48).

The heathen receive with faith tidings of things which had never been heard of before; whereas Israel has to lament that it put no faith in the tidings which it had heard long, long before, not only with reference to the person and work of the servant of God, but with regard to his lowly origin and glorious end.²⁵

It is a reminder also of Jesus' words from Matthew 7:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13–14)

St. Paul also cites this verse in Romans 15 as a prophecy of the Gospel being proclaimed not only among the Jewish people, but also among the Gentiles.

And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written:

*"To whom He was not announced, they shall see;
And those who have not heard shall understand."*

For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. (Romans 15:20–24).

²⁴ Delitzsch, 311.

²⁵ Delitzsch, 310–311.

But the Gospel is the very Word of God and powerful to carry out its mission, to give life to the dry bones of lost mankind, the victims of sin, self, and Satan.

Arm of the Lord – זְרוּעַ יְהוָה עַל־מִי נִגְלָתָהּ

“The arm of the LORD has been revealed [נִגְלָתָהּ],” Isaiah says, but poses it as a question: “Upon whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” Connecting this with Isaiah’s statement that “the glory of the LORD shall be revealed [וְנִגְלָתָהּ], and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5), we New Testament listeners are quickly transported to the famous, “*Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus, bona voluntas.*”²⁶ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”²⁷ The glory²⁸ of God is revealed on earth to all people when Jesus [“Salvation”] is born in Bethlehem. This language also directs us to Titus:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.... But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 2:11, 3:4–7)

²⁶ The Latin here is what Bach used in his *Magnificat* with Christmas interpolations. It is not the traditional Latin translation “*et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*,” but reflects the KJV and NKJV translations that favor the reading εὐδοξία instead of εὐδοξίας of Luke 2:14, with the result: “peace on earth, good will to men,” instead of “peace on earth to men of good will,” (*hominibus bonae voluntatis*).

²⁷ Note the translation is NKJV, not NIV nor the traditional Latin translation. It is the text Bach uses in his *Magnificat* with Christmas interpolations, which avoids any misunderstanding of “people of good will” (*hominibus bonae voluntatis*).

²⁸ We dare not look at God’s glory with the naked eye, just as when Moses had to be hidden when he asked to see God’s glory: “So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by” (Exodus 33:22). But in Jesus, our divine Lord and our human Brother, we may see God face to face and get a glimpse of His glory. Simeon was allowed to look on the Savior before he died, and he says, “My eyes have seen Your Salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and *the Glory of Your people Israel*” (Luke 2:30–31). The disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ “majesty,” Peter says (2 Peter 1:16). Jesus’ glory was revealed and confirmed at His Baptism, in His miracles, and on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Isaiah says that “all flesh shall see it together,” but we usually consider the divine glory to be hidden in the flesh of the Savior’s incarnation.

Here Isaiah says “the arm of the LORD” has been revealed. The outstretched arm of the Lord (זְרוֹעַ נְטוּיָה) is an expression of God’s wrath and of His salvation. It is like the two-edged sword of the Word: Law and Gospel. It destroys sin and unbelief; it rescues the penitent believer. The expression “arm of the Lord” occurs only in Isaiah,²⁹ but the word “arm” (זְרוֹעַ) occurs in several key places, often in combination with the adjective “outstretched” (נְטוּיָה). Many times it describes the powerful outstretched arm of God delivering Israel from Egypt and Pharaoh’s army,³⁰ but it also speaks of God’s general power and protection,³¹ conversely His wrath on the enemies of His people,³² but also His gentle guiding hand: “He will gather the lambs with His arm” (Isaiah 40:11). A father’s outstretched arm can precede punishment, or it can offer help and comfort, even when we are just learning to walk: “I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them” (Hosea 11:3). God shows His outstretched arm of glory and grace veiled in the incarnate flesh of His Son. Jesus is the outstretched “Arm of the Lord” who defeats all our enemies, delivers us from bondage, and brings us to the Promised Land.

Form and Appearance – תֹּאֵר, מְרֻאָה

“For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Is. 53:2). Looks and appearances can be deceiving, but they do sometimes give an indication of what is inside. For example, the expression “beautiful/handsome of form” (יְפֵת־תֹּאֵר) is used to describe Rachel, Joseph, the seven healthy cows in Pharaoh’s dream, young David, Abigail, and Esther.³³ The expression “beautiful/handsome of appearance” (יְפֵת מְרֻאָה) is used of Sarai, Rachel, Joseph, and David.

But the Suffering Servant’s has “no form” (לֹא־תֹאֵר) “nor honor” (לֹא־הָרָר). Isaiah has already described his appearance as “marred more than any man” (בְּמִשְׁחַת מְאִישׁ) and his form as “un-human” (מִבְּנֵי אָדָם).

²⁹ Isaiah 51:9, 53:1, quoted in John 12:38.

³⁰ Exodus 6:6, 15:16, Deuteronomy 4:34, 5:15, 7:19, 9:29, 11:2, 26:8, 2 Kings 17:36, Isaiah 63:12.

³¹ 1 Kings 8:42, Isaiah 40:10, Jeremiah 27:5, 32:17, Psalm 89:13, 98:1.

³² Isaiah 30:30, 48:14, Psalm 89:10.

³³ Rachel: יְפֵת־תֹּאֵר וְיֵפֶה מְרֻאָה. Joseph: יְפֵת־תֹּאֵר וְיֵפֶה מְרֻאָה. Pharaoh’s seven cows: יְפֵת־תֹּאֵר.

Isaiah will go on to describe this in more detail. Here he says: “And when we look at Him, there is no look [appearance] that we should desire Him.”³⁴ Once again we are drawn back to the Garden of Eden. There is a striking contrast in the description of the trees in Eden and the Servant in Isaiah:

[Every tree] was delightful to look at. לְמַרְאֵהוּ נִחְמָד (Genesis 2:9).

There was no look [appearance] that we should delight in Him. וְלֹא מַרְאֵהוּ נִחְמָדְהוּ (Isaiah 53:2).

We would expect the Servant who is the Son of God and Lord of heaven to have a perfect form and appearance, to be described like beautiful Rachel, handsome Joseph, or ruddy David. But He set aside the use of His perfection and His divine powers and made Himself so lowly that He has “no form or honor that we should delight in Him at all.” He emptied Himself, became “a worm and no man” (Psalm 22:2). But He was still in fact the Divine Son of God and Lord of all. There is this gracious exchange, described in so many ways: He took on our sin, our poverty, our disownment, our darkness, that we might become sinless, rich, adopted children of God, and light in the Lord.

Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:10, referring to Hosea 1)

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. (Ephesians 5:8)

Paul’s description in Philippians parallels the Isaiah text as well. He took on human form and appearance, but emptied Himself so much that Isaiah says He looked “un-human” (מְבַנֵּי אָדָם).

Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking

³⁴ The word used here also means “to covet” in the Commandments: לֹא תִחְמָד (Exodus 20:17).

the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:6–8)

Study Translation of Isaiah 53:3–5

Despised and rejected of men,

A man of **sorrows**, knowing **illness** [wounds],

And like one who turns His face from us,

Despised, and we did **not esteem** Him.

But in fact our **illnesses** **HE** took up,

And our **sorrows**, He carried them.

And we **esteemed** Him

Stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [*threefold structure*]

And He was **made ill** [wounded] from our rebellions,

Crushed from our errors;

The chastisement of our peace was upon Him,

And in His stripe[s] there is healing for us.

³ נְבִזָּה וְחָדַל אִישִׁים

אִישׁ מִכְּאֲבוֹת וַיְדוּעַ חָלִי

וּכְמִסְתָּר פְּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ

נְבִזָּה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ

⁴ אָכַן חָלֵינוּ הוּא נָשָׂא

וּמִכְּאֲבוֹנוּ סָבָלָם

וְאֶנְחָנוּ חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ

נְגוּעַ מַכָּה אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲנָה

⁵ וְהוּא מִחֻלָּל מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ

מִדָּפָא מַעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ

מִוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו

וּבְחֻבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ

Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted – נְגוּעַ מַכָּה אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲנָה

This section begins with the expression “despised and rejected of men.” Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:34). Goliath despised David (1 Samuel 17:42). David despised the commandment of the Lord and even the Lord Himself by taking Bathsheba and killing Uriah (2 Samuel 2:9–10). People are often described as despising God, but God does not despise the contrite:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
 A broken and a contrite heart—
 These, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:17)

Here the parallel is clearly with the Messianic Psalm 22: “But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people” (Psalm 22:6). Jesus became the curse for us (Galatians 3:13 referencing Deuteronomy 21:23).

The Man of sorrows is described here. The word translated here “sorrows” or “pains” indicates mental or physical pain. It is used also in Exodus 3, where the Lord says of the Israelite slaves in Egypt. “I know their sorrows” (אֶת־מַכְאֲבֵיוֹ יִדְעֵהָיִי Exodus 3:7). The expression “Man of sorrows” shows that He has suffered such pains and sorrows that He is an epitome of someone who know such difficulties. Handel in his *Messiah* connects this also with the passage from Lamentations that describes the pain or sorrow desolate Jerusalem:

Behold and see If there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
 Which has been brought on me, Which the Lord has inflicted
 In the day of His fierce anger. (Lamentations 1:12)

The Man is also characterized by illnesses (חֲלָיִי) or wounds. If the “sorrows” (מַכְאֲבוֹת) are mental, these are clearly physical, and He knows those pains and illnesses (יִידוּעַ חֲלָיִי) that are direct result and consequence of mankind’s Fall into sin. Jesus is perfect, sinless, and could be immune to such things. But He bears them nonetheless, willingly making Himself despised, rejected, sorrowful, not to be esteemed.

The next phrase is one of the most difficult in the chapter: “And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;” מִמֶּנּוּ פָּנִים מְסֻתָּרִים. The first difficulty is that מִמֶּנּוּ can be “from Him” or “from us.” Also מְסֻתָּרִים can also be more than one form. Delitzsch discusses the form³⁵ and lists the possible meanings:

The words mean either [1] “like the hiding of the face on our part,” or [2] like one who met with this from us, or (what is

³⁵ Delitzsch: “Moreover, He was מִמֶּנּוּ פָּנִים מְסֻתָּרִים. This cannot mean, “like one hiding his face from us,” as Hengstenberg supposes (with an allusion to Lev 13:45); or, what is comparatively better, “like one causing the hiding of the face from him:” for although the feminine of the participle is written מְסֻתָּרָה, and in the plural מְסֻתָּרִים, for מְסֻתָּרִים is quite possible, we never meet with מְסֻתָּרִים for מְסֻתָּרִים, like מְסֻתָּרִים for מְסֻתָּרִים in the infinitive (Isa 29:15, cf., Deut 26:12). Hence מְסֻתָּרִים must be a noun,” 314–315.

more natural) [3] like the hiding of the face before his presence (according to Isa 8:17; 50:6; 54:8; 59:2, and many other passages), i. e., like one whose repulsive face it is impossible to endure, so that men turn away their face or cover it with their dress (compare Isa 50:6 with Job 30:10).³⁶

Whatever the exact grammatical solution, the final meaning is the same, pointing to the ultimate suffering of the Servant of the Lord. His sorrows were so deplorable, so repulsive, that they were not bearable to be looked upon. “We esteemed Him not” (לֹא הִשְׁבַּחְתֶּם). We did not regard Him or consider Him to be looked upon.

Again, these sorrows, pains, illnesses, rejections are not His own, but belong to the rebellious children of God. But the Righteous Servant takes them upon Himself. Isaiah emphasizes how profound this is with the attention-getting אֵיךְ, “but [we were wrong,] in fact”³⁷ and quickly follows up with the thought that the Messiah carries *our* pains and sorrows.

The repetition and contrast of key words makes this section of Isaiah 53 extremely poignant:

Despised — despised;
 Man of sorrows — He carried our sorrows;
 knowing illness — He carried our illnesses, He was made ill;
 we did not esteem Him — we esteemed Him stricken, smitten
 by God and afflicted.

At first we did not esteem Him, Isaiah says, but then we esteemed Him, saw Him in His deepest humiliation and saw what was really happening. He is fulfilling the promise given in Eden, that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head.

And here we come to that stunning triple thought:

Stricken, Smitten of God, and Afflicted.

נָגוּעַ מִכּוּחַ אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲנָה

To be “stricken” is several times used of a punishment from God, such as the plagues on Pharaoh and Abimelech because of Sarah, and later Rebekah (Genesis 12:17, 20:6, 26:11) and the plagues on Egypt.

³⁶ Delitzsch, 315.

³⁷ אֵיךְ adv. with strong asseverative force: a. surely, truly, esp. at beginning of a speech (stronger & more decided than אֵיךְ).

b. emphasizing a contrast, *but indeed, but in fact*, esp. after אָמַרְתִּי *I said or thought*, expressing the reality, in opp. to what had been wrongly imagined. See also Waltke and O’Connor, 671.

The word (נָגַעַ) is also used of the prohibition of “touching” Sinai. But it is used even earlier, and once again Isaiah takes us back to the temptation in the Garden where Eve replies to Satan that God said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it (וְלֹא תִגְעֶנּוּ בּוֹ), lest you die” (Genesis 3:3). And then because Eve touched (נָגַעְתָּהּ) the tree and ate the fruit, the Messiah must be stricken or plagued (נִגְוֶנֶּ) in punishment.

The second expression, “smitten” (מִנְכָּה),³⁸ is a common Old Testament term for striking someone, with or without a weapon, but here specifically it is God who smites His own Son, “smitten of God.” It is worth noting that the doer is the Almighty God (אֱלֹהִים) and Isaiah does not here use the name for God, Yahweh (יהוה), since that term is so closely connected with God’s mercy, grace, and lovingkindness.

Thirdly, the Servant of Yahweh was “afflicted,” מִנְעָנָה (pual participle of עָנָה). Some significant uses of this verb “to afflict” occur when the Lord prophesies to Abraham that his descendants will be “afflicted” in a foreign land (Genesis 15:13), when Israel is afflicted in Egypt (Exodus 1:11–12 and other places). Even Joseph, at the birth of his son Ephraim, describes Egypt as the land of his affliction, אֶרֶץ עֲנָיִי (Genesis 41:52), because he had been sold into slavery there. This word “to afflict” is also used of Samson, Naomi, Hannah, Job, and appears frequently in the Psalms. Perhaps it is significant that it occurs in Psalm 22 as well, which has several other parallels in this section of Isaiah:

For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard. (Psalm 22:24)

A particular use of the expression to “afflict the soul” often means “to fast” (Isaiah 58 and Leviticus 16). The use of “afflict” or עָנָה in Leviticus 16 again connects this chapter of Isaiah with the Day of Atonement, a day that was unique for Old Testament believers. It was the only day they were required to fast. It was the only day the high priest wore the simple linen tunic. It was the only day the high priest entered the Holy of Holies with the sacrifices for all the sins of all the people of Israel. Israel’s affliction did not spare them, but the Messiah’s affliction spares the whole world. In the same way Good Friday is unique

³⁸ מִנְכָּה here is the “passive” Hophal participle form of נָכַח, since it is commonly used in the Hiphil.

as the fulfillment of that Day of Atonement. Hebrews 9 and 10 present a clear commentary comparing the two.

Isaiah does not let it go with that familiar phrase, “He afflicted His soul,” but continues to describe the Messiah as “made ill (wounded),” “crushed,” “chastised,” and bearing “stripes.”

And He was made ill [wounded, bruised] from our rebellions,
Crushed from our errors;
The chastisement of our peace was upon Him,
And in His stripe[s] there is healing for us. (Isaiah 53:5)

These continue to point to the cause of the Messiah’s affliction, for these words deal also with punishment for wrongdoing, with discipline (chastisement, מוֹסֵר)³⁹ to “correct error.” This “punishment” was not merely “discipline” in a gentle sense, but a real “punishment.” Olof Olsson notes: “Surely death can not be called merely a correction or discipline.”⁴⁰ Although the word used here for “bruised” or “crushed”⁴¹ is different from what is used in Genesis 3:15, the thought takes us to those words:

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head, (הוּא יְשׁוּפֵדָהּ רֹאשׁ)
And you shall bruise His heel.” (תִּשְׁפֹּנֵי עֲקֵב) (Genesis 3:15)

The expression “crushed ones” is also used for the “contrite,” those with a broken spirit, as we say:

³⁹ Delitzsch: מוֹסֵר not only denotes παιδεία, as the chastisement of love (Proverbs 3:11), but also as the infliction of punishment (= τιμωρία κόλασις, Proverbs 7:22; Jeremiah 30:14), just as David, when he prayed that God might not punish him in His anger and hot displeasure (Psalm 6:2), could not find a more suitable expression for punishment, regarded as the execution of judgment, than הוֹכִיחַ (דוֹכִיחַ).

⁴⁰ Olsson, 78.

⁴¹ Daka [דָּכָא] vb. crush, poet. not in Qal;

Niph. *crushed*, fig. = *contrite ones*.

Pi. *crush*, (fig.) c. acc.

Pu. *crushed*, broken in pieces, shattered; made humble, contrite.

Hithp. *must let themselves be crushed*, i. e. maltreated; *are crushed* (the mighty, by God).

I. דָּכָא contrite (crushed) — *contrite*.

II. דָּכָא n.[m.] dust (as pulverized).

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

Jesus is crushed in body and soul, so that when we are contrite, crushed in spirit by the Law, we are not crushed eternally, but receive His salvation.

The cause of Jesus being stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, of His being made ill and crushed, is also listed: our rebellions and our errors, פְּשָׁעֵנוּ and עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ. The preposition (בְּ) here shows the reason Jesus is wounded and crushed. It resulted from our rebellions and errors, from our transgressions and iniquities.⁴²

But then comes the glorious result of this horrendous torture: we have peace; “in His stripes there is healing for us.” Jerome (quoted in Delitzsch) states with typical and succinct Latin: *suo vulnere vulnera nostra curavit*, “by His wound He healed our wounds.” Delitzsch sees connections here with early passages in Isaiah from chapter 1 and chapter 52, noting the manifold meaning of שְׁלוֹם as peace, health, soundness, and wholeness:

It was our peace, or, what is more in accordance with the full idea of the word, our general well-being, our blessedness, which these sufferings arrived at and secured (the synonyms of שְׁלוֹם are טוֹב and יְשׁוּעָה, Isa 52:7). In what follows, “and by His stripes (תַּבְּרֵיהֶּ = תַּבְּרֵיהֶּה, Isa 1:6) we have been healed,” שְׁלוֹם is defined as a condition of salvation brought about by healing. “*Venustissimum* ὀξύμωρον,” exclaims Vitranga here. He means the same as Jerome when he says, *suo vulnere vulnera nostra curavit*. The stripes and weals⁴³ that were inflicted upon Him have made us sound and well (the LXX keeps the collective singular, and renders it very aptly τῶ μώλωπι αὐτοῦ; cf., 1 Peter 2:24). We were sick unto death because of our sins; but He, the sinless one, took upon Himself a suffering unto death, which was, as it were, the concentration and essence of the woes that we had deserved; and this voluntary endurance, this submission to the justice of the Holy One, in accordance with the counsels of divine love, became the source of our healing.⁴⁴

⁴² In Modern Hebrew פְּשָׁע means crime and עֲוֹן means sin or misdemeanor.

⁴³ Delitzsch makes an interesting “pun” here: weal as “welfare” is similar to *shalom*, but weal can also mean a “welt” from an inflicted wound (319).

⁴⁴ Delitzsch, 319–320.

And, of course, there is Peter's summary and commentary in his first epistle: "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

In typical fashion Luther latches on to these words where the Gospel is proclaimed "to us" and "for us": "These words, OUR, US, FOR US, must be written in letters of gold. He who does not believe this is not a Christian."⁴⁵

I would perhaps be remiss as a Lutheran church musician if I did not here direct you to the other "fifth Evangelist," Johann Sebastian Bach, and his *St. John Passion* where he compares the stripe-wounds on Jesus' flogged back with the lines of the rainbow after the Flood, a sign of God's grace.

Erwäge, wie sein blut-
gefärbter Rücken

In allen Stücken

Dem Himmel gleiche geht!

Daran, nachdem die
Wasserwogen

Von uns'rer Sündflut sich
verzogen,

Der allerschönste Regenbogen

Als Gottes Gnadenzeichen steht.

Consider how His blood-
stained back

In every part

Is just like the heavens!

Where, after the rainclouds

Of our flood of sins have
cleared away,

Stands the most beautiful
rainbow of all

As God's sign of grace.

⁴⁵ *Luther's Works: American Edition*, Vol. 17, 221. On 224 Luther speaks about comforting those who are troubled by their sins:

Paul also struggled with this problem and was deeply disturbed. A Christian is not yet perfect, but he is a Christian who has, that is, who begins to have, the righteousness of God. I say this for the sake of the weak, so that they will not despair when they feel the bite of sin within themselves. They should not yet be masters and doctors but disciples of Christ, people who learn Christ, not perfect teachers. Let it suffice for us to remain with that Word as learners. Therefore, however perfect and absolute the teaching of Christ is that affirms that all our sins belong to Christ, it is not perfect in our life. It is enough for us to have begun and to be in the state of reaching after what is before us. Hence a Christian man must be especially vexed in his conscience and heart by Satan, and yet he must remain in the Word and not seek peace anywhere else than in Christ. We must not make a log or a rock out of the Christian as one who does not feel sin in himself. This is the claim of the exceedingly spiritual Enthusiasts.

Study Translation of Isaiah 53:6–8

All of us like a **flock** have erred⁴⁶
[gone astray],

כָּצִאֵן תְּעִינוּ כָּלָנוּ⁶

Each to his own way we have
turned

אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ

And the LORD placed on Him
the error [iniquity] of **all of us**

וַיִּהְיֶה תְּפִילָּה בּוֹ אֶת עֲוֹן כָּלָנוּ

He was oppressed and afflicted,
He does not open His mouth.

נִגְשׁ וְהוּא נִעְנָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּי⁷

Like **the sheep** to slaughter
brought,

כַּשֶּׂה לְטֹבַח יוּבָל

And like a **lamb** before her
shearers is silent,

וּכְרֹחַל לְפָנֵי גֹזְזֵיהָ נִאֲלָמָה

He does not open His mouth

וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּי

From prison and justice He was
taken,

מִמַּעַר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לָקַח⁸

And in His generation, who will
consider

וְאֶת־דֹּרוֹ מִי יִשׁוּחַת

That He was cut off from the
land of the living,

כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

For rebellion of my people there
was a plague upon Him?

מִפֶּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַּע לָמוֹ

Behold, the Lamb of God

Sheep imagery is common throughout Scripture, perhaps culminating in that mind-boggling statement in Revelation: “For the *Lamb* who is in the midst of the throne will *shepherd* them and lead them to living fountains of waters” (Revelation 7:17). Here we have “flock,”

⁴⁶ תָּעָה vb. err —

Qal 1. physically, *wander about*, abs.; c. ב loc.; c. ל loc.; acc. loc.

2. of intoxication, c. ב of wine; מִן of wine; fig. of perplexity, subj. לִבָּב.

3. ethically, abs.; c. מִן.

Niph. 1. *be made to wander about*, as a drunkard.

2. ethically: *be led astray* (c. בִּשְׂוֵא)

Hiph. 1. physically: *cause to wander about*: abs. (of bridle, in fig.), (acc. of people as sheep); acc. pers.; c. מִן loc., ב loc.

2. of intoxication.

3. mentally and morally: *cause to err, mislead*: abs.; c. acc. pers.; c. ב obj. intr. *err at cost of*; c. מִן of “*י*”.

“sheep,” and “lamb.” Delitzsch says, “All the references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God (with which the corresponding allusions to the Passover are interwoven) spring from this passage in the book of Isaiah.”⁴⁷ Jesus is the Lamb who is sacrificed *and* the Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Likewise He is both High Priest and Sacrificial Victim.

“All of us like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of all of us.” Isaiah’s *inclusio* ties everything together. He begins כְּלָנוּ (“all of us”) and ends כְּלָנוּ (“all of us”). And he inserts אִישׁ אִישׁ “each one.” “We, each one of us, have turned to his own way; אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנֵינוּ.” That takes us to Paul’s catalogue of Old Testament Law condemnations in Romans 3 (“There is none righteous, no, not one.... There is none who does good, no, not one, etc.”) which culminates in his expression, “all have sinned and fall short [*keep falling short*] of the glory of God.”

Isaiah begins by describing mankind as lost, straying, and scattered sheep. The New Testament picks up on this in at several places. Jesus had compassion on the multitudes, “because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). Peter says, “You were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). Straying is a metaphor very familiar from the parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1–7). The Good Shepherd seeks out the straying sheep and brings it back to the fold.

As Scripture also has many metaphors and many words for sin (sin חַטָּה, trespass/transgression פְּשָׁע, iniquity עֲוֹן, all used in Psalm 51 and here in Isaiah 53, for example), it has a comparable number of expressions for the forgiveness of sins. Psalms 32 and 51 speak of covering, not imputing, washing, cleansing, purging, blotting out, and converting. In an expansion of Exodus 20:6 (familiar to us as the “Conclusion” of the Ten Commandments in the Catechism), Exodus 34:7 lists these many words for sin, but in the context of forgiveness:

“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:7)

This forgiveness comes only because:

The Lord Has Laid on Him the Iniquity of Us All.

⁴⁷ Delitzsch, 323.

Here is an absolutely key text for the doctrine of the vicarious atonement of Christ for all sinners. The Lutheran Confessions quote this passage twice: in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, to oppose Roman Catholic works-righteousness; and in the *Smalcald Articles* as a central understanding of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as Redeemer of the world.

Delitzsch notes the modern tendency to reject the doctrine of vicarious atonement. But Isaiah's words allow no other understanding of the Messiah than as the sacrificial substitute upon whom the "iniquity of us all" is placed, as the Lamb of God who "takes away" the sin of the world and who "carried our sorrows."

Many of the more modern expositors endeavour to set aside the *poena vicaria* here, by giving to הִפְגִּיעַ a meaning which it never has. ... Hofmann ... holds fast to the fact that הִפְגִּיעַ , regarded as a causative of פָּגַע , signifies "to cause anything to strike or fall upon a person," which is the rendering adopted by Symmachus: κύριος καταντήσαι ἐποίησεν εἰς αὐτόν τῆν ἀνομίαν πάντων ἡμῶν, but פָּגַע is used to denote not only the transgression itself, but also the guilt incurred thereby, and the punishment to which it gives rise. All this great multitude of sins, and mass of guilt, and weight of punishment, came upon the Servant of Jehovah according to the appointment of the God of salvation, who is gracious in holiness.⁴⁸

Isaiah simply and plainly says: "The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."⁴⁹

$\text{וַיִּהְיֶה הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ אֶת עוֹן כָּלֵנוּ}$

⁴⁸ Ibid., 320–322.

⁴⁹ פָּגַע vb. meet, encounter, reach —

Qal 1. *meet, light upon*, c. acc. pers., c. sf. pers.; c. ב pers.; c. ב loc.

2. *meet*, with kindness, c. acc. pers. (subj. ').

3. *encounter with hostility, fall upon* c. ב pers.; of God, c. acc. (sf.), + ב instr.

4. *encounter with request, entreat*, c. ב pers., sq. cl., + ל pers. on whose behalf.

5. *strike, touch*, of boundary, c. ב loc.

Hiph. 1. *cause to light upon*, c. acc. rei + ב pers.

2. *cause one* (acc.) *to entreat* (ב pers.).

3. *make entreaty*, c. ב pers.; more gen. *interpose*, c. ל pers. in whose behalf; *one interposing*.

4. *make attack, assailant*.

The New Testament comments:

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
(1 Corinthians 15:3)

Who gave Himself for our sins. (Galatians 1:4)

Who ... Himself purged our sins. (Hebrews 1:3)

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. (1 John 3:5)

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. (Revelation 1:5)

It's hard to know whether to comment further. The texts themselves are more powerful than any human words. Prophecy and fulfillment are undeniable. The mercy and love of God is beyond human comprehension and human expression. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

It must not be overlooked that it is the LORD (Yahweh, יהוה) Himself who placed these sins on the Righteous Servant (צַדִּיק עֲבָדֵי), who becomes the Man of Sorrows (אִישׁ מְאָבֹהַת), who acts wisely and succeeds (יִשְׁכַּל) in His appointed task. This is an act of divine grace and mercy. God who is just demands justice: "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4); "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). But God who is gracious pours out His grace on us through His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased: "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

This holy substitution is already indicated in the Protevangelium: "the Seed of the woman ... you [Satan] shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). Jesus was not the one who sinned, but He suffers on account of the sin. The Passover lamb shed its blood to spare the firstborn of Israel, so that the LORD passed over their homes. But this imposition of sin on the Suffering Servant comes most prominently in the rituals of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, **concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat**, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. (Leviticus 16:21)

וְסָמַךְ אֶת־יָדָיו עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר הַחַי
וְהִתְוַדָּה עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְאֶת־כָּל־פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם וְנָתַן אֹתָם עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר

Religion in the Old Testament was a bloody activity. The Tabernacle and Temple acted not only as assembly place for the congregation of Israel, but as a place of tremendous ritual and physical activity of washing, stoking, burning, replenishing, slaughtering, roasting, feasting, hauling, and many more things than we at first imagine and associate with “worship.” But the Day of Atonement was different from any other day of the year. There was no feasting, no beautiful vestments, no bringing of many sacrifices, but a day of fasting, a day of deep reflection and repentance.

The **one sacrifice** for *all* the sins of *all* Israel clearly foreshadowed the crucifixion of our Lord. “**All of us** like a flock have gone astray, we have turned, **each one of us**, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of **all of us**.”

This was the **one day** prescribed for Israel to afflict their souls, to fast.

This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls (וְעִנִּיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם), and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. (Leviticus 16:29)

But Jesus is the true and ultimate Afflicted One: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, וְהָיָא נִעְנָה וְהוּא נִגְשׁ” (Isaiah 53:7). He was the One Oppressed⁵¹ to release us from oppression, from slavery, from our

⁵⁰ Ketibh: יָדָיו. Qere יָדָיו

⁵¹ נִגְשׁ vb. press, drive, oppress, exact —

Qal 1. *press, drive to work* (obj. עֲבָדֵיכֶם your workmen); v. 3.

2. *exact* c. acc. נִגְשׁוּ; sq. acc. pers. only.

3. Pt. (= subst.) *driver, task- master*; (ass-)driver; of (arbitrary) *ruler, ruler* (good sense); = foreign *oppressor, tyrant* (c. נִגְשׁ); *exactor* of tribute; pl. abstr. *lordship* = *lord, ruler*, fig. of נִגְשֵׁי (personif.)

taskmaster. שָׂרֵף is used of the oppression in Egypt. So Jesus suffered also the slavery in Egypt, but then became the Passover Lamb to deliver the people.

Lamb to the Slaughter

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). The sheep imagery continues with the expression that the Suffering Servant was like the Lamb led to the slaughter: כַּשֶּׂה לְטֹבַח יוֹבֵל. He does not open His mouth to complain or to defend Himself. This caused Pilate to marvel:

And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, **He answered nothing**. Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” But **He answered him not one word**, so that the governor marveled greatly. (Matthew 27:12–14)

Prophecy and fulfillment again in clear, simple words. If there were anything near this clarity and consistency in the writings of Homer, for example, no one would doubt the reality and power of the Greek gods. The Christian Bible is unique in its constant, consistent message, and its faithful transmission from generation to generation.

Luther’s hymn *Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands* extends the metaphor and speaks of the Lamb “roasted in fervent love,” relating this to Passover.

Here the true Paschal Lamb we see,	<i>Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm,</i>
Whom God so freely gave us;	<i>Davon Gott hat geboten,</i>
He died on the accursed tree—	<i>Das ist hoch an des Kreuzes Stamm</i>
So strong His love! — to save us.	<i>In heißer Lieb gebraten, (Roasted in fervent love)</i>
See, His blood doth mark our door;	<i>Das Blut zeichnet unsre Tür,</i>

Niph. *hard pressed* by enemy; *treated harshly*, of suffering servant of¹; recipr. *tyrannize over* (כָּ) *each other*.

Faith points to it, Death passes o'er,	<i>Das hält der Glaub dem Tode für,</i>
And Satan cannot harm us.	<i>Der Würger kann uns nicht mehr schaden.</i>
Alleluia!	<i>Halleluja!</i>

Nikolaus Decius uses images directly from this verse in his hymn *Lamb of God, Pure and Holy*.

Lamb of God, pure and holy, Who on the cross didst suffer,	<i>O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig Am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet, (Slaughtered on the tree of the cross)</i>
Ever patient and lowly, Thyself to scorn didst offer.	<i>Allzeit funden geduldig, (patient) Wiewohl du warest verachtet; (despised)</i>
All sins Thou borest for us,	<i>All Sünd hast du getragen, (bore all sin)</i>
Else had despair reigned o'er us: Have mercy on us, O Jesus!	<i>Sonst müßten wir verzagen. Erbarm dich unser, o Jesu.</i>

Paul Gerhardt takes up the silence of the Lamb at the slaughter, and His willing patience to bear our sin.

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
The guilt of all men bearing;
And laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing!
Goes patient on, grow weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer;
Bears shame and stripes, and wounds and death,
Anguish and mockery, and saith,
“*Willing* all this I suffer.”

This was also the passage that Philip explained to the Ethiopian in Acts 8:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
 So *He opened not His mouth*. (Acts 8:32)
 In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
 And who will declare His generation?
 For His life is taken from the earth.” (Acts 8:33)
 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom
 does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”
 (Acts 8:34)
 Then Philip *opened his mouth*, and *beginning at this Scripture*,
preached Jesus to him. (Acts 8:35)

The quotation seems to indicate that the Ethiopian was reading the Septuagint. Clearly Philip understood this passage as Messianic, with Jesus as the fulfillment.

He Was Cut Off From the Land of the Living –

כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

“He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken” (Isaiah 53:8). As this section begins with the image of the flock (צֹאן), sheep or goats), we see similarities between Jesus and the Passover Lamb, the goat sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, and the scapegoat from the Day of Atonement. Isaiah says, “He was cut off from the land of the living.” He uses the word נִגְזַר, related to the word used of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16, who “bears ... all ... iniquities,” and carries them into the wilderness, into a land “cut off,” a land of “separation” (אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה).

And He was cut off from the land of the living.

כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים (Isaiah 53:8)

The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an **uninhabited land**; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:22)

וְנָשָׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנֹתָם
 אֶל־אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה וְשָׁלַח אֶת־הַשְּׂעִיר בַּמִּדְבָּר

The events are so striking as parallels when they occur in Jesus’ lifetime. Delitzsch says that the people of the time should have recognized that Jesus died, not for His own sins, but for Israel, for the world.

Yet, even if they had been mistaken concerning Him during His lifetime; now that He no longer dwelt among the living, they ought to see, as they looked back upon His actions and His sufferings, that it was not for His own wickedness, but for that of Israel, *viz.*, to make atonement for it, that such a visitation from God had fallen upon Him.⁵²

The One who is the Living God and Life itself (John 11:25; 14:6) died and was cut off from the land of the living. But He rises to life again. In the Easter Sequence hymn (*Victimae paschali laudes*) we sing, “*Rex vitae mortuus regnat vivus*; The King of life, having died, reigns, being alive;” and in the Easter Exordium hymn, “He was dead, but see, He liveth” (*ELH* 348).

In His Generation, Who Shall Consider?⁵³ – וְאֵת־דִּדְרוֹ מִי יִשׁוּחֶהּ

This is one of the more difficult expressions in the chapter. Delitzsch interprets this as an astonished expression from Jesus’ contemporaries: “Who [of them] can explain all these things that have happened? Has there ever been such suffering, such injustice, that He was ‘cut off from the land of the living?’” etc. He explains וְאֵת־דִּדְרוֹ as an adverbial accusative. Perhaps like this: “Alas, His generation [His contemporaries]! Who shall consider/meditate/say: ‘He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.’”

וְאֵת־דִּדְרוֹ in that case is not the object to וְאֵת־הֶהָ, the real object to which is rather the clause introduced by מִי, but an adverbial accusative, which may serve to give emphatic prominence to the subject, as we may see from Isa 57:12; Ezek 17:21; Neh 9:34 (*Ges* §117, Anm.).⁵⁴

Earlier Delitzsch writes:

The *pilel* שׁוּחֶהּ with כִּי signifies in Ps 143:5 a thoughtful consideration or deliberation, in a word, *meditationem alicujus rei*

⁵² Delitzsch, 326.

⁵³ שׁוּחֶהּ vb. denom. muse, complain, poet. talk (of); —

Qal 1. *complain*.

2. *muse*: c. כִּי, *meditate upon, study*; c. acc.

3. a. *talk* (about), *sing* (of): abs. (ode); c. כִּי rei.

b. c. sf. pers. *talk* (with); c. לְ *speak to*.

Pöfel *meditate, consider* (כִּי rei; || הִגִּדְהוּ).

⁵⁴ Delitzsch, 325.

(compare the *kal* with the accusative, Ps 145:5). The following **כִּי** is an explanatory *quod*: with regard to His contemporaries, who considered that, etc. The words introduced with **כִּי** are spoken, as it were, out of the heart of His contemporaries, who ought to have considered, but did not. We may see from **עָמִי** that it is intended to introduce a direct address; and again, if we leave **כִּי** untranslated, like *ὅτι recitativum* (see, for example, Josh 2:24; compare **כִּי**, Dan 2:25), we can understand why the address, which has been carried on thus far in such general terms, assumes all at once an individual form. It cannot be denied, indeed, that we obtain a suitable object for the missing consideration, if we adopt this rendering: “He was torn away (3rd *praet.*) out of the land of the living, through (**מִן** denoting the mediating cause) the wicked conduct of my people (in bringing Him to death), to their own punishment; i.e., none of the men of His age (like **כִּי** in v. 1, no one = only a very few) discerned what had befallen them on account of their sin, in ridding themselves of Him by a violent death.”⁵⁵

He was led out⁵⁶ from prison. - **לְקַחַת וּמִמְשַׁפָּט לְקָחַת**
 For the rebellion of my people, plague upon Him. -
מִפְּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַּע לְמוֹת

Here we encounter the same word for “touch” as before: “to touch, to strike;” the noun becomes “mark, stroke, plague-spot.” Again it is a word from Eden, or rather from a hellish interpretation in Eden when Eve attributes to God the words, “You shall not touch it.” The word is often used of divine punishment. That plague of divine punishment comes upon the Messiah, for or from (caused by) the rebellion of the people. Delitzsch sees the connection here between this verse and verse 4 in the word **נִגַּע** (plague, **נִגְרַע** stricken).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The idea that is most prominent in **לְקַחַת** (with *â* in half pause) is not that of being translated (as in the accounts of Enoch and Elijah), but of being snatched or hurried away (*abreptus est*, Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 33:4, etc.). The parallel is *abscissus* (cf., **נִכְרַת**, Jeremiah 11:19) *a terra viventium*, for which **נִגְזַר** by itself is supposed to be used in the sense of carried away (i.e., out of the sphere of the living into that of the dead, Lamentations 3:54; cf., Ezekiel 37:11, “It is all over with us”). **עֲצָר** (from **עָצַר**, *compescere*) is a violent constraint; here, as in Psalm 107:39, it signifies a persecuting treatment which restrains by outward force, such as that of prison or bonds; and **מִשְׁפָּט** refers to the judicial proceedings, in which He was put upon His trial, accused and convicted as worthy of death—in other words, to His unjust judgment (Delitzsch, 323).

מִפְּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַּע לְמוֹד ... is intended to be taken as a rectification of וְאַנְחֵנוּ חִשְׁבְּנָהּוּ נִגְוֵעַ in v. 4b, to which it stands in a reciprocal relation. ... נִגַּע always signifies suffering as a calamity proceeding from God (e.g., Ex 11:1; Ps 39:11, and in every other passage in which it does not occur in the special sense of leprosy, which also points back, however, to the generic idea of a plague divinely sent); hence Jerome renders it, "for the sin of my people have I smitten Him." The text does not read so; but the smiter is really Jehovah. Men looked upon His Servant as a נִגַּע; and so He really was, but not in the sense of which men regarded Him as such.⁵⁷

And regarding His being taken out from prison:

The description of the closing portion of the life of the Servant of Jehovah is continued in v. 8. "He has been taken away from prison and from judgment; and of His generation who considered: 'He was snatched away out of the land of the living; for the wickedness of my people punishment fell upon Him?'" The principal emphasis is not laid upon the fact that He was taken away from suffering, but that it was out of the midst of suffering that He was carried off.⁵⁸

Study Translation of Isaiah 53:9-12

And He [they?] set with the wicked His grave

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רֵשָׁעִים קֶבֶרֹוּ ⁹

And with a rich one in His death

וְאֶת־עָשִׂיר בְּמֹתָיו

Although no violence He did,
[*notwithstanding that* = עַל]

עַל לֹא־חָתָמָם עָשָׂה

and no deceit was in His mouth.

וְלֹא מְרָמָה בְּפִיו

And the LORD **delighted** to crush Him, to make Him ill,

וַיִּהְיֶה חִפְזֵן דָּכְאוּ הֶחְלִי ¹⁰

If His soul set a sin-offering,

אִם־תְּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ

He will see His seed, He will extend His days,

וַיֵּרְאָה זֶרַע וַיַּאֲרִיךְ יָמָיו

⁵⁷ Delitzsch, 325.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 323.

And the **delight** of the LORD shall succeed in His hand.

The labor of His soul He shall see; He shall be satisfied.

In knowing Him [By His knowledge]

My **just** Servant shall **justify** the many [great ones];

And their errors **He** will bear.

Therefore I will **divide** [bequeath] to Him with the great ones [many].

And the strong He will **divide** [as] the spoils.

Because He emptied [laid bare] to death His soul,

And with the **rebellious ones** He was counted [allowed Himself to be counted]

And **He** the sin of many [great ones] lifted up

And for the **rebellious ones** He will make intercession [encounter].

וְתִתְּנֶנּוּ יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח

11 מִעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יִשְׁבֹּעַ

בְּדַעְתּוֹ

וְיִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עֲבָדֵי לְרָבִים

וְעֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל

12 לְכֵן אֶחְלָק לּוֹ בְּרָבִים

וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יִחְלַק שְׁלָל

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ

וְאֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה

וְהוּא חַטָּאת־רַבִּים נִשָּׂא

וְלַפְּשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ

Crucified, Died, and was Buried

Earlier we spoke of the threefold phrase “stricken, smitten, and afflicted,” and we also noted that the phrase “the third day He rose again, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father” is at least hinted at the beginning of this pericope with the words “exalted, and lifted up, and very high.” We come now to Isaiah’s discussion of the death and burial of the Messiah which reminds us of the phrase from the Creed, “crucified, died, and was buried.”

He again reminds us of the innocence of Christ, even though He dies by a method reserved for the worst criminals. “He did no violence; no deceit was in His mouth.” He was the spotless Lamb, the sacrifice

without blemish. He appeared to have “no honor,” but He was the most honorable of all.

The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;
 The sinful child of man may live in gladness;
 Man forfeited his life and is acquitted—
 God is committed.

(Johann Heermann: “O Dearest Jesus,” *ELH* 292:5)

Jesus’ execution was performed with the intent of dishonoring Him, but His burial provides a stark contrast. Isaiah seems to connect “rich” with “death” and “wicked” with “grave,” seemingly the opposite of what happened to our Lord. The opening [תָּבִילָה] also adds a difficulty. Who is the subject? Some take it as impersonal and transform it to plural in English: “They assigned His grave.” That helps with the other concern as well, because it is taken to contrast the intention of the Jewish leaders and the irony of the actual events. Delitzsch finds the wording here so striking that it defies forgery and supports true prophecy and fulfillment. Hengstenberg and Delitzsch both offer this explanation as both possible and legitimate:

And if we reflect that the Jewish rulers would have given to Jesus the same dishonourable burial as to the two thieves, but that the Roman authorities handed over the body to Joseph the Arimathæan, a “rich man” (Matt 27:57), who placed it in the sepulchre in his own garden, we see an agreement at once between the gospel history and the prophetic words, which could only be the work of the God of both the prophecy and its fulfilment, inasmuch as no suspicion could possibly arise of there having been any human design of bringing the former into conformity with the latter. But if it be objected, that according to the parallel *תָּבִילָה* must be regarded as dead, quite as much as the *רְשָׁעִים*, we admit the force of this objection, and should explain it in this way: “They assigned Him His grave with criminals, and after He had actually died a martyr’s death, with a rich man;” i.e., He was to have lain where the bodies of criminals lie, but He was really laid in a grave that was intended for the corpse of a rich man.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 328.

The Delight of the Lord – תִּפְּץ יְהוָה

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand” (Isaiah 53:10).

In verse 10 we have two expressions that deal with the “delight” (תִּפְּץ) of the Lord. Jesus is the “delight” of the people of God, as He is described in Malachi 3:1, “And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight” (וּבְמִלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם תִּפְּצִים). Already in Isaiah 1:11 the Lord has said, “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight (לֹא תִפְּצֶהוּ) in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats.” This Servant is the Delight of the Lord and delights to do His will: “I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8).

But there had to be a sacrifice for sin in order to atone for mankind’s sin and sinfulness. Hebrews 9:22 says, “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” And since it is the Lord’s essence and nature to be gracious and merciful, it delights Him to do this, even at the cost of His own Son. In a sense, as the Law is a foreign or alien work of the Lord, so is punishment; His proper work is to bless and to save. But it is Yahweh who does this, as an act of pure grace.

The LORD delights to crush him, to make Him ill.

וַיְהוֹה תִפְּץ וַיִּכְאוּ הַקֶּלִי

Isaiah makes a type of *inclusio* again, beginning and ending the verse with the word “delight.” In the second part He shows the assurance that the Messiah will fulfill His task.

And the delight of the LORD shall succeed⁶⁰ in His hand.

וְתִפְּץ יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח

⁶⁰ תִּפְּץ, יִצְלַח vb. advance, prosper —

Qal prosper, of way of wicked; c. לָּ rei, = be good for anything; subj. pers., abs. be successful.

Hiph. 1. make prosperous, bring to successful issue, of ’, c. acc. of man’s way (הַדֶּרֶךְ), c. acc. rei,

c. acc. pers., c. לָּ pers.; abs. send success; human subj. c. acc. הַדֶּרֶךְ; c. acc. בְּיָדוֹ.

2. shew, experience, prosperity, of men, (+ לָּ pers. in ref. to whom); אִישׁ מְצַלֵּחַ; a prosperous

man; subj. הַדֶּרֶךְ, ’s word.

Isaiah uses a different word for “succeed” here, the word used in Psalm 118, the great Passover Psalm, with its tight poetry and parallelism:

Save now, I pray, [Hosanna] O Lord;

אָנָּא יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא

O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.

אָנָּא יְהוָה הַצְלִיחָה נָּא (Psalm 118:25)

The Hosanna acclamation of Palm Sunday is paralleled by the “prosperity” and “success” of the Messiah in redeeming mankind. And when this happens, the One who is the Delight of the Lord joins us to Himself so that the Church as the Bride of Christ also receives the eponym Hephzibah, “My delight is in her.”

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken (עֲזוּבָה),

Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate (שְׁמִינָה);

But you shall be called Hephzibah (הַפְּזִיבָה, *My delight is in her*), and your land Beulah (בְּעוּלָה, *married*);

For the Lord delights in you,

And your land shall be married. (Isaiah 62:4)

A Sin-Offering – אֲשָׁם

“If You shall place His soul as a sin-offering.” - אִם-תָּשִׂים אֲשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ

There are at least three possible translations for אֲשָׁם. It can be either 2nd person singular, or 3rd person singular feminine. If it is 3rd person, the subject must be “soul” as a feminine noun, and then perhaps reflexive: “If His soul sets [itself as] a burnt offering.” If it is 2nd person, the subject must be determined. It could be “the Lord,” or “Israel.” But this is not the most important question, and in many ways is immaterial since, as Delitzsch says, “the supreme *causa efficiens* in the whole was God.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Delitzsch:

It was men who inflicted upon the Servant of God such crushing suffering, such deep sorrow; but the supreme *causa efficiens* in the whole was God, who made the sin of men subservient to His pleasure, His will, and predetermined counsel. The suffering of His Servant was to be to Him the way to glory, and this way of His through suffering to glory was to lead to the establishment of a church of the redeemed, which would spring from Him; in other words, it would become the commencement of that fulfillment of the divine plan of salvation which He, the ever-living, ever-working One, would carry out to completion. We give up the

The more important word here is $\square\psi\text{̄}\text{̇}\text{̈}\text{̇}$,⁶² which means both “sin” and “sin-offering” or “guilt” and “guilt-offering.” This sin-offering [$\square\psi\text{̄}\text{̇}\text{̈}\text{̇}$] must be made to atone for sin [$\square\psi\text{̄}\text{̇}\text{̈}\text{̇}$].⁶³ It is the only sin-offering that can cover all sin. The parallel in Greek is $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ which is used in the New Testament for sin and for sin-offering.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin [a sin-offering] for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

τόν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh. (Romans 8:3)

περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί.

The Lutheran Confessions cite this word and this passage in the discussion of the Mass and the work of Christ in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* XXIV. The sacrifice that atones for sin is only that of Christ, never the works of man, not even the Mass. This was the utter abomination and misunderstanding of the Mass that developed

idea that $\square\psi\text{̄}\text{̇}\text{̈}\text{̇}$ is to be taken as addressed by Jehovah to “His Servant.” The person acting is the Servant, and it is to Jehovah that the action refers. But Hofmann’s present view, *viz.*, that $\square\psi\text{̄}\text{̇}\text{̈}\text{̇}$ is addressed to the people, is still less admissible (330).

⁶² $\square\psi\text{̄}\text{̇}\text{̈}\text{̇}$ n.m. offence, guilt —

1. offence, trespass, fault.
2. guilt.
3. compensation.
4. trespass-offering.

⁶³ Delitzsch:

Here also according to the usual custom of the prophet, things of the New Testament are represented under images taken from those of the Old Testament. According to this passage Paul affirms, 2 Cor. 5:21, God has made Christ to be $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ i. e. a sin-offering whereby we became righteous before God, as in Rom. 8:3: God has sent Christ περὶ ἁμαρτίας as a sin-offering, and Christ is called $\text{ἰλασμός, ἰλαστήριον}$, a propitiatory sacrifice for all sins, Rom. 3:25. 1 John 2:2. 4:10. Comp. Heb. 9:14: $\delta\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu\acute{\nu} \text{προσῆνεγκεν ἄμωμον τῷ θεῷ}$. Without a figure therefore the sense is: when he has freely given himself up to bitter suffering and a bloody death, in order, by the expiation of our sins, to procure for us forgiveness of righteousness (334).

in Medieval Roman Catholicism. It was a new way even of looking at history and the Bible, assuming that there must be strict parallels between the Old and New Testaments: priesthood in both (therefore, Holy Orders as a sacrament), sacrifices in both (the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass), etc. But the Old Testament finds parallels not in human priesthood and continuing sacrifice, but in the fulfillment of these “shadows” and “types,” in the person and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christ is the substance that outshines any Old Testament foreshadowings: “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16–17). New laws, new “canons,” new decrees are not from God but are “commandments and doctrines of men.”

“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:21–23)

Our Lutheran fathers clearly recognized the abuse and misuse of Scripture that had developed in during the Middle Ages, and, like Josiah and Hezekiah, they returned to the only reliable Source, the pure Fountain of Israel, as they call it. It was a Christian rally within the Renaissance ideal: “*Ad fontes*; to the sources!” This idea is also found in Isaiah’s writings: “To the law and to the testimony (לְתוֹרָה וְלִתְעוּדָה)! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

We have one Priest, one Sacrifice for all sins, one Redeemer, as portrayed each year to Israel in the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) and explained and applied properly to Christ in Hebrews 9 and 10. By focusing on this, our Lutheran fathers have let Scripture alone be the authority, have let Scripture interpret itself, and have seen the one message of the Word of God, and that is He who is the Word of God.

22] But in fact there has been only one propitiatory sacrifice in the world, namely, the death of Christ, as the Epistle to the Hebrews 10, 4 teaches: It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. And a little after, of the [obedience and] will of Christ, 10, 10: By the which will we

are sanctified by the offering of the body 23] of Jesus Christ once for all. **And Isaiah interprets the Law, in order that we may know that the death of Christ is truly a satisfaction for our sins, or expiation, and that the ceremonies of the Law are not; wherefore he says, Is. 53, 10: When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He will see His seed, etc. For the word employed here, אָשָׁם [asham], signifies a victim for transgression; which signified in the Law that a certain Victim was to come to make satisfaction for our sins and reconcile God, in order that men might know that God wishes to be reconciled to us, not on account of our own righteousnesses, but on account of the merits of another, namely, of Christ. Paul interprets the same word אָשָׁם [asham] as sin, Rom. 8, 3: For sin (God) condemned sin, i. e., He punished sin for sin, i. e., by a Victim for sin.** The significance of the word can be the more easily understood from the customs of the heathen, which, we see, have been received from the misunderstood expressions of the Fathers. The Latins called a victim that which in great calamities, where God seemed to be especially enraged, was offered to appease God's wrath, a *piaculum*; and they sometimes sacrificed human victims, perhaps because they had heard that a human victim would appease God for the entire human race. The Greeks sometimes called them καθάρματα and sometimes περιψήματα. **Isaiah and Paul, therefore, mean that Christ became a victim, 24] i.e., an expiation, that by His merits, and not by our own, God might be reconciled. Therefore let this remain established in the case, namely, that the death of Christ alone is truly a propitiatory sacrifice.** For the Levitical propitiatory sacrifices were so called only to signify a future expiation. On account of a certain resemblance, therefore, they were satisfactions redeeming the righteousness of the Law, lest those persons who sinned should be excluded from the commonwealth. But after the revelation of the Gospel [and after the true sacrifice has been accomplished] they had to cease; and because they had to cease in the revelation of the Gospel, they were not truly propitiations, since the Gospel was promised for this very reason, namely, to set forth a propitiation. ...

53] And although our belief has its chief testimonies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, nevertheless the adversaries distort against us mutilated passages from this Epistle, as in this very

passage, where it is said that every high priest is ordained to offer sacrifices for sins. Scripture itself immediately adds that Christ is High Priest, Heb. 5, 5. 6. 10. The preceding words speak of the Levitical priesthood, and signify that the Levitical priesthood was an image of the priesthood of Christ. For the Levitical sacrifices for sins did not merit the remission of sins before God; they were only an image of the sacrifice of Christ, which was to be the one propitiatory sacrifice, as we have said above. 54] Therefore the Epistle is occupied to a great extent with the topic that the ancient priesthood and the ancient sacrifices were instituted not for the purpose of meriting the remission of sins before God or reconciliation, but only to signify the future sacrifice of Christ alone. 55] **For in the Old Testament it was necessary for saints to be justified by faith derived from the promise of the remission of sins that was to be granted for Christ's sake, just as saints are also justified in the New Testament. From the beginning of the world it was necessary for all saints to believe that Christ would be the promised offering and satisfaction for sins, as Isaiah 53, 10 teaches: When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.** (Apology XXIV, emphasis added)

Christ builds His Church upon His sacrifice. And thus He who is the Seed (Genesis 3:15, 22:18) shall see His seed, His progeny, and will live forever. We return once more to the Protevangelium in the Garden of Eden with the expression, "He will see His seed (יִרְאֶה יָרֵעַ)." Jesus is the promised Seed of the woman who defeats death and the devil. And with that victory He gains for Himself a "seed," a descendancy that is innumerable:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (Revelation 7:9)

This "seed" or "descendant" image connects also with that Psalm 22, the great Passion psalm, which has several parallels with Isaiah 53.

You who fear the Lord, praise Him!
 All you descendants of Jacob (כָּל-יִרְעֵי יְיָ), glorify Him,

And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel (כָּל-יִרְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)!
(Psalm 22:23; *English numbering*)

A posterity shall serve Him (יִרְעֵי יְעַבְדְּנִי). It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation. (Psalm 22:30)

“He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.” Christ is successful also in gaining “length of days”: “He will extend His days.” The word אָרַךְ simply means “to be long;” here in the *Hiphil*, “to lengthen.” It describes the length of Noah’s ark, the mercy seat, and Tabernacle furnishings. Used together with “days” יָמִים, it expresses “long life” as a promise to those who honor their parents (Fourth Commandment), to the kings who followed in the ways of good King David, and to believers in general, through the Psalms, particularly Psalm 23: “And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever [to length of days]; יָמִים לְאָרְךָ לְאֵלֹהֵי יְהוָה.” The days of the Messiah are eternal, like Melchizedek: “having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually” (Hebrews 7:3), and as prophesied in Micah (5:2):

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting.

From everlasting to everlasting, it shall resound in heaven: “King of kings and Lord of lords. ... And He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 19:16; 11:15). And as we recite in the Creed, according to the Gospels, “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:33).

My Just Servant Shall Justify Many

“He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

Justification is the heart of Isaiah and the heart of Scripture. This is what weighs on Jesus’ soul. “He shall see the labor of His soul.” The word for soul is נַפְשׁ which can mean “soul,” but also “life,” or a person’s “whole being.” In Genesis תַּיִתּוּ נַפְשׁ indicates a “living creature” and is applied to Adam as a “living being.” Jesus in His incarnation has both body and

soul, to redeem both our body and soul. His physical sufferings have been described in detail both in Isaiah's prophecy and in the Passion History in the four Gospels. But the spiritual anguish, the "labor of His soul," is the deepest depths of hell, abandonment by God the Father: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Psalm 22:1). The Messiah Himself shall see this anguish and He shall be filled and satisfied (שָׂבַע) that He has completed His work: "It is finished" (John 19:30). In death He shall commit His soul to His gracious Father: "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit'" (Luke 23:46; quoting Psalm 31:5).

This is what the Just One does to justify, to bring justice, to those who come to know Him. "By His knowledge [in knowing Him; by knowing Him] My just Servant shall justify many, and their errors He shall bear." The just Servant has all knowledge; the Spirit of knowledge rests upon Him (Isaiah 11:2). This indicates His close relationship to the other persons of the Trinity, His knowledge of them. The Bible uses this word even for marital relations: "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain" (Genesis 4:1). One might speculate on the relationship of our words "ken" and "can" and "kin," as Hebrew also has כָּנָע (from יָרַע) meaning a "kinsman" (Proverbs 7:4, Ruth 2:1). Jesus knows the Father so closely. He also knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our sins and sorrows, and He knows His work and task to save us. He also gives us knowledge and familiarity with Him through faith. It seems that both of these ideas can be contained in that simple pregnant expression: בְּיָרַעֵהוּ, without isolating "objective" or "subjective" genitive, but taking the word simply as it is.

He knows God, with whom He stands in loving fellowship; He knows the counsels of His love and the will of His grace, in the fulfilment of which His own life ascends, after having gone down into death and come forth from death; and by virtue of this knowledge, which rests upon His own truest and most direct experience, He, the righteous One, will help "the many."⁶⁴

Luther speaks of this knowledge as a "passive" knowledge:

The knowledge of Christ must be construed in a passive sense. It is that by which He is known, the proclamation of His suffering and death. You must therefore note this new definition of righteousness. Righteousness is the knowledge of Christ. What is Christ? He is the person who bears all our sins. These are

⁶⁴ Delitzsch, 337.

unspeakable gifts and hidden and unutterable kinds of wisdom. ... I have said that the individual words must be pondered in supreme faith, and they must be read and considered with the most watchful eyes, so that it is not simply any kind of knowledge or understanding but a knowledge that justifies, in opposition to other kinds of knowledge. ... It is not the work of reason, which always seeks its own kinds of righteousness. The Word, however, sets forth another righteousness through the consideration and the promises of Scripture, which cause this faith to be accounted for righteousness. This is our glory to know for certain that our righteousness is divine in that God does not impute our sins. Therefore our righteousness is nothing else than knowing God.⁶⁵

We also have Jesus' own expressions:

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (John 10:14-15).

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)

And Grundtvig's hymn, *Built on the Rock*:

Many in saving faith may come
Where Christ His message is bringing:
"I know Mine own, Mine own know Me;
Ye, not the world, My face shall see.
My peace I leave with you." (ELH 211:7)

"Justify" is a word we sometimes shy away from, because with our simple Latin understanding we think its form might mean, "to make righteous." But in Latin *justificare* does not primarily mean, "make someone righteous," but to "act justly towards, do justice to; justify/make just; forgive/pardon; vindicate."⁶⁶ We also look here at the *Hiphil* form and constrain it to our view of what "causative" means. But קָרַן in the *Hiphil* primarily means to "vindicate, do justice for, declare righteous."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Luther's Works: American Edition*, vol. 17, 230.

⁶⁶ William Whitaker's Words. (<http://users.erols.com/whitaker/words.htm>)

⁶⁷ קָרַן , קָרַן vb. denom. be just, righteous -

Qal 1. *have a just cause, be in the right*; in complaint; c. קָרַן pers. (of Tamar).

Our own intrinsic righteousness flows from that, of course, but when speaking of justification that saves us and righteousness that avails before God, it is a completely extrinsic, external, alien righteousness, as Saint Paul describes it in Romans:

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:24–28)

The juxtaposition of those two forms that sound almost identical (which the Hebrews and the Latins love to do) emphasizes and intensifies the expression, making it very powerful: *יְצַדִּיק יְצַדִּיק*, the just One shall justify, shall bring justice, shall vindicate “the many.” The work of the Messiah is not just for Israel, but for “the many,” for “the whole world.” In the institution of His Holy Supper Jesus says, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Of course, also, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19); and, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

2. *be justified*, in one’s plea; c. *צַדִּיק* (man with God); *בְּיָד*; by witnesses; by acquittal; by condemnation of opponent.

3. *be just*: of God, in his government, in charging with sin; of *יְצַדִּיק יְצַדִּיק*.

4. *be just, righteous*, in conduct and character: of men, c. *צַדִּיק* comp. (more than God).

Niph. *be put right*, in a right condition.

Pi. *justify; make to appear righteous* (all c. *צַדִּיק* comp.).

Hiph. 1. *do justice*, in administering law.

2. *declare righteous, justify*, c. acc. *צַדִּיקֵי (הוּ)*; *justify* accusers, by recognizing charge as just.

3. *justify, vindicate the cause of, save*, c. acc., (of God), c. *לְ* of obj. (of servant of יְ).

4. *make righteous, turn to righteousness*.

Hithp. *justify ourselves*.

This righteousness comes through His bearing our sins, carrying them, lifting them up, taking them away. We quickly think of the *Agnus Dei* based on the words of John the Baptizer: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Isaiah says, “He bears our sins; וְיִשָּׁוּנוֹתֵם הוּא יִסְבֵּל.” The word order is already emphatic if only to make a chiasm with the line before, but the intensive addition of הוּא draws even more attention to the importance of this statement. “**He**” bears their sins, because they cannot bear their own. Hengstenberg draws some fine statements from Calvin and Jerome:

Calvin: “The exchange is, without doubt, excellent. Christ justifies men by giving them His own righteousness and in turn He takes upon Himself their sins so that He might atone for [expiate] them.”

Jerome: “And He Himself will carry their iniquities, which they were not able to carry and by whose weight they were being overwhelmed [oppressed].”⁶⁸

Isaiah here uses the word יִסְבֵּל, not for innovation, color commentary, or simple poetry, but again to emphasize the concept and vastness of its importance and impact. We are more familiar with the word נָשָׂא (lift, carry, take, take away). סָבַל has the idea of “bearing a burden.” It is used of the burdens imposed on Israel in Egypt. Isaiah uses it also in the Messianic chapter 9:

For You have broken the yoke of his burden (סָבַלָּו)
 And the staff of his shoulder,
 The rod of his oppressor,
 As in the day of Midian. (Isaiah 9:4)
 It shall come to pass in that day
 That his burden (סָבַלָּו) will be taken away from your shoulder,
 And his yoke from your neck,
 And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.
 (Isaiah 10:27)

The Man of Sorrows, the Righteous Servant of the Lord, bears our burden, which to us is literally “*un*-bearable.” Like the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, the weight and burden of the sins of Israel are

⁶⁸ The translation here is mine. Hengstenberg gives the original Latin, as follows: Calvin: “*Egregia nimirum est permutatio. Christus justificat homines dando ipsi justitiam suam et vicissim in se suscipit peccata ipsorum, ut ea expiet.*” Jerome: “*Et iniquitates eorum ipse portabit, quas illi portare non poterant et quarum pondere opprimebantur.*”

placed on Him and He dies for them; and like the scapegoat He carries them away into the wilderness never to be seen again. Therefore, we are justified in His knowledge. Isaiah repeats this expression several times in this chapter:

Surely He has borne our griefs
 And carried our sorrows. (53:4)
 And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
 (Isaiah 53:6)
 For He shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)
 And He bore the sin of many,
 And made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12)

Venit, Vidit, Vicit, Vindicavit⁶⁹

An American proverb says, "To the victor go the spoils." The thought is ancient and probably too militaristic for much of modern Christianity. Or it is misapplied to liberation theology and Gustaf Aulén's doctrine of *Christus Victor*, where Christ is seen as liberator, but not through paying the penalty for sin to satisfy the wrath of God. There is clearly battle and warfare terminology connected with the Bible's description of Christ's work of redemption:

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!
 For He has done marvelous things;
 His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory
 (הוֹשִׁיעָה לָּנוּ). (Psalm 98:1)
 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory (τὸ νῆκος)
 through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57)

In Luther's *A Mighty Fortress* we sing:

But for us fights the Valiant One,
 Whom God Himself elected. . . .
 He holds the field forever. (*ELH* 250:2)

At Easter we sing:

⁶⁹ "He came. He saw. He conquered. He vindicated." A "parody" of Julius Caesar's famous statement, "*Veni. Vidi. Vici.* I came. I saw. I conquered."

The strife is o'er, the battle done;
 The victory of life is won;
 The song of triumph has begun: Alleluia! (*ELH* 357:1)

But the irony and paradox remain when we look at redemption gained through Christ's "victory." Christ conquered by dying. "He emptied His soul to death; הָעֲרָה לְמִוְתָּהּ נִפְשׁוֹ." There are several related roots that mean to "be bare" or "be naked": עָרָה, עָרָה, עָרָה. Here we have the *Hiphil* of עָרָה, הָעֲרָה "to lay bare," sometimes translated "to pour out." Paul speaks in a very similar way in Philippians: "[He] made Himself of no reputation (emptied Himself; ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν), taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7).⁷⁰ That is how He overcomes the devil and gains the victory. Consider the Icelandic hymn:

The Lord into His Father's hands,
 With dying prayer His soul commends,
 In triumph He yields up His ghost.
 Lift up your heads, O heav'nly host,
 Shout praise! Such glory ne'er shall be
 As Jesus dying on the tree. (*ELH* 339:1)

As conqueror He will divide the spoils. There is some discussion about how to understand רַבִּים as "multitudes" or "great ones," and whether they are the "spoils" or if the Messiah shares the spoils "in the midst of the great ones." Some of the constructions are a bit ambiguous. How is כִּי to be understood in כִּי רַבִּים? Is אֶת a preposition here meaning "with" or the marker for a definite direct object? In a way, both senses are true. The Messiah receives "many" and "great ones" as spoils and He receives His spoils "among the great ones." Hengstenberg refers us back to the kings in Isaiah 52:15 who are astonished at what happens to the Suffering Servant, and to Psalm 2 where the Messiah receives the גוֹיִם (nations, Gentiles, heathen) as an inheritance, and to Isaiah 11:10: "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

After the usual custom of the prophets to exhibit spiritual objects by sensible images, the spiritual victory of Christ over

⁷⁰ One might expect this to be a quotation from the Septuagint, but it has a different reading in Isaiah: παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἢ ψυχῇ αὐτοῦ.

the nations who take his easy yoke upon themselves, is here described under the figure of a worldly victory. Martini: “*Inest descriptio amplissimi et splendissimi imperii expressa imaginibus ab imperatore humano, qui terra sub ditionem suam reducta regnum occupat, praedaeque parta potitur repetita.*” That worldly triumphs are not here the subject of discourse, appears, 1. From the manner, pointed out in the preceding verses, in which the Messiah has attained to this exaltation. Such triumphs are not won by the deepest humiliation, by suffering and death, voluntarily endured for the salvation of mankind. 2. From what the Messiah in the state of exaltation, shall accomplish in behalf of those who betake themselves to him. He shall sprinkle them with his blood, chap. 52:13; justify them and bear their sins, v. 11; and intercede for sinners, v. 12; — these are surely not designations of a worldly conqueror. The רְבִיִּים and עַצְוִנָּיִם are none others, than the nations and kings, chap. 52:15, and the generation and posterity of the Messiah, v. 8, 10. Similar figure are found, Ps. 2:8, where Jehovah says to the Messiah: “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Comp. Isa. 11:10.⁷¹

It reminds one also of the passage and the hymn, “They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29); “There many shall come from the east and the west” (*ELH* 200).

The Suffering Servant, the Man of Sorrows, the Righteous Servant has earned a reward through His innocent suffering, through emptying His soul unto death, through carrying our sorrows. Anselm (Archbishop of Canterbury, 1093–1109), in his treatise *Why God Became Man* (*Cur Deus Homo*), speaks of Christ earning the reward and demonstrates that since God is just, the reward must be paid out. But since Christ has no need of the reward of eternal life, it is bestowed on mankind, the ones for whom Christ became Man and in whose place He suffered and died.⁷² He vindicates our cause and gives us His justice and righteousness, the eternal life that He earned by suffering the pains and torments of eternal death.

⁷¹ Hengstenberg, 535.

⁷² See Appendix C for the excerpt.

Another irony in Christ's victory is that He is counted among the "sinners" or "rebels." "And with the rebellious ones He was [allowed Himself to be] counted.... And for the rebellious He makes intercession,⁷³ וְלַפְּשָׁעִים יִפְגֹּעַ ... וְאֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה." Hengstenberg notes the importance that this was a voluntary action on Jesus' part: "The ground [basis] of the Messiah's glorification was not that he was numbered [with the transgressors], but that 'he voluntarily suffered [allowed] himself to be numbered' with the transgressors."⁷⁴ Delitzsch makes a similar observation and ties it to the inclusion of an emphatic אֶת־הָרֵשָׁעִים:

With אֶת־הָרֵשָׁעִים נִמְנָה (He was numbered with the transgressors), if not in a subordinate connection (like אֶת־הָרֵשָׁעִים in v. 5; compare Isa 10:7), the following antithesis: He submitted cheerfully to the death of a sinner, and yet He was no sinner, but "bare the sin of many (cf., Heb 9:28), and made intercession for the transgressors."⁷⁵

"He makes intercession for them." Delitzsch notes that the reference here is to the intercession of the Suffering One, thus citing the first Word from the Cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).⁷⁶ But the intercession of the Messiah continues even now:

⁷³ פָּגַע vb. meet, encounter, reach —

Qal 1. *meet, light upon*, c. acc. pers., c. sf. pers.; c. ׀ pers.; c. ׀ loc.

2. *meet*, with kindness, c. acc. pers. (subj. "I").

3. *encounter with hostility, fall upon* c. ׀ pers.; of God, c. acc. (sf.), + ׀ instr.

4. *encounter with request, entreat*, c. ׀ pers., sq. cl., + ׀ pers. on whose behalf.

5. *strike, touch*, of boundary, c. ׀ loc.

Hiph. 1. *cause to light upon*, c. acc. rei + ׀ pers.

2. *cause one* (acc.) *to entreat* (׀ pers.).

3. *make entreaty*, c. ׀ pers.; more gen. *interpose*, c. ׀ pers. in whose behalf; *one interposing*.

4. *make attack, assailant*.

⁷⁴ Hengstenberg, 536.

⁷⁵ Delitzsch, 339.

⁷⁶ According to the *cons. temporum* [sequence of tenses], the reference is not to the intercession (ἐντετεύχεσθαι) of the glorified One, but to that of the suffering One, on behalf of His foes. Every word stands here as if written beneath the cross on Golgotha. And this is the case with the clause before us, which was fulfilled (though not exclusively) in the prayer of the crucified Saviour: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) (340).

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5).

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25).

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. (Hebrews 9:24)

For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:18)

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15–16)

In Jesus' own words:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever. (John 14:16)

With his last word in this pericope (יִפְגִּיעַ), Isaiah makes one final “*inclusio*” that ties together Christ’s Passion and His intercession, His hellish sufferings and our entrance into heaven. The One who is able to intercede (יִפְגִּיעַ) for us is the One who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, the One upon whom the Lord laid (הִפְגִּיעַ) all our iniquities: וַיִּהְיֶה הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ אֵת עוֹן כָּלֵנוּ. He intercedes for us because took all our sins upon Himself so that the Father would see us as pure and innocent, without guile, without blemish. Thomas Kelly even picks up on this in his hymn, “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted.”⁷⁷ Jesus interposes to save us and to plead for us, but no one would interpose to help Him in His suffering. הִפְגִּיעַ (in the *Hiphil*) means to “cause to fall upon,” to “interpose,” and to “intercede.” The Lord interposed His Son between Himself and our sins; now the Son places Himself between us and the

⁷⁷ “None would interpose to save.” See Appendix D for the full hymn text.

Father, pleading on our behalf that the Father look not on our sins, but on His payment for our sins. For that reason the messengers go out to proclaim the good news (מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב), and cause salvation to be heard (בְּשִׂמְיֵה יֵשׁוּעָה), so that we might believe the report (הַאֲמִין לְשִׂמְעָתָנוּ), and through His stripes have healing (וּבְחַבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ), because there we see the Lamb led to the slaughter (שָׂחָה לְטַבַּחַת יוֹדָבֵל), the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Conclusion

Some summary comments from Delitzsch on the paradox and contrast of this chapter:

The curtain of the most holy is lifted higher and higher. The blood of the typical sacrifice, which has been hitherto dumb, begins to speak. Faith, which penetrates to the true meaning of the prophecy, hopes not only for the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but also for the Lamb of God, which beareth the sin of the world. And in prophecy itself we see the after-effect of this gigantic advance. Zechariah no longer prophesies of the Messiah merely as a king (Isa 5:13); He not only rules upon His throne, but is also a priest upon His throne: sovereignty and priesthood go hand in hand, being peacefully united in Him. And in Zech 12:13 the same prophet predicts in Him the good Divine Shepherd, whom His people pierce, though not without thereby fulfilling the counsel of God, and whom they afterwards long for with bitter lamentation and weeping. The penitential and believing confession which would then be made by Israel is prophetically depicted by Isaiah's pen — "mourning in bitter sorrow the lateness of its love."⁷⁸

But the Servant of Jehovah goes through shame to glory, and through death to life. He conquers when He falls; He rules after being enslaved; He lives after He has died; He completes His work after He Himself has been apparently cut off. His glory streams upon the dark ground of the deepest humiliation, to set forth which the dark colours were supplied by the pictures of suffering contained in the Psalms and in the book of Job. And these sufferings of His are not merely the sufferings of a confessor or a martyr, like those of the *ecclesia pressa*,

⁷⁸ Delitzsch, 342.

but a vicarious atoning suffering, a sacrifice for sin. To this the chapter before us returns again and again, being never tired of repeating it. “*Spiritus Sanctus*,” says Brentius, “*non delectatur inani βαπτολογία, et tamen quum in hoc cap. videatur βαπτολόγος καί ταυτολόγος esse, dubium non est, quin tractet rem cognitu maxime necessariam.*” [“The Holy Spirit does not delight in empty word-play, and yet when there seems to be battology (repetition of words) and tautology in this chapter, there is no doubt but that one should consider it extremely necessary examine the matter.”] The banner of the cross is here set up.⁷⁹

It has been an extreme privilege to delve more deeply into this phenomenal and classic text of the prophet Isaiah. It has brought me an even more profound amazement at the poetry of the Holy Spirit and the obvious unity of Scripture, but most of all an absolute loss for words at the depth of the riches of God’s grace. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1).

From Eden, Goshen, Sinai, and Calvary, God’s justice and mercy are clear and in perfect accord through the saving work of the Suffering Servant. Creation, Passover, Yom Kippur, Good Friday, and Easter mean nothing apart from each other. They are the one message of good news and salvation, proclaiming Jesus the Savior *for* the whole world *to* the whole world, because He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted; crucified, died, and was buried; rose again, ascended, and is seated at the right hand of the God the Father Almighty. This is our God, our salvation, our entrance into Paradise restored, where we may share the length of days with the One who justifies us through the sprinkling of His blood. “The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ... With His stripes we are healed. ... Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” LSQ

⁷⁹ Ibid., 341.

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Lectionary

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- Palm Sunday (Scandinavian Quinquagesima) Third Series: Is. 53:10-12
- One-Year: Good Friday Is. 52:13-53:12
- Easter Day: 1st — Is. 52:13-15
- ILCW (Year B) Pentecost 22 Isaiah 53:10-12

Appendix A: Whether Isaiah 53 is Messianic (385–646)

Hengstenberg has a long discussion on whether Isaiah 53 is Messianic. Below is an abstract of some of the main arguments and Hengstenberg's refutation of them.

Objections to Isaiah 53 being Messianic.

1. "Though the similarity of the condition of this pious sufferer with that of Christ is so great, yet still there is much also which is unsuitable to him." ...

2. "The name *servant of God* never occurs of the Messiah."

3. "The idea of a suffering and atoning Messiah is foreign from the Old Testament, and in contradiction to its prevailing representations, even admitting it to have been entertained by some about the age of Christ."

4. "The Messianic interpretation regards all as future; which the language does not allow. The suffering, contempt, and death of the servant of God are here represented throughout as past, since chap. 53:1-10, all is expressed in the *Praeter*."

5. "It is perfectly evident that this servant of God is the same person, who is the subject of discourse in the parallel passage. Chap. 42:1-7. 66:1-9. 50:4-11. 61:1-3. In these passages there is yet a great deal more which cannot apply to Christ."

6. "In what precedes, as well as in what follows, the subject of discourse is the restoration of the State after the exile. It was consequently entirely impossible for those, who then read the oracle, to refer it to a Redeemer to be expected in future times."

Hengstenberg's Refutations:

1. This [Messianic] interpretation is confirmed by the testimony of tradition. The Jews, in more ancient times, unanimously referred this prophecy to the Messiah. ...

2. The citations of this prophecy in the New Testament serve not only to show, that the Messianic interpretation was the prevailing one in those times, (otherwise the writers would have justified it, as e. g. in the case of the 16th Psalm, and in reference to the divine dignity of the Messiah, Ps. 110); the same things is also evident from the declaration of John the Baptist taken from the passage before us, (John 1:29 ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, comp. chap. 53:4, 7, 11), but also to furnish us with infallible evidence of its correctness. That in John 12:38 and Rom. 10:16, the first verse of the 53d

chapter is cited to explain the unbelief of the greatest part of the people, and in the former passage, with the formula ἵνα πληρωθῆ, would not it is true of itself be sufficient for proof. The passage, however, in Luke 22:37 affords decisive evidence. Christ himself there says, the prophecies relating to him are about to have an end, (so only can the expression τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ τέλος ἔχει be understood; comp. Matt. 26:54, where Christ says he must suffer and die in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled) and therefore the declaration also: "he was numbered with the transgressors," must be accomplished in him. ... And we make no groundless assumption, when we assert, that in those passages where Christ says he must suffer and die κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς, he has this passage chiefly in view. ... It was not because the apostles did not explain this prophecy of the expiatory death of Christ, that they so seldom cited it, when they speak on that subject, but because it was so familiar to them and to those to whom they wrote, that direct quotation was unnecessary, a bare allusion being sufficient. This appears from the numerous passages, in which we meet with allusions to the prophecy, or reminiscences of it. (Comp. e. g. Mark 9:12. Rom. 4:25. 1 Cor. 15:3. 2 Cor. 5:21. 1 John 3:5. 1 Pet. 1:19.) This passage is, as it were, the theme, which lay at the foundation of the apostolic annunciation respecting the atoning death of Jesus. ...

3. There can be no question, and the best interpreters ... acknowledge, that the subject of these prophecies can be no other than that of those in chap. XLII, XLIX, L, LXI. Now if these can be referred only to the Messiah, all the arguments in favor of their Messianic character, and which we will not here repeat, are equally applicable to the prophecy before us, and *vice versa*. In addition to this, the passage chap. 11:1 **וַיִּצְאָה הַטֹּר מִיְמֵי יֵשׁוּעַ וְנִצְרָר מִשָּׂרֵשׁוֹ יִפְרָה**, which is also explained of the Messiah by Gesenius, has so striking a resemblance to chap. 53:2, that both must be referred to the same subject. ...

4. To these external arguments we must subjoin the internal, derived from the characteristics attributed to the subject of the prediction. Though each particular feature can be shown to have been fulfilled in Christ, yet we will here confine ourselves to that which belongs to him exclusively, and can be referred to no one else without entire caprice ... vicarious sufferings, etc. ...

Appendix B: Quotations of Isaiah 53 in the Lutheran Confessions (emphasis added)

Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Article XX: Of Good Works.

81] Therefore the blasphemy of ascribing Christ's honor to our works is not to be endured. These theologians are now entirely without shame if they dare to bring such an opinion into the Church. Nor do we doubt that His Most Excellent Imperial Majesty and very many of the princes would not have allowed this passage to remain in the *Confutation* if they had been admonished of it. 82] Here we could cite infinite testimonies from Scripture and from the Fathers [that this article is certainly divine and true, and this is the sacred and divine truth. For there is hardly a syllable, hardly a leaf in the Bible, in the principal books of the Holy Scriptures, where this is not clearly stated.] But also above we have said enough on this subject. And there is no need of more testimonies for one who knows why Christ has been given to us, who knows that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. [God-fearing, pious hearts that know well why Christ has been given, who for all the possessions and kingdoms of the world would not be without Christ as our only Treasure, our only Mediator and Redeemer, must here be shocked and terrified that God's holy Word and Truth should be so openly despised and condemned by poor men.] **Isaiah says, 53, 6: The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. The adversaries, on the other hand, [accuse Isaiah and the entire Bible of lying and] teach that God lays our iniquities not on Christ, but on our [beggarly] works. Neither are we disposed to mention here the sort of works [rosaries, pilgrimages, and the like] which they teach.** 83] We see that a horrible decree has been prepared against us, which would terrify us still more if we were contending concerning doubtful or trifling subjects. Now, since our consciences understand that by the adversaries the manifest truth is condemned, whose defense is necessary for the Church and increases the glory of Christ, we easily despise the terrors of the world, and with a strong spirit will bear whatever is to be suffered for the glory of Christ and the advantage of the Church. 84] Who would not rejoice to die in the confession of such articles as that we obtain the remission of sins by faith freely for Christ's sake, that we do not merit the remission of sins by our works? 85] [Experience shows—and the monks themselves must admit it—that] The consciences of the pious will have no sufficiently sure consolation against the terrors of sin and of death, and against the

devil soliciting to despair [and who in a moment blows away all our works like dust], if they do not know that they ought to be confident that they have the remission of sins freely for Christ's sake. This faith sustains and quickens hearts in that most violent conflict with despair [in the great agony of death, in the great anguish, when no creature can help, yea, when we must depart from this entire visible creation into another state and world, and must die].

Smalcald Articles (I, II, 1–5)

THE SECOND PART

Treats of the Articles which Refer to the Office and Work of Jesus Christ, or Our Redemption.

The first and chief article is this,

1] That Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification, Rom. 4, 25.

2] And He alone is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, John 1, 29; and **God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, Is. 53, 6.**

3] Likewise: All have sinned and are justified without merit [freely, and without their own works or merits] by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood, Rom. 3, 23f

4] Now, since it is necessary to believe this, and it cannot be otherwise acquired or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us as St. Paul says, Rom. 3, 28: For we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law. Likewise 3, 26: That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Christ.

5] Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered [nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same], even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. For there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved, says Peter, Acts 4, 12. **And with His stripes we are healed, Is. 53, 5.** And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the [whole] world. Therefore, we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us.

Apology XXIV

22] [Thus there have been in the Law emblems of the true sacrifice.] But in fact there has been only one propitiatory sacrifice in the world, namely, the death of Christ, as the Epistle to the Hebrews 10, 4 teaches: It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. And a little after, of the [obedience and] will of Christ, 10, 10: By the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body 23] of Jesus Christ once for all. **And Isaiah interprets the Law, in order that we may know that the death of Christ is truly a satisfaction for our sins, or expiation, and that the ceremonies of the Law are not; wherefore he says, Is. 53, 10: When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He will see His seed, etc. For the word employed here, אָשָׁם [asham], signifies a victim for transgression; which signified in the Law that a certain Victim was to come to make satisfaction for our sins and reconcile God, in order that men might know that God wishes to be reconciled to us, not on account of our own righteousnesses, but on account of the merits of another, namely, of Christ. Paul interprets the same word אָשָׁם [asham] as sin, Rom. 8, 3: For sin (God) condemned sin, i. e., He punished sin for sin, i. e., by a Victim for sin.** The significance of the word can be the more easily understood from the customs of the heathen, which, we see, have been received from the misunderstood expressions of the Fathers. The Latins called a victim that which in great calamities, where God seemed to be especially enraged, was offered to appease God's wrath, a *piaculum*; and they sometimes sacrificed human victims, perhaps because they had heard that a human victim would appease God for the entire human race. The Greeks sometimes called them καθάρματα and sometimes περιψήματα. Isaiah and Paul, therefore, mean that Christ became a victim, 24] i. e., an expiation, that by His merits, and not by our own, God might be reconciled. Therefore let this remain established in the case, namely, that the death of Christ alone is truly a propitiatory sacrifice. For the Levitical propitiatory sacrifices were so called only to signify a future expiation. On account of a certain resemblance, therefore, they were satisfactions redeeming the righteousness of the Law, lest those persons who sinned should be excluded from the commonwealth. But after the revelation of the Gospel [and after the true sacrifice has been accomplished] they had to cease; and because they had to cease in the revelation of the Gospel, they were not truly propitiations, since the Gospel was promised for this very reason, namely, to set forth a propitiation.

53] And although our belief has its chief testimonies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, nevertheless the adversaries distort against us mutilated passages from this Epistle, as in this very passage, where it is said that every high priest is ordained to offer sacrifices for sins. Scripture itself immediately adds that Christ is High Priest, Heb. 5, 5. 6. 10. The preceding words speak of the Levitical priesthood, and signify that the Levitical priesthood was an image of the priesthood of Christ. For the Levitical sacrifices for sins did not merit the remission of sins before God; they were only an image of the sacrifice of Christ, which was to be the one propitiatory sacrifice, as we have said above. 54] Therefore the Epistle is occupied to a great extent with the topic that the ancient priesthood and the ancient sacrifices were instituted not for the purpose of meriting the remission of sins before God or reconciliation, but only to signify the future sacrifice of Christ alone. 55] **For in the Old Testament it was necessary for saints to be justified by faith derived from the promise of the remission of sins that was to be granted for Christ's sake, just as saints are also justified in the New Testament. From the beginning of the world it was necessary for all saints to believe that Christ would be the promised offering and satisfaction for sins, as Isaiah 53, 10 teaches: When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.**

Appendix C: Excerpt from Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*

Boso I see that it is necessary for the Father to reward the Son; else he is either unjust in not wishing to do it, or weak in not being able to do it; but neither of these things can be attributed to God.

Anselm He who rewards another either gives him something which he does not have, or else remits some rightful claim upon him. But anterior to the great offering of the Son, all things belonging to the Father were his, nor did he ever owe anything which could be forgiven him. How then can a reward be bestowed on one who needs nothing, and to whom no gift or release can be made?

Boso I see on the one hand a necessity for a reward, and on the other it appears impossible; for God must necessarily render payment for what he owes, and yet there is no one to receive it.

Anselm But if a reward so large and so deserved is not given to him or any one else, then it will almost appear as if the Son had done this great work in vain.

Boso Such a supposition is impious.

Anselm The reward then must be bestowed upon some one else, for it cannot be upon him.

Boso This is necessarily so.

Anselm Had the Son wished to give some one else what was due to him, could the Father rightfully prevent it, or refuse to give it to the other person?

Boso No! but I think it would be both just and necessary that the gift should be given by the Father to whomsoever the Son wished; because the Son should be allowed to give away what is his own, and the Father cannot bestow it at all except upon some other person.

Anselm *Upon whom would he more properly bestow the reward accruing from his death, than upon those for whose salvation, as right reason teaches, he became man; and for whose sake, as we have already said, he left an example of suffering death to preserve holiness? For surely in vain will men imitate him, if they be not also partakers of his reward. Or whom could he more justly make heirs of the inheritance, which he does not need, and of the superfluity of his possessions, than his parents and brethren?* What more proper than that, when he beholds so many of them weighed down by so heavy a debt, and wasting through poverty, in the depth of their miseries, he should remit the debt incurred by their sins, and give them what their transgressions had forfeited?

Boso The universe can hear of nothing more reasonable, more sweet, more desirable. And I receive such confidence from this that I cannot describe the joy with which my heart exults. For it seems to me that God can reject none who come to him in his name.

Appendix D: Isaiah 53 in Christian Hymnody

(A Scriptural Index of ELH is available at:
<http://www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/ELHHB.html>)

When our heads are bowed with woe	274.02	Is. 53:4	He has borne our griefs
When o'er my sins I sorrow	276.02	Is. 53:4	bears our griefs
Near the cross was Mary weeping	294.02	Is. 53:4	bore our griefs
Now Christ is risen!	355.03	Is. 53:4	He has borne our griefs
What a friend we have in Jesus	385.01	Is. 53:4	bears our griefs
Stricken, smitten, and afflicted	297.01	Is. 53:4	Stricken, smitten, and afflicted
Jesus, I will ponder now	287.02	Is. 53:5	by His stripes
Lord Jesus Christ, my Life, my Light	291.05	Is. 53:5	by His stripes we are healed
Near the cross was Mary weeping	294.03	Is. 53:5	by His stripes we are healed
The strife is o'er	357.05	Is. 53:5	by His stripes we are healed
I lay my sins on Jesus	239.01	Is. 53:6	lay sins on Jesus
Hail, Thou once despised Jesus!	270.02	Is. 53:6	all our sins were laid on Him
O sinner, come thy sin to mourn	272.01	Is. 53:6	all our sins were laid on Him
Sweet the moments, rich in blessing	300.02	Is. 53:6	the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all
Like the golden sun ascending	354.05	Is. 53:6	the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all
If Thy beloved Son, O God	374.05	Is. 53:6	the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all
To Jordan came our Lord, the Christ	247.07	Is. 53:7	Lamb led to slaughter

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth	331.01	Is. 53:7	Lamb silent before shearers
So rest, my Rest	338.01	Is. 53:9	grave with the wicked

1. Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
See Him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ by man rejected;
Yes, my soul, 'tis He! 'tis He!
'Tis the long-expected Prophet,
David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
'Tis the true and faithful Word.

2. Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that Justice gave.

3. Ye who think of sin but lightly
Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the Sacrifice appointed,
See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the WORD, the LORD'S ANOINTED,
Son of Man and Son of God.

4. Here we have a firm foundation;
Here the refuge of the lost;
Christ's the Rock of our salvation,
His the name of which we boast.
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded,
Sacrifice to cancel guilt!
None shall ever be confounded
Who on Him their hope have built. (*ELH 297*)

Appendix E: Outline of the Text

Behold, My **Servant** shall **deal prudently (prosper)**;

**He shall be (1)exalted and (2)extolled and (3)be very high. (Is. 52:13) [rose again, ascended, is seated]*

Just as **many** were astonished at you,

So His visage was marred more than any man,

And His form more than the sons of men; (Is. 52:14)

So shall He sprinkle **many** nations.

Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;

For what had not been told them **they shall see**,

And what they had not heard they shall consider. (Is. 52:15)

Who has believed our report?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? (Is. 53:1)

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,

And as a root out of dry ground.

He has no form or comeliness;

And when **we** see Him,

There is no beauty that we should desire Him. (Is. 53:2)

He is despised and rejected by men,

A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And **we** hid, as it were, **our** faces from Him;

He was despised, and **we** did not esteem Him. (Is. 53:3)

Surely He has borne **our** griefs

And carried **our** sorrows;

Yet **we** esteemed **Him**

(1)Stricken, (2)smitten by **God, and (3)afflicted.*

(Is. 53:4)

But He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon

Him,

And by His stripes we are healed. (Is. 53:5)

All **we** like sheep have gone astray;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the **LORD** has laid on **Him** the iniquity of us all.

(Is. 53:6)

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet **He** opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So **He** opened not His mouth. (Is. 53:7)
He was taken from prison and from judgment,
 And who will **declare His generation?**
 For **He** was cut off from the land of the living;
 For the transgressions of My people **He** was (1)*stricken*. (Is.
 53:8)
 And they made His grave with the (2)*wicked*—
 But with the rich at His (3)*death*, [*crucified, died, was buried*]
 Because **He** had done no violence,
 Nor was any deceit in His mouth. (Is. 53:9)

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
 He has put Him to grief.
 When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
 And the pleasure of the LORD shall **prosper** in His hand. (Is. 53:10)
 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.
 By His knowledge My righteous **Servant** shall justify **many**,
 For He shall bear their iniquities. (Is. 53:11)
 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the **great**,
 And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
 Because He poured out His soul unto death,
 And He was ^{*}(1) *numbered* with the transgressors,
 And He (2) *bore* the sin of **many**,
 And (3) *made intercession* for the transgressors. (Is. 53:12) [*crucified, died,*
is seated]

Creation, Human Sin, and Jesus

Matthew W. Crick
Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church
San Antonio, Texas

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WHERE DID YOU COME FROM? What are you? What is your purpose?

Can you answer these questions? Did you know that you can find the answers to each of these questions in the Bible's very first chapter, Genesis chapter 1, verses 26–28? In these verses God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (the three persons of the one true God) reveal their intent to create the human being in the image of God and define the human being's purpose in life. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."¹ Next, we hear what God *did*: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" This happened on the sixth day of creation.

Let's ask the questions again and answer them, according to Genesis 1:26–28.

- *Where did you, a human being, come from?* God created you on the sixth day of creation.

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the NIV.

- *What are you?* A creature, which God originally created in his image, in his likeness.
- *What is your purpose?* You are the crown of God's creation. He has created you to be fruitful and fill the earth. Also he has created you to subdue the earth and rule over every fish, bird and animal.

God's Image—Do you know what it is?

When the Bible teaches that we human beings were created in God's image, it means that we were made to be like God in several important ways. (Animals, in contrast, were not made in God's image and so do not have many of the qualities human beings possess.) By saying that God made the human being in his image the Bible is speaking of *two* important truths. First it means that God created the human being as a holy creature, just as he is holy. The Christian and church reformer Martin Luther said that man was created righteous, true and upright in actions and words, but also in his inner being—in his soul. In this holiness, the first human beings, Adam (the male) and Eve (the female), knew God and fully recognized him as their Creator. They loved him with all their heart, soul, and mind. There is also a second meaning of the image of God. It includes the following:

- We were made to be spirit-beings who live forever, in addition to having a physical body.
- We were made to have freedom and to be rational, moral, creative, self-aware, knowledgeable, and capable of marvelous accomplishments—be that artistic, intellectual, scientific, technological and the like.
- We were made with a conscience that tells us if we are living up to God's moral law.

This is the high Christian view of the original human being. "Christianity explains not only freedom but also the *other* dimensions of human personality that derive from freedom: creativity, originality, moral responsibility, and even love. The whole range of human personality is accounted for only by the Christian worldview, because it begins with a personal God."²

In Genesis 2:19, we are given a glimpse into God's personal love for Adam, and Adam's love response to God his Creator. "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he

² Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 395.

would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.” In this, God introduced Adam to the full range of abilities with which he had been blessed, and gave him the opportunity to exercise them. On the very day that God created him, we learn that Adam was able to: 1) comprehend and gladly carry out the work which God had defined for him in Genesis 1:26–28; 2) articulate himself in a fully-developed human language; 3) analyze and differentiate between species; and 4) identify each beast and bird with a fitting name and recall the names he had given to each. God taught Adam one more thing through this assignment. As Adam went through the process of naming the animals (which emphasized his rule over them from the very beginning), he came to recognize that “no animal was suited for intimate companionship with him. He had no one with whom he could share the joy of living in paradise.”³ So God put Adam into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, and closed up the place with flesh. From the rib God created a wife for him, a helper to support him in his rule of the earth. (For God had said: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” [Genesis 2:18].) When Adam came out of the sleep he saw the woman, and immediately recognized that she too was created in the image of God and that she had been created from him directly. He said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:23). This established the marriage relationship from which children could be born and raised and the human race could fill the earth. “The marital relationship begins when two people freely pledge themselves unconditionally to each other... which then becomes God’s way of passing on the gift of life to the next generation. In God’s view, sexual union is anything but casual. Marriage, then, is not human arrangement or social development. It was God’s idea, his gift to his highest creatures.”⁴ These truths we learn from Genesis 2.

Do human beings still possess the original image of God?

In Genesis 3, we learn about the tragic fall of Adam and Eve, and its consequences upon the entire creation. They were holy, but they sinned. The creation was perfect, but their sin totally corrupted it. How did this happen? Let’s return to the six days of creation for some important background information.

³ John Jeske, *The People’s Bible: Genesis* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41–42.

Sometime during the six days of creation, as God was giving form and detail to the heavens and earth, he created the angels. The Bible tells us that angels were created as holy, immortal, powerful spirit-beings, with a free will. God created different ranks of angels, some more powerful, some less. Their purpose is to serve human beings (Hebrews 1:14). After God completed the good creation in all its vast array, one of the most powerful angels suddenly rebelled against him. Many lesser angels joined him in rebellion. God cast out this powerful angel from heaven and along with every lesser angel who rebelled with him. While we can't fully understand why holy angels would suddenly rebel, the fact is it happened (1 Timothy 3:6). This is the origin of evil. The Bible identifies the chief of the fallen angels by names such as the devil, Satan, Beelzebub, the prince of this world, a roaring lion, the dragon and the ancient serpent. Jesus identified him as the "father of lies" (John 8:44). The devil hates God, despises God's Word of truth, and attempts to destroy everything God builds. In fact, the devil and his demons expend every effort in direct conflict with their original mission. God had created the angels to help human beings in their relationship with him. They were quite literally "messengers" of God to the human race, the Hebrew meaning of the word "angel." Now the devil and the fallen angels make it their business to destroy the faith of human beings in their Creator. They do so with lies. This brings us to Genesis 3. It describes his original destroying work: the fall of Adam and Eve into sin.

As we learn from Genesis 3, Satan inhabited a serpent (a disguise) and slipped into Eve's presence with a question: "Did God really say that you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1) He was tempting Eve to reject God's command, which God had spoken to Adam on the sixth day, before Eve was created: "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). Our hindsight wonders, "Why didn't Eve sense immediate danger when this serpent engaged her in conversation? Didn't it strike her as odd that an animal was speaking to her in human language, and seemed to be fully aware of God's command to Adam?" It's entirely possible that these questions were running through her mind, but she did not attempt to resolve them. However, Eve *did* reject Satan's first temptation, replying to him, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch

it, or you will die” (Genesis 3:2–3). But the devil did not give up—he never does—and Eve did not disengage from him. So he was able to continue, now concerning God’s veracity: “You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” By calling into question God’s veracity, he was suggesting to Eve that it wouldn’t be such a great sin to eat from the tree, and that if she did eat, God certainly wouldn’t punish her with a death sentence for such a “minor infraction.” Rather her life would become more complete. In effect, he was attempting to convince Eve, “When you eat, you will discover that I am telling you the truth about this, not God.” We should notice the temptation he tucked into his words: “You will be *like God*....” This may be the root sin of the devil himself, who attempted to climb over God in his craving to become “like God,” or to become God himself. He wanted Eve to do the same. The devil knew that this craving, once it sets in, can never be satisfied. He knew it would destroy humanity as it destroyed him.

She accepted the lie for truth. Once she did, she instantly began to crave more than God had assigned to her, beginning with her relationship to Adam. She desired the fruit, then she touched the fruit, then she ate the fruit, and then she ripped the reins of leadership from Adam—and he allowed it. She gave the fruit to Adam, and he ate the fruit, weakly following his wife’s lead into rebellion. The order of creation had been stood on its head. Immediately “their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves” (Genesis 3:7). In the end, they came to know good and evil as the devil said. But it didn’t make them “like God.” Instead they knew good as something they had lost; they knew evil as something they had become. The dramatic nature of the fall is depicted in the seemingly modest act of making coverings for their bodies. It says everything we need to know about how sin debased the human condition. They felt an immediate need to *hide*. They felt the need to hide their bodies from each other due to the sudden rush of uncontrolled sexual lust and shame they felt—something they had never felt before. It seemed to startle them and they didn’t like it. They also felt the need to hide among the trees when they heard God approaching them in the garden. In both cases they were attempting to hide from their sin. God would have none of it. He called for them, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9).

The Bible says that God knows all things (the only One who does). He certainly knew that Adam and Eve had sinned. When God called for them, “Where are you?” he was in reality “calling them out.” They

would have no choice but to come out of hiding both in terms of their physical location (in the trees) and their spiritual location (sin and unbelief). So Adam, once forced from hiding, confessed, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid” (Genesis 3:10). God knew there was more to the story than this. Just as a father will press his child who has done wrong until the truth is fully wrung out, so God pressed Adam. He asked Adam pointedly, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat from?” (Genesis 3:11) When Adam spoke again he offered a little more information, but not without an attempt to shift blame: “This woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). You can hear the excuse in Adam’s confession, and also the brazenness of it—that he dared even to blame God for giving him such a trouble-making, “bones of my bones” wife in the first place. Adam was justifying his sin, “If it wasn’t for her none of this would have happened.” God then turned his attention to Eve, “What is this you have done?” (Genesis 3:13) She blamed the devil. “The serpent deceived me and I ate” (Genesis 3:13). But each of them knew better. (There was no one to blame except....)

They had become fallen, sinful, evil creatures, just like the devil. They were filled with unbelief of God, pride, lust, shame, fear, anger, and excuse-making. Death entered into them and into the creation. The image of God was shattered in this sense: they no longer believed in God (nor could they return themselves to faith in him) and they were no longer holy, but 100% sinful. This is original sin and its immediate consequences.

Their sin had other consequences too. Now, marriage would be filled with competition between husband and wife. Now human rule of the earth would be filled with waste and greed and every kind of abuse. Now, the creation would fight *against* the human being in his struggle to survive (think: floods and droughts and famines and earthquakes). Now, the human being would find himself in a constant search for meaning in his life of dusty toil. After all the struggle, then death. God said to Adam, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:17–19).

How was it possible for holy people to sin?

It is difficult to understand fully since we don't know what it is like to be holy like Adam and Eve were. This much we know from the Bible: Just as it was for the angels, so it was for Adam and Eve. God created them as holy individuals and he blessed them with a free will. They were not zombies. In freedom, they were fully able *not to sin*. God gave them opportunity to exercise their free will when he commanded them, "You are *free* to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you are eat of it you will surely die." Robert Johnston says, "To have created man with a free will and yet to have given him no opportunity to exercise that will in a personal decision for God would have made a farce of that attribute. Man would have been like a robot in his service to God, serving him only because he was unable to do anything else. He could have exercised absolutely no choice in the matter. Would this kind of service not have been a mockery of God? God also created the same kind of free will in His angels."⁵ Martin Luther adds, "This tree of the knowledge of good and evil was Adam's church, his altar, his pulpit. Here he was to yield to God the obedience he owed, give recognition to the word and will of God, give thanks to God...."⁶

To summarize: Before sin, Adam and Eve were holy, they were able not to sin (free will), and they believed in their Creator and wanted to serve him. After sin, Adam and Eve were evil, they were unable to refuse sin (free will was destroyed), and they no longer believed in their Creator and did not want to serve him.

What does Adam and Eve's sin have to do with me?

When Adam and Eve sinned, they became instantly and utterly sinful. Because of this, the children they would conceive would be utterly sinful also, even from the point of conception ("Like father, like son," as the saying goes). This is indicated in Genesis 5:1–3, which describes the birth of Adam and Eve's son Seth: "This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created mankind, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man.' When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he

⁵ Robert Johnston, *The Scriptures—Sacred Fact or Pious Fiction* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1970), 33.

⁶ *Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 95.

named him Seth.” You see, Seth was born in the image of his fallen father Adam, rather than in the holy image of God. King David, in Psalm 51:5, describes what the image of man is: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

According to the sinful nature, a sinful person is an unbelieving person. A sinful person is naturally hostile to God and to everything God is, and to everything God does. “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law nor can it do so” (Romans 8:7). Because Adam and Eve listened to the devil’s lies and accepted them as truth, every human being is bound to do likewise. Every one of us. We are unable to will ourselves to believe in the God of the Bible, and we have no desire to. Before we ever hear a single one of the devil’s lies about God we are already convinced the devil is telling us the truth. The Bible says, “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). This explains Jesus’ strong condemnation of his countrymen who did not believe in him. “Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet I tell the truth, and you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God” (John 8:43–47). In these words, Jesus condemns all people of this sin. Every one of us was conceived and born into the world already guilty of unbelief.

How does sin affect the image of God according to its other characteristics?

1) *The human soul remains immortal, even though the body decays, grows ill, and dies.*

The Bible says that the human soul will go to one of two places after the body dies. Jesus says, “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:46).

2) *We retain a natural knowledge or “sense” of God, but we do not naturally know the true God.*

A Bible example that teaches us about the natural knowledge of God is Acts 17:22–23. It is the introduction of the sermon the Apostle Paul preached to the Greeks of Athens: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To An Unknown God.’” Yet, because of lost holiness, we cannot believe in God the Creator on our own or recognize him as he is. The perversion of the natural knowledge of God is the cause for the countless religions that spring up in the human search for “someone” or “something” beyond. Apart from the true faith of the Bible, each is a vain human attempt to reconnect with the God that we no longer know naturally (read Acts 17:16–33). Consequently, the Bible says, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Romans 3:10–12).

3) *We remain rational, creative, intellectual, yet we misuse these blessings to pursue selfish cravings of all kinds, including hunger for power, wealth, and celebrity.*

Chapters 4 and 6 of Genesis are dominated by this theme. The Bible describes the early progress of Cain’s descendants in architecture, music, animal husbandry, and metal working in bronze and iron (Genesis 4:20–22). Yet they did not thank God for what they were able to achieve. One of Cain’s descendants, Lamech, even rejoiced over the blood he had shed: “Adah and Zillah, listen to me: wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.” As mankind zoomed into technological advancements of all types, it completely fell away from God, descending into hardened sin, pride and evil. “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and full of violence” (Genesis 6:11). I don’t think we can imagine how violent human life on earth had become before the flood (we think it is bad *now*). The only exception was Noah, his three sons, and their wives—eight remaining believers in God in an estimated world-wide population of 3 billion.⁷ So God told Noah that he was going to destroy mankind and that an ark needed to be built. God gave Noah the specifications for

⁷ Jeske, 77.

the Ark. It was to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high, with three decks large enough to carry its animal cargo, the male and female pairs of animals, birds, and all creatures that move along the ground, and the necessary supplies to live on, until the floodwaters receded again. It was quite an undertaking. Noah had the capability and skill to build it. 120 years later God judged unbelieving mankind through a catastrophic flood. “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty day and forty nights” (Genesis 7:11–12).

So mankind “began again” from this family of eight believers. But was human sin drowned by the floodwaters so that it would trouble the earth no more? If we continue a little further into the Genesis history, we learn it was not. About a year afterwards, when the flood waters had settled, and vegetation began to grow again, God allowed Noah and his family to leave the ark, with the command he had originally given to Adam and Eve: “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.” So they did, as reflected in the Table of Nations, Genesis 10. Mankind was repopulating and beginning to spread across the drastically changed and challenged post-flood earth. At this time the descendants of Noah’s son Ham settled in the plain of Shinar. It was there that the pre-flood sin lifted its prideful head again. They decided that Shinar was as far as they wanted to go. They said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:1–4). There can be no doubt that they were planning to build something tremendous, even measured by modern terms. Most likely they were planning to make use of the highly advanced pre-flood technology that Noah and his sons carried with them into the post flood world, and combine it with new advancements.⁸ Yet their planning was in direct, prideful disobedience of God’s command to fill the earth. God saw trouble brewing. “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:6). It was here that God confused their language to frustrate their planning and building so that it was abandoned (Genesis 11:5–9). Humanity is the same today as it was then. It constantly craves more in the pursuit to become like God, using

⁸ Donald E. Chittick, *The Puzzle of Ancient Man* (Newberg, OR: Creation Compass), 149–150.

and abusing, gathering but unwilling to give back, never quite satisfied with anything. We see it in our own lives.

4) *Each person has a conscience from the point of conception. It tells us if we are living up to God's holy standard (which we aren't).*

The conscience is God's moral law, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17), written on the mind and heart from the point of conception. When we do right our conscience defends us; when we do wrong it accuses us (Romans 2:14–15). The conscience is the curb that prevents human beings from acting like remorseless animals. It enables human society to function. Yet every day we sin against the conscience. We try to muffle its voice through excuse-making—why we were justified in doing whatever it was we did, even if it *was* wrong. (Think of Adam's excuse-making in the garden and Lamech's song of justification for his blood-shedding.) *What do the Ten Commandments say?* We must know so that we can confess our sin for what it is, with no excuses.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
3. Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.
4. Honor your father and mother so that you may live long in the land...
5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

Every one of us has broken every one of the Commandments. We break them in the things we say, do, and even *think*. Jesus says that hatred is the sin of murder, and lust is the sin of adultery, even without acting on these thoughts. Who can escape? The Bible says, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (Romans 3:19–20).

What are the ultimate consequences of our lost holiness?

Our bodies age, become sick, and die.

Sin introduced physical decay, disease, and death into human life and all life on earth. Consequently, the human race is in a physical death spiral. The Bible says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Current research into the complexity of the human genome has revealed that the human race is decaying genetically and losing genetic information, rather than evolving and gaining information. In fact, geneticists have discovered that the human genome is deteriorating 1–2% with each generation through mutations. Current research is also revealing that mutations very rarely improve a species. Rather they cause harm or at the very least are nearly neutral.⁹ Some mutations directly affect the function and health of one’s body. Literally, they can be life-threatening. Cancers, genetic defects like Down Syndrome, diseases of the brain like Alzheimer’s, even aging, are the result of genetic mutation.¹⁰ Genetic decay has been occurring since the original copies, Adam and Eve, sinned. Mutations have been mounting since then, having the effect of shortening life spans. We are flawed copies of flawed copies of flawed copies, over and over and over again. (In other words, we are mutant life forms, a feeble shadow of the original.) Genetic scientists foresee a time when the human race itself will no longer be able to reproduce because of advanced genetic decay, a point which they call “error catastrophe.”¹¹ The reality of genetic decay is directly discrediting Charles Darwin’s theory that mutation has been the driving force, through the sieve of natural selection, for species’ development and improvement. (Interestingly, when Darwin published his theory in 1859, next to nothing was known about genetics. Charles Darwin knew next to nothing about genetics.)

The entire creation is in a death spiral, along with mankind. Everything is wearing down and wearing out, as the Bible teaches us in Romans 8:20: “The creation was subjected to frustration.” We see genetic decay in every species of the world. For various reasons, genetic

⁹ John C. Sanford, *Genetic Entropy and The Mystery of the Genome* (Waterloo, NY: FMS Publications, 2008), 15–32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

and environmental, species continue to become extinct. There is little to nothing the human being can do to slow this decay.¹²

This tragic reality of decay helps us to understand God's reason for casting Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after they sinned. It was for love's sake! God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:21–24). God was not talking about eternal life here. God wants us to have eternal life. But if Adam and Eve had reached out and eaten from the tree of life they would have trapped themselves in aging, decaying bodies that could not die, until every moment of their existence would be torture. They would still be alive today, dying, but unable to die. Think about the implications of this for your life and for the earth itself.¹³

We must face judgment at the throne of God the holy Creator

The Bible says that all people must give account before God's throne after they die. There will be no place to hide as Adam and Eve discovered that day in the Garden. God knows the sins we successfully keep hidden from all other eyes (or do not admit to ourselves). Each person—every one of us—deserves to be judged for every one of our careless thoughts, words, and actions. Because the human soul is eternal, those who fail the test will suffer eternally in hell for failing their holy Creator. Jesus says of this, "Their worm does not die, and the fire is not

¹² Ibid., 62–63.

¹³ The reality of genetic decay is very depressing. Professor John Sanford acknowledges so. In fact one of the reviewers of his book commented about this fact. In his book, *Genetic Entropy and The Mystery of the Genome*, Professor Sanford offers this aside (158):

One of my reviewers told me that the message of this book is both terrifying and depressing. He suggested that perhaps I am a little like a sadistic steward on board the Titanic, gleefully spreading the news that the ship is sinking. But that is not correct. I hate the consequences of entropy (degeneration). I hate to see it in my own body, in the failing health of loved ones, or in the deformity of a new-born baby. I find it all absolutely ghastly, but also absolutely undeniable. Surely a real steward on the Titanic would have a responsibility to let people know that the ship is sinking, even if some people might hate him for it. I feel I am in that position. Responsible people should be grateful to know the bad news, so they can constructively respond to it. If we have been putting all our hope in a sinking ship, would it not be expedient to recognize that and abandon false hope? It is only in this light that we can appreciate bad news. Only in the light of the bad news can we really appreciate the good news that there is a lifeboat.... I believe the Author of Life has the power to defeat death and degeneration.

quenched” (Mark 9:48). Hell is the place of punishment, an eternal prison, which God created for the devil and his demons. All who reject the God of the Bible and follow the lies of devil will be sent there also (2 Peter 2:4–10). The final judgment is also coming, when Jesus, the Son of God, returns in glory, with his holy angels. At that time, the earth will be destroyed, the books will be opened, and all will be judged innocent or guilty (Revelation 20:11–15).

Satan is constantly at work to destroy human being, body, mind, and soul

Satan, the father of lies, is the root of all evil. He continually tempts us to pervert the unique gifts God has given, just as he tempted Adam and Eve. He shrewdly uses every tool, especially false religion, to lead us away from the faith of the Bible. He leads us into behavior that is far worse than animal-like (such as abortion on demand, serial killing, or Islamo-fascist terrorism). He coaxes human society to slide into dysfunction of every kind (divorce, neglected or spoiled children, sexual immorality, greed, communism, anarchy). The Bible says, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He even poses as something good (what he once was) to destroy body and soul. “Satan masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

What hope and meaning can there be for the sinful human being?

The reality of sin, decay, death and judgment troubles all people deeply. No one wants to see it, feel it, or deal with it. It troubled Charles Darwin. It caused him to question, “I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created parasitic wasps with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars.” He did not understand or accept the reality of human sin and its consequence on the entire creation. He began to theorize an alternative explanation for suffering. “Blind, pitiless, indifference,” he said. He convinced himself that God does not exist and therefore did not create the world and does not oversee it. He convinced himself that life began on its own in the form of a common ancestor, from which all life branched out through random mutation and natural selection, into various species. Therefore, in Darwin’s view, the human being, with his unique gifts, is not a special creature of God. In Darwin’s view, the human being was created neither immediately nor specifically on the

sixth day of creation. Darwin believed that the human being is merely a by-product of survival in a world that is neither evil nor good. For Darwin, all life, including human life, is simply a battle of gene pools. If this is so, who can lay claim to any truth, any absolute morality, any purpose, other than to survive at all costs? *Survival at all costs is not hope.* Whether Charles Darwin ever truly believed in God, even earlier in his life, is known only to God himself. The fact is that he moved away from faith, away from natural knowledge of God, and away from the moral law of his conscience. The devil uses his now widely held belief to lead countless numbers of people away from faith in God the Creator and God the Savior, Jesus Christ. Some have described his belief as a “universal acid.”¹⁴ It eats away at *everything*. It offers no objectively true hope or meaning.

In contrast to Darwinism and other false religions, the Bible says that there is:

- a. OBJECTIVE, TRUE HOPE IN WHICH TO BELIEVE!
- b. OBJECTIVE, TRUE MEANING FOR WHICH TO LIVE!

Here's Why and How (It is good news)

The Bible tells us that God is the God of justice and love. Justice required human sin and unbelief to be convicted, yet out of his love for all people he desired to save sinners from the conviction all deserve. After Adam and Eve sinned, God immediately promised humanity a Savior who would defeat the devil and free humanity from his lies. God told the devil, “I will put enmity (hatred) between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). These words form the basis of the Christian Gospel (Gospel means “good news”). It is the golden thread which runs through the entire Bible and ties everything together. From it, we can determine a handful of crucial details about the Savior who was to come into the world:

¹⁴ Pearcey, 156.

Adam and Eve knew these vital details about the promised Savior

- 1) There would be hatred (“enmity”) between the Savior and the devil
- 2) The Savior would be born of a woman (“her offspring”)
- 3) The Savior would be a human male (“he”)
- 4) The Savior would be more powerful than the devil (“he will crush your head”)
- 5) The Savior would inflict a mortal wound on the devil (“he will crush your head”)
- 6) The Savior would be wounded by devil in the conflict (the devil “will strike his heel”)
- 7) The Savior would recover from his wound (the devil “will strike his heel”)
- 8) The Savior would be God himself—the only one with the strength and authority to do this.

The Bible reveals to us that the Savior is the eternal, almighty Son of God. God the Father sent him into the world in human form, at a point in time in human history. Here’s how it happened. The holy angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin named Mary to proclaim to her that she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Son of God in human form. According to his human nature, the Son of God took on the DNA of Mary and was, in reality, her son. She was, in reality, the “Mother of God.” About 6 B.C. he was born into the world in the town of Bethlehem, in Judea. He was given the name Jesus, which in Hebrew means, “God saves.” He had no sin. (Please read the full record of this historical fact in the Gospel of Luke, chapters 1 and 2.) So the Bible proclaims, “At just the right time, God sent his Son, born of a woman...” (Galatians 4:4–5).

Jesus did for humanity what we could no longer do for ourselves: live a holy, perfect life, by perfect faith in God. In doing so, Jesus fulfilled the Ten Commandments for us in his actions, in his words, and in every thought. He lived in line with his conscience every moment of his life, and he did this under the constant pressure of outside temptations. Who brought these temptations against him? The devil did. He did so immediately following Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist. This is significant. Jesus’ baptism was the public beginning of his ministry. As he came up from the water, “He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:10–11).

Then, at once, the Spirit sent him into the desert, where he fasted forty days, “being tempted by the devil” (Mark 1:12). The Bible also tells us of three specific temptations the devil leveled against Jesus in the desert. The third of the three was this: “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me’” (Matthew 4:8–9). The devil was tempting Jesus as he had tempted Eve, to climb over God in a craving for something more. Sometimes we find ourselves thinking, “If Jesus is God, how difficult could it have been for him to reject the devil?” Well, Jesus *is* God! But this didn’t make the devil’s temptations any less difficult on him. In reality, the devil pressured him harder than anyone else. The devil knew Jesus had come to “crush his head.” So he exerted his full effort against Jesus to cause him to sin. (If Jesus sinned, he would have failed as the Savior. A sinful Savior cannot save anyone, including himself.) Jesus felt the full pain of temptation. The Bible says, “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). Yet Jesus did not sin. In his holiness he successfully beat back the devil’s temptations for us who fail to. Jesus responded to the devil’s third temptation in the desert, “Away from me, Satan. For it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matthew 4:10). This is one chapter in Jesus’ life of innocence and faith.

Then, three years later, it happened. At the appointed time, Jesus went to the cross in the place of every person. At the cross God the Father judged all your sin and mine by placing it on his innocent Son and judged him in the place of all. Jesus was, indeed, judged, though he did nothing wrong. On the cross, he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) Did you know that he was suffering the very judgment of hell at this time? He did it for every single person who has lived or ever will live in the world, from Adam to the end of time. He endured it so that we, who *deserve* to endure it, will not have to. After his eternal suffering was complete, he said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). He died, and was buried.

What did Jesus accomplish for all of humanity, in his holy life and innocent death? The Bible says, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). In other words, he “crushed the devil’s head,” even as Jesus was wounded in the conflict at the cross. In fact, Jesus died in the conflict, but did not remain in death. He rose bodily from the dead. That makes all the difference. The Bible says that Jesus’ death is the power of *life* over death and the devil because of his

resurrection. “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21–22). The Bible also says, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrews 2:14–15).

This is the Christian gospel. It is good news. It is the only religion with good news. Islam doesn't have it. Judaism doesn't have it. Buddhism and Hinduism do not have it. Neither do cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Neither do the naturalistic religions such as Darwinism and secular humanism. Every religion of the world gives some version of what *we* must do to achieve greatness—but not Christianity. As Jesus questioned, “What can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26) The answer he is leading us to confess is: “*I have nothing to give. My conscience and the Ten Commandments convict me.*” Christianity proclaims that God is the one who completed the atonement for the sinful human soul. He offered his holy, divine, incarnate Son in place of us all, even though we did not deserve it in any way. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

The Blessing of Jesus' Perfect Life, Atoning Death and Victorious Resurrection

Jesus lived a perfect life for us who live sinful lives. “During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:7).

At the cross, Jesus shed his blood for us in atonement. The Bible says, “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

On the third day Jesus rose again from the tomb. He offers this great objective hope to all people, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25).

The Bible proclaims to you and me and all, “The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” (John 3:35–36).

If all sinners are hostile to God in heart and soul, and unable to believe in Jesus by their own reason or strength, how can anyone come to believe?

To answer this vital question, let’s turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 3. In this chapter we read about a religious teacher named Nicodemus who came to visit Jesus in secret one night. He came to visit Jesus because he wasn’t sure what to make of him. Nicodemus said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2). I suppose if Jesus had allowed Nicodemus to control the conversation that evening it would have wandered all over the map. Jesus went to the heart of the matter for him. He said, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is *born again*” (John 3:3; emphasis added).

If you are wondering what it means to be born again, Nicodemus wondered too. He asked Jesus: “How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” (John 3:4) What *did* Jesus mean? He explained to Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5–6).

Nicodemus didn’t recognize it, but Jesus was talking to him about two kinds of birth. The first was physical. “Flesh gives birth to flesh.” In these words Jesus describes what happens when a man and a woman conceive. A human infant, in body and soul, is conceived and nine months later is born into the world. But sinful flesh can only give birth to sinful flesh. At conception, the sinful nature of the father and mother infects the infant so that it is dead in sin and does not believe in God. Jesus says that a second birth is required to enter the kingdom to heaven above: “But the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” This second birth is the spiritual birth which the Holy Spirit conceives in the spiritually dead heart (Ephesians 2:1–10). The spiritual birth is the birth of living faith in Jesus. Jesus even told Nicodemus how this spiritual birth comes about. “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is *born of water and the Spirit*.” In effect, Jesus was telling Nicodemus, “If you are going

to believe in me for who I AM, there's no need to pick me apart with questions; rather, you need to be baptized!"

You may be asking, "How can water do such great things?" The Bible talks about this in many places. It is not the water itself that does this, but the Spirit and promise connected to the water. Each time a sinner is baptized according to the command of Jesus, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), faith is born in the heart and through faith forgiveness is given and eternal life promised. Christian baptism gives the power to believe in Jesus throughout life. Also, by the faith-creating work of the Spirit the holy image of God that was destroyed by Adam's sin is renewed. The Bible says that it is "the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:10). This faith receives the forgiveness of sins and eternal life that Jesus won for the entire world in his perfect life, innocent death, and resurrection.

The Power of Baptism to Save? The Bible Says, "Yes!"

Titus 3:5: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and regeneration by the Holy Spirit."

Ephesians 5:25: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy by the washing with water through the word."

1 Peter 3:20–21: "Baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Romans 6:3–4: "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

How does the Christian faith help me as I continue to live in this world of sin, in a body subjected to decay and death?

The Christian faith brings all things full circle and leaves nothing out. It explains the birth and design of the creation and God's purpose for the human race; it describes Adam's fall, along with its daily and eternal consequences; it tells us that God, through Jesus Christ, re-established hope and purpose for the human race, both now and forever.¹⁵ In doing so, it enables us to see and interpret the world as it is, to understand our

¹⁵ Ibid., 45–46.

place in it, and to believe in Jesus in order to enter heaven's paradise after death. It is the all-encompassing *worldview*. Let's take a look.

Godly purpose is renewed

Salvation in Jesus motivates the Christian to live for God his Creator in joy and thanks. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). In doing so, the Christian does not seek to climb over God (as Eve did in the garden) and invent his own "mission and meaning" for his life. Rather he humbly attends to the work God has defined for him. First, there is God's original command, which remains in effect for mankind, given at the beginning: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Second, there is Jesus' New Testament command to Christians: "All authority has been given unto me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18–20). As the Christian strives to carry out these assigned tasks the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17) give parameters to the work. They are the moral guideposts of love.

God uses trouble for good purpose

Salvation in Jesus promises the Christian that God is steering every circumstance of his life for good, including trouble. Paul says, "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16–20).

All pain is temporary

Salvation in Jesus helps the Christian to remember that all suffering, no matter how deep or sorrowful, is temporary and *short*. In fact, it will end, once for all, when Jesus returns in glory on the Last Day. On that day, all people will be called from the grave. Unbelievers will be judged and convicted. Believers will be acquitted in Christ and their bodies glorified. The Apostle Paul looks forward, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed

in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:18–21).

Anticipation of heaven brings daily joy

In life, we all look forward to certain things with great anticipation. Children count down the days to summer vacation. An engaged couple counts down the days to their wedding. Christian hope is like this. It gives us something great to look forward to (heaven!) and we can't wait for it to arrive. This is not a psychological trick or pleasant placebo that pretends to help us through today but doesn't exist in reality. Salvation in Jesus is a fact, as all believers in Jesus know. The testimony is that powerful and comforting. The Bible says, “Though you have not seen him you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 3:8).

Biblical Food for Thought—10 Statements

1. The biblical definition of human identity, essence and purpose is the highest definition there can be (Genesis 1:26–31; Colossians 2:6–8).
2. If the human being rejects the biblical definition of human identity, essence and purpose, he must settle for a self-created, lower, false definition (Romans 1:21–25; Galatians 5:17–20).
3. Before sin, human life and the entire creation was at its highest point of development (Genesis 1 & 2).
4. Because of sin the human being does not (and cannot) rule over and subdue the earth as God desires (Genesis 6:1–6; Romans 7:14–20).
5. Jesus Christ is God, born fully human, who did everything perfectly well. In doing so, he defeated the devil and redeemed all sinners, once for all (Luke 1:26–45; Luke 2:1–20; Mark 1:9–10; Matthew 17:1–5; Matthew 27:45–54; John 19:30; Matthew 28:1–10; Acts 1:1–10; Hebrews 9:15, 27–28).
6. Human beings cannot choose their physical or spiritual birthday (John 1:10–12; John 15:16).
7. Faith in Jesus is born by Spirit, Word and baptism (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; Romans 10:17; John 3:5; Mark 16:16).

8. In sin the human being is 100% corrupt, no matter what he tries to accomplish. By faith in Jesus, the human being is declared 100% pure, before attempting to do a single good thing (Romans 7:18; 3:28).
9. The joy of free salvation in Jesus motivates the Christian to master his sin, temptation, and trouble day by day (Titus 2:11–14; Colossians 3:5–17; 1 Peter 4:1–19).
10. The commands of God provide the Christian with holy purpose and guidance for life in a sinful, troubled world (Genesis 1:28; Exodus 20:1–17; Matthew 28:19–20; Matthew 5:1–16; 1 Peter 2:9–12).

For Further Examination

Worldview, a definition: “a comprehensive, especially personal, philosophy or conception of the world and of human life.”¹⁶

- 1) What is the Darwinist worldview?
- 2) What is the Christian worldview?
- 3) What does each worldview say about the following?
 - a) Origin of life
 - b) Uniqueness of the human being
 - c) Value of human being in relation to other species
 - d) The purpose of the earth
 - e) Morality and judgment
 - f) Life after death
 - g) Purpose for living LSQ

¹⁶ *Webster's New World Dictionary, 3rd College Edition.*

How False Worldviews Worm Their Way into Christian Schools

David C. Thompson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Audubon, Minnesota

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YES, I AM *READING* a paper to you at this conference—with no apologies. I am convinced that the information I share with you is so important that I thought it best you not only hear it, but also hold it in your hands now and in the days ahead. I am a confessional Lutheran—again with no apologies, for this means I am a biblical Christian who confesses that there is a God who has revealed himself in the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Scriptures as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that there is a real moral law that applies to me and to all people of all time; that there was a real fall that has devastated the entire human race; that the second person of the Holy Trinity entered time and space to live the life we were to live (but could not) and die the death we were to die (so we would never have to); that the Holy Spirit takes that redeeming work of Christ, offers it and bestows it upon undeserving people such as me through such mundane things as words, water, and bread and wine; that through these means of grace I become his own and learn to live under Him in His Kingdom in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. It is this very confession that is and always has been under attack within the structures of the Church and the Christian Home (including Christian schools) by means of false worldviews.

A clarification. I taught at a Christian school for 12½ years. Before, during and after that time I spent a fair amount of time studying and observing worldviews. I know something of how they operate and

infiltrate. Faithfulness, vigilance, discernment, and going on the offensive are essential tools for the Christian school (1 Peter 3:15; Acts 17:11; Colossians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 10:4–5). I do not know what you do in your schools and how well you do what you ought to do. You may do poorly or excellently. I do not know. But please do not assume that I am suggesting by what is written here that you are doing poorly. There is no accusation intended. On the other hand, I hope this presentation will encourage you to do what is beneficial and necessary for the perseverance in the faith of the lambs entrusted to your care.

I begin with an example of a false worldview assumption worming its way into a Christian's life. While teaching at Bethany Lutheran College, a student who had transferred to the local state university called me. She told me she had been struggling with her major, but that things had gotten better. When I asked her to explain, she told me she was being taught things about the family that were in conflict with what she had been taught at home and in her church. What helped, she said, was an "assessment" she and all students in her major had to take, an assessment that indicated she was "too narrow" in her views and needed to learn to be more "tolerant." This made sense to her, at which point she started struggling less. Unbeknownst to her she had begun to swallow the worldview of Postmodernism which teaches that all views are to be respected since all views or truths are all culturally determined. But just how long would it be until she applied this postmodern way of thinking to the Christian religion and say, "I have been too narrow-minded in my thinking of religion; other religions are to be respected too for they grow out of a culture just like Christianity did"? This is the danger of false worldviews. Now of course this happened at a secular university, but it could have had something to do with the previous education she could have received at a Christian school.

A worldview is a way of thinking about life. It is some philosophy or religion with its various assumptions or doctrines applied to the culture in which one lives. It is often compared to a pair of glasses. Put on one pair of glasses and you get a certain view of life; put on a different set of glasses and you get another view. A person's worldview will determine how a person thinks, what he believes about nature, what he values and to what extent, how he views issues like homosexuality, what he thinks sin is or if it even exists, how he believes the universe originated, what he thinks about the supernatural, whether or not truth can be known, who Jesus of Nazareth is (or was), where truth comes from, what the

nature of man is like. In short, a worldview helps determine how one sees every aspect of life.

Worldviews are formed in a person's mind and heart by his upbringing, education, place of worship, friends, the media, art, relationships, culture, etc. They can be godly or satanic (1 Timothy 4:1–2). One does not have to sit at the feet of a teacher or professor to become a disciple of a particular worldview; worldviews are just as likely to be absorbed by osmosis—all one has to do is exist in culture: watch the “Simpsons,” read *Time* magazine, curl up with a book, peruse a newspaper, talk with Aunt Helen, listen to the news, socialize, attend history class.

A person may not even know he holds to a certain worldview. And if he does know he will likely not think critically about his worldview. He will not ask himself whether his worldview might be true or false, where it comes from, why it was rejected a generation ago, and, very importantly, how it may conflict with certain religious or doctrinal teachings—another worldview—to which he also holds.

What is important to understand is that a false worldview normally doesn't grab hold of a person all of a sudden; it can happen slowly, in bits and pieces. But even when the bits and pieces (the assumptions) start attaching themselves to a person's thinking, that is not to say a complete false worldview has taken over. A Christian may hold to just a few false assumptions without applying them to his or her faith. In the example above the young lady may hold to the postmodern “all views are equal” assumption in regards to the definition of the family but fortunately fail to apply it to the biblical doctrine that one comes to the Father only by Christ. In other words, worldviews, both true and false, are not consistently followed. A person may hold a number of contradictory assumptions from different worldviews and not even know it. On the other hand, even though one postmodern assumption may not make a person a postmodernist, it may make him a non-Christian. A Christian doesn't have to adopt a whole false worldview before he becomes an unbeliever; just a little bit will do. The reason for that is a false worldview assumption is a false doctrine, and as the Scriptures say, “a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough” (1 Corinthians 5:6). All false worldview assumptions are dangerous, but some are more dangerous than others (like the belief that man evolved) and some automatically exclude true Christian faith (for example, the belief that matter is all that exists or that Jesus is not the only begotten Son of God). The bottom line is that

false worldviews and their assumptions all need to be taken seriously for what is at stake is our confession of faith by which we are saved.

The list of worldviews is almost endless and they seem to be markedly fearless in our culture compared to 100 years ago. There is Modernism which includes Naturalism (or Materialism), Darwinism, Secular Humanism, Theistic Existentialism, and others. There is Postmodernism (which is very akin to Neo-Marxism) with its emphasis on multiculturalism, tolerance, constructivism, and group power struggles. There is a growing Spiritualism in the forms of Pantheism and Paganism. All of these are alive and doing quite well today as are Nihilism, Utilitarianism, Feminism, Narcissism, Socialism, Communism, and others. You can even classify the different Christian theological systems into worldviews: Lutheranism, Catholicism, Calvinism, and Evangelicalism, along with the different branches thereof. Same with the non-Christian religions: Islam, Judaism, Mormonism, etc. In this paper I won't go into detail about specific worldviews, but what I hope to do is show how within Christian schools various false assumptions can unintentionally be taught or be given fertile ground so at some point these assumptions take root and begin to grow.

#1: Teaching False Worldviews by Failing to Teach a Biblical Worldview

Teaching a biblical worldview is not simply teaching Christian doctrine. It is *applying* confessional Lutheran doctrine *to the culture* in which we live and breathe. It's like the difference between holding a pair of glasses and wearing them. We want them to wear the glasses. It is educating students to understand that Christian doctrine always has something to say about everything we encounter.

If we don't do this, students will have much more difficulty identifying false worldviews and their assumptions. You can't see what is wrong with something unless you have a standard against which to measure it. The Christian's standard is God's doctrine found only in His Word. A Christian who has been carefully taught the scriptural worldview (doctrine applied to culture) will be more aware when a false worldview assumption crops up so he can say, "Aha! There's something fishy here."

But also if the Christian worldview is not explained, the Christian student's spiritual radar will not work properly. False worldviews are out there vying for the hearts and minds of students. We should not expect students naturally to make the connection between doctrine and

life; that's what teachers and pastors and parents are for. If the false is not identified because the truth has not been well-established in their thinking, the false can fly in with little or no resistance. This is the fertile ground for false worldviews I mentioned above.

So what does it mean to teach or explain the biblical or confessional Lutheran worldview? It is to answer the questions of life, including culturally relevant questions, with biblical answers and doctrine. These questions need to be answered biblically because other worldviews are answering these same questions all the time, except they generally have different—sometimes strikingly different—answers. What follows are eight worldview questions with biblical answers¹ to help the Christian better identify false worldview assumptions.

Question 1: How does the Christian worldview explain the Prime Reality?

The Christian God. He is the Prime Reality that does exist, always has existed, and always will exist. His existence explains all else.

[T]here is one divine essence which is called and is God: eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, of immeasurable power, wisdom, and goodness, the creator and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. Yet, there are three persons, coeternal and of the same essence and power: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [*Augsburg Confession*, I]

There is only one God who is infinite, personal, uncreated, eternal, omnipotent, rational, loving, and just, separate from all else, above all else, and the source and creator of all else.²

This answer (though part of it is 470 years old) is culturally relevant since it challenges the answers given to the same question by Modernism, Naturalism, Darwinism, Postmodernism, Pantheism, Paganism, and more. For example, the evolutionist Carl Sagan said, “The Cosmos [the material universe] is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” Evolution’s Prime Reality is eternal matter. Darwinism and these other worldviews

¹ These questions and answers are taken from my book *What in the World Is Going On? Identifying Hollow and Deceptive Worldviews* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010).

² David C. Thompson, *What in the World Is Going On? Identifying Hollow and Deceptive Worldviews* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010), 15.

leave no room for a personal and infinite God above and outside the universe.

Question 2: How does the Christian worldview understand the source of knowledge and truth? How does it claim to know truth, and right from wrong?

The Christian biblical worldview recognizes two sources for obtaining knowledge: **natural knowledge** and **special revelation (the Bible, Holy Scriptures)**, with the latter having the higher authority.

Natural Knowledge

God has made man with the ability to arrive at knowledge, facts, and truth by means of the natural gifts with which he is endowed. Martin Luther wrote, "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them." [*Small Catechism*] By use of his reason and senses, by observing creation and making use of his mind, and even by his heart and conscience man can know ethical, mathematical, scientific, historical, geographical, aesthetic, and religious truths (Ps. 19:1–4, Job 12:7–9, and Rom. 1:18–32, 2:14–16). But since man is finite, so his knowledge is limited. And since man is also sinful, his knowledge is yet more limited and even distorted, especially that knowledge associated with God and salvation....

Special Revelation (The Bible, the Holy Scriptures)

We confess that God reveals Himself to mankind, not only through creation and the human conscience, but also and especially through the Holy Scriptures, His written Word.... The Holy Scriptures are without error in everything they teach, including matters of geography, science, and history, and they are the only infallible rule and norm of Christian doctrine and practice. The Scriptures not only contain the Word of God (as if to say, some of their teachings are the authoritative Word of God and others are not), but they **are** the very

Word of God **in their entirety**... [*We Believe, Teach, and Confess*].³

Again, a clear difference is implied in this answer between the Christian worldview and other worldviews. Whereas many worldviews (such as Naturalism, Darwinism, Secular Humanism, etc.) base truth on Natural Knowledge alone, they will not acknowledge its limitation or the scriptural truth and assumption that reason has been warped by sin. The postmodern worldview, on the other hand, expresses skepticism for any sort of knowledge and truth no matter what its source. The pagan and pantheistic worldviews have all sorts of truths, especially spiritual truths, but their source is clearly something other than Scripture.

Question 3: How does the Christian worldview understand and explain the universe? What is the universe and its relation to the Prime Reality, that is, to the triune God?

God created and preserves the universe.

The one true God is the “Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible” (the Nicene Creed). He created all things, both material and spiritual, out of nothing by His almighty Word in six, normal days (Gen. 1–2). This real historical event of Creation took place several thousand years ago making the earth relatively young (compared to the old-earth assumption of other popular worldviews; see Ex. 20:11). God’s whole creation reflects His character inasmuch as He said, “It is good” (Gen. 1). God is separate from and above His creation, though He is and always has been intimately involved with it.

He continues to be its Preserver (Ps. 104). This preservation is brought about by His almighty Word which works either directly (“supernaturally”) or indirectly (for example, through the laws of nature and the vocations or activity of human beings).

The whole universe testifies to the existence, glory, power, wisdom, righteousness, justice, rationality, and kindness of God (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–32, 2:14–16; Acts 14:17).⁴

Notice again how we can go back to our ancient confessions (the Nicene Creed) and make them not only relevant but make them confront the popular notions of the day. We also see here an attack on the estab-

³ Ibid., 16f.

⁴ Ibid., 18.

lished trend in liberal churches which wish to make Creation (and other biblical accounts) into nothing more than a myth. I also appropriately plug in here the Lutheran doctrine of vocation by connecting it to God's work of preservation: human beings have the great privilege of being used by God to provide daily bread for themselves—that's one of the ways God works to preserve.

Question 4: How does the Christian worldview understand man and his relation to the Prime Reality and the universe?

Man was made in the image of God.

Man was the pinnacle of God's creative work who was created of the dust of the earth on the sixth day (Gen. 1 and 2). Man alone was created in the image of God, a concept that has both a narrow and wide sense. Being created in God's image means that man has an absolutely remarkable connection to God that the rest of creation or nature does not; man is above all other aspects of nature; from this perspective man and nature are not equal. Man's life, from the time of conception, is sacred and precious, far more valuable than any other facet of creation.

Being created in the image of God in the **narrow sense** means that man had "the true knowledge of God and the perfect righteousness and holiness..." [*ELS Catechism and Explanation*]. He was in perfect spiritual harmony with God, was perfect himself, and lived in and looked forward to the perfect life.

The image of God in the **wide sense** means that man alone has an immortal soul; he is personal, self-aware, creative, and rational; he understands there is life beyond natural life (beyond the physical universe); he realizes there is transcendent truth, justice, purpose, destiny, life, beauty, and goodness; and he is appointed to rule over the rest of creation as a good steward (James 3:9; Gen. 1:27–28; 9:6). Therefore nature is to be the servant of man just as man is to be the servant of God.

On the other hand, a righteous humility is required of man since, like the rest of the universe, he too is created and finite; he is not God. From this perspective man is on equal footing with nature.⁵

This answer is very helpful when students are confronted with the radical environmentalism which comes from both the Darwinian and pantheistic worldviews which reduce man's value to that of a monkey,

⁵ Ibid., 18f.

an owl, a fish, or even (if these worldviews are consistently followed) a speck of dust. These worldviews give no basis for a dignity and sanctity of human life. The biblical worldview does, while at the same time maintaining the utmost respect for the rest of God's creation and a healthy human humility.

Question 5: How does the Christian worldview understand and explain evil?

The fall into sin.

Real evil was brought into the world in time and space when the fallen angel Satan succeeded in his temptation to have the first two human beings, Adam and Eve, disobey the will of God. This was not merely the breaking of a rule by eating a piece of fruit, but a total rebellion toward God and His will, the complete loss of the image of God in the narrow sense (their moral righteousness and perfect harmony with God), a corruption of all other aspects of the image of God in the wide sense (e.g., man's reason is now imperfect and his rule of creation will often neglect good stewardship), coming under the dominion of Satan, and the belief that man can become like God. This original sin is inherited by all of Adam and Eve's offspring in an undiminished manner and cannot be repaired or improved by any effort of man (Rom. 3:9ff; 5:12ff; 7:18).

This state of human depravity has brought profound consequences upon man and his relationship with God, his relationship to other men, and his relationship to the rest of creation. Man is now God's enemy, spiritually dead, and destined for physical and eternal death in hell (Rom. 8:7; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 6:23). He will not and cannot fear, love, and trust in God; rather he hates God (Rom. 3:10–18). Man cannot by his own reason or strength save himself or discover how to undo his destiny of damnation. In regards to other humans, man now continually faces hatred, murder, rebellion, strife, jealousy, perversion, war, family breakdown, tyrannical leaders, corrupt laws, false religious teachers and teachings, and human philosophies and worldviews that leave him with nothing but despair (Matt. 15:19). Man now also struggles with nature: pestilence, famine, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, pollution, inadequate resources, sickness, disease, injury, pain, the aging process, etc. (Gen. 3:17ff.); the world is far from perfect.

Though evil has real consequences, man can attempt to create a more civil culture, live in peace with his neighbor, and produce greater harmony with nature. All this can and does happen on a limited scale. But in general man and the world will not improve; if anything they will only get worse (Matt. 24:12).

Especially since the fall into sin and man's corruption, the Christian worldview recognizes that Special Revelation—the Bible—trumps any knowledge from any other source (like man's reason or experience or desires) that contradicts Special Revelation.⁶

You will have to excuse me if I say this is an exciting answer. It is exciting because it fits *reality*, a reality that all people experience. It explains why there is so much evil both personally and socially and why there are so many other problems in the world that go unabated. Whereas the previous answer (man made in God's image) explains why people can know and outwardly do what is right and accomplish amazing things (with technology, etc.), this answer explains why, in spite of some temporal advances, there is no meaningful human improvement (peace on earth remains a pipe dream) and why every generation and every person experiences and engages in real evil. No other worldview has such answers. Christianity is an intelligent worldview because it provides answers that make sense and, as we will see in the next question especially, provides a real solution. We have answers that face reality and they are found in the real Word of God. Other worldviews hopelessly downplay evil, try to make man good, locate evil in something other than the human heart, justify evil, or simply surrender to futility.

Question 6: What is the Christian worldview's solution for evil?

Justification through Christ and **Sanctification** by the Holy Spirit.

Since the introduction of sin and corruption, this temporal world cannot be redeemed, generally improved in any lasting sense, or brought into a universal state of harmony. There will never be any kind of utopia here and now. However, man can perform acts of mercy and charity, encourage respect for legitimate authorities (especially parents), and through his vocations help and benefit his fellow man so that a greater degree of civil or outward righteousness exists. Christians, especially

⁶ Ibid., 19f.

(Matt. 5:13), in these above-mentioned ways, through prayer, and through the spread of the Gospel can benefit cultures (e.g., the Reformation brought many temporal and spiritual benefits to many peoples and cultures throughout the world; also, the freedom and prosperity of the United States has been attributed to a Christian heritage). On the other hand, the Christian worldview recognizes that the above-mentioned work of a Christian may instead bring upon him persecution and the further decay of culture (Gen. 6:9–11; Acts 14:11ff.; Heb. 11).

The ultimate and only lasting solution for the evil that has gripped man and the world is **Justification** in Christ that is applied to man and reveals itself through the Holy Spirit's work of **Sanctification**.

Justification

I believe in ... one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By Whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.... [The Nicene Creed]

I believe that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary; and that He is my Lord, Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death.... [*The Small Catechism*]

... One has this justification as a personal possession and is personally declared by God to be righteous in Christ when he or she is brought to faith in Him as Savior.... If the objective fact of Christ's atonement is not personally received by faith, then it has no saving benefit for the individual. We reject as unscriptural any teaching that people can be saved apart from faith in Jesus Christ. [*We Believe, Teach, and Confess*]

There are four crucial points regarding Justification that are pertinent to the comparisons of other worldviews: the person of Christ (that He is true God and true man in one Person), the historical events of His life (His conception, virgin birth, life, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension really took place in time and space; they are not myths), the product or result of His life, death and resurrection (namely, the existence of real forgiveness and freedom from sin, death and the devil for the entire world), and reception of this product (coming only through faith alone in Christ)....

Sanctification

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.... [*The Small Catechism*]

The Holy Spirit through the power of the Gospel (the Good News of forgiveness in Christ), turns the heart of man from unbelief to belief and gives him new life. This Gospel, found in the Means of Grace of Word and Sacrament, is no less powerful than the Word He used to create the universe out of nothing. Through these Means of Grace God converts, brings forgiveness, comforts, strengthens, and preserves the Christian throughout his life in the one true faith. The Christian also thereby learns to love God and his neighbor, rejects evil, perseveres in trials, and looks forward to the return of Jesus Christ and the certain hope of eternal life. Because the Christian still retains a sinful nature, lives in a fallen world, and must contend with Satan, the Christian life will remain a struggle here and now compelling the Christian to live a constant life of repentance in which he seeks and finds comfort and strength in the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. The Christian also, by the work of the Holy Spirit through His Word, gains a renewed mind which enables him to see the world and reality through the lenses of the Scriptures, though even here he will be tempted to compromise and forsake this through the bombardment of false teachings and false worldview assumptions.

The Unbeliever

Though an enemy of God and captive to Satan, the unbeliever can make use of Natural Knowledge and come to understand and accept many of the facts and truths revealed through this means of knowledge (for example, he can know mathematical facts as well as or better than a Christian for they both have access to the same gift of Natural Knowledge). Many of the great discoveries, whether coming from the mind of a Christian or an atheist, have resulted and will continue to happen because of Natural Knowledge.

Though an unbeliever may have wholly accepted a false worldview, he will have great difficulty living consistently with that worldview since the reality of the universe and his own person made in the image of God (wide sense) compel him to live otherwise (for example, he will live as if real and transcendent right and wrong exist even though his worldview and mind tell him all morality is relative or culturally determined).

The unbeliever, though completely void of new life in Christ, can still perform many outward good works which will benefit himself, his neighbor, and his culture. He can discern right from wrong and outwardly live a righteous life for by nature he still has an understanding of the moral law of God (Rom. 2:14–15). But he, in his heart and soul, is living in rebellion to God and His will. Such rebellion can manifest itself in the most gruesome and monstrous fashion in mind and deed (Rom. 3:9ff). Though many speak of the world becoming better, this is proven wrong and impossible time and time again by all of history which is filled with example after example of highly intelligent men and “advanced” nations committing atrocities and creating the most bizarre idol worship imaginable. This can only be explained by the Christian worldview assumption and truth of the fall of man into sin.⁷

Justification is by far the most exciting answer. It is the heart and center of the Christian’s worldview. It is also the answer that will never make sense to sinful man and his reason (“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing”; 1 Corinthians 1:18). Nevertheless it is a legitimate answer—the only answer—for the very real problem of evil. Nothing is more important than the person and work

⁷ Ibid., 21ff.

of Christ who comes to us by the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Every other worldview's solution for evil is either a utopia of sorts (on earth or beyond) achieved by some kind of work or effort of man or men (but definitely not by Christ alone) or one that yields to despair. Every one. This Christian answer also helps explain the unbeliever from the perspective of Justification and Sanctification since so many worldviews refuse to acknowledge a consequential difference between the Christian and non Christian: we are all one (Pantheism) or everyone will be saved (universalism) or we are all basically good (Secular Humanism).

Question 7: How does the Christian worldview understand the future, the final reality, or the “end game”?

The Christian worldview teaches the historical reality of the **Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of all flesh, the final judgment, the end of the universe**, and either a believer's **glorification** or an unbeliever's **damnation** in eternity.⁸

Young people have a tendency to be more idealistic and therefore can be easy targets of worldviews that answer this question with some sort of coming earthly utopia. Darwinism, Secular Humanism, Pantheism, and Paganism all make promises that somehow in some way life in this world will get better, if not perfect; their heaven is not one beyond the universe nor prepared by Christ. This scriptural answer is also important because of the many worldviews that, though they believe in some sort of heaven, deny the reality of hell.

Question 8: How is the Christian worldview reflected in various disciplines (like theology, ethics, philosophy, science, history, art, music, sociology, and politics) and various media?

Ethics: The Christian worldview acknowledges that there are real and transcendent morals that apply to all people of all time and that these have their source in the one, true God. They are absolute, not relative; this does not mean, however, that there will not be challenges in discerning which moral absolute applies when and how. They are written on the heart of man and each person's conscience testifies to them (Rom. 2:14–15), though since the fall into sin man's natural understanding of the moral law is flawed. The only clear and perfect description of this God-given ethic is found in the Bible, summarized by the

⁸ Ibid., 25.

Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) and even more simply by the Two Great Commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul; and love your neighbor as yourself.”...

Science: The Christian worldview acknowledges the essential role of reason and observation in the study of science. But the Christian worldview insists on filtering reason and observation through Special Revelation since human reason is imperfect, corrupted and tempted by false worldviews such as Darwinism or evolution. For example, Special Revelation reveals a universe that was created out of nothing, not out of pre-existing matter; was created thousands, not billions, of years ago; was created by God’s powerful Word with thoughtful design, not blind, undirected chance; that man was created and is unique, not evolved from some lower species; that the supernatural and miraculous exist; etc. Empirical science (where conclusions are reached based on repeatable observations) is complementary to the Christian worldview. When correctly used empirical science does not contradict but actually supports many aspects of the literal interpretation of Genesis, including the existence of a Creator/Designer, the uniqueness of each species, a worldwide flood, a young earth, and more. There is a growing number of scientists who are convinced that scientific knowledge and observations of life and the universe oppose evolution, not Creation.

History: History has a beginning (Creation) and an end (the Second Coming of Christ); that is, it is linear; it is, therefore, not meaningless. The central event of all history is the life of Christ. History is directed and planned by God. Nothing in history happens without God’s foreknowledge and will. Historical facts can be known through both Natural Knowledge and Special Revelation. The Christian worldview also tells us that history includes miraculous and supernatural events that cannot be explained by natural causes.

Art and Music: These gifts exist because man was made in the image of God; among God’s creatures, art and music are unique to man. Though art and music may be neutral in their content and message, the highest form of art and music is that which expresses a transcendent beauty, goodness, nobility, or some other characteristic of God (Phil 4:8) or some truth or event of the Scriptures. There is art and music created by man

that can be called truly good, and art and music that can be called truly bad or ugly, otherwise God's declaration "it is good" regarding His creation has no meaning. The Christian worldview also recognizes that a distinction can be made between an individual's talent or skill and the content or message of his art and music, so we can say a man may have poor or undeveloped talent but is pursuing good art, or he may have great talent and is pursuing bad art. It is similar to saying that Hitler as a leader may have been very gifted but also very evil, or President so-and-so was very inept but very moral.

Sociology and Politics: The origin, development, behavior, and structure of human societies and individuals are to be understood from the perspective of the divinely instituted estates of **Marriage, Government,** and the **Church.** **Marriage** is the most basic and highly valuable earthly unit of society from which all other natural relationships flow, including parent, son or daughter, grandparent, teacher, doctor, farmer, lawyer, legislator, etc. Marriage is defined by God as a life-long union between a male and female that God Himself joins together as "one flesh." For this reason God hates divorce as well as same-sex "marriages." The marriage estate exists so that man would not be alone (marriage is the most unique complementary human relationship which includes differing roles which God defined as good from the beginning; Gen. 2:18), for the purpose of begetting and raising children (to benefit them in both the spiritual and civic realm; Gen 1:28), and, since the fall, to help curb sinful sexual desires (1 Cor. 7:9). Within marriage, man is to be the loving leader and the woman is to respect his headship (Eph. 5:22ff.). These roles have been ignored, distorted and abused since the fall but when correctly understood and fulfilled bring about great joy and comfort within the marriage.

Government "is derived and developed out of the authority of parents" [*Large Catechism*] and is also divinely instituted. Therefore man is to submit to the governing authorities, even when governments are corrupt, unless they command him to do something contrary to the will of God (Rom. 13:1ff; Acts 4:19). Because individual governments are established by God, the Christian worldview recognizes and upholds the concept of national sovereignty and rejects attempts to undermine it, including worldview dreams and pursuits of a one-world

government or a one-world community (sometimes referred to as globalism) in which countries would have to forfeit all or part of their national sovereignty. Government exists for the purpose “of punishing evildoers and protecting the innocent, and of promoting civil order among its people” [*We Believe, Teach, and Confess*]. Good government, then, is that which limits itself to this purpose and does not infringe upon responsibilities that belong to either parents or the Church or oppose them (such as taking over parental responsibilities, teaching false worldviews, or serving as priest, cleric, or evangelist for any religion, including Christianity). In order for government to carry out its responsibility it should be well-grounded in Natural Knowledge which will help direct it in understanding right from wrong, justice, etc. Good citizenship where citizens play a role in government requires appointing people to office and establishing laws that recognize the purpose and limitations of government. Participation in the political process, including participation by Christians, can be very beneficial in helping establish good government (for example, when they support those who understand basic moral truths and the limitations of government, when they run for office, when they promote laws that would defend innocent life and protect the institution of Marriage, when they speak out against false worldviews taught in government schools, when they help their neighbor in time of need so the government will not be distracted from its purpose, etc.). Citizens, including Christians, may serve in the military and fight in just wars. The Christian worldview also recognizes that government is a temporary institution that is needed to maintain good order but, in this sinful world, will never be able to produce anything close to an ideal or utopian society. Governments and their leaders stand in the place of God when they carry out the purpose of government, but they are not God.

The **Church** on earth is God’s institution of true believers in Christ which has been given the task of administering the Gospel to extend and preserve the Church (Matt. 28:18-20). The Church is the Bride of Christ and is submissive to Him (Eph. 5:23-24) who reveals His will in the Scriptures. The Church can have a beneficial effect on culture and even on Government (see above); Christ has called believers “the salt

of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). The Church’s purpose is not political, but in carrying out its spiritual responsibilities—warning against false teachings and worldviews, loving one’s neighbor (for example, defending the unborn or upholding God’s definition of marriage), and spreading the Gospel—the Church may unintentionally find itself involved in matters that have become political. This is not a violation of the so-called separation of Church and State principle; rather it is a failure of the Government to fulfill its responsibility to protect the innocent (the unborn), to guard the most important and basic unit of civilized society (marriage), and to limit itself to temporal affairs so that it does not hinder the Church in her spread of the Gospel. When the Government fails in these ways, it may resort to criticizing, limiting, or persecuting the Church for simply fulfilling her responsibilities. On the other hand, the Church is not to exercise civil authority and when it does so it is going beyond its sphere (Luke 12:13–14)...⁹

This last question some may see as violating a sacred or “common sense” separation between Christianity and “the world.” But it is here in these disciplines that the most critical assumptions of the various worldviews are often communicated. Very few will become convinced of a false worldview because they have read or studied its creed, statement, or manifesto; rather, a worldview will communicate its assumptions through the disciplines of science, the arts, sociology, etc., and in this way recruit disciples. Quite often Christians will divorce these disciplines from the Christian worldview, assuming there is no connection between the two. It is then, especially, that these disciplines can act as effective vehicles of the various false worldviews. As C. S. Lewis wrote,

Our faith is not very likely to be shaken by any book on Hinduism. But if whenever we read an elementary book on Geology, Botany, Politics, or Astronomy, we found that its implications were Hindu, that would shake us. It is not the books written in direct defence of Materialism that make the modern man a materialist; it is the materialistic assumptions in all the other books.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., 26ff.

¹⁰ “Christian Apologetics,” *Essays on Theology and Ethics*.

Luther understood very well that all of life and learning need to be connected to God's Word: "But where the Holy Scripture does not rule I certainly advise no one to send his child.... I greatly fear that schools for higher learning are wide gates to hell if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scriptures and impress them on the young folk" (*What Luther Says*, #1327).

I need to state once more why I wrote this first part. If we do not teach the confessional Lutheran—the biblical—worldview, we open up our children to whatever worldviews happen to be popular. Their minds are like vacuums; something will fill the space. If we do not answer the above questions for Christian students, there are many false worldviews that will answer them for them. And all it takes is a little yeast—one false doctrine, one false worldview assumption—to begin work toward unbelief.

#2: Teaching False Worldviews by Implying Two Realms of Truth

There is something called the two-realm explanation of truth in which one realm is deemed not as reliable or knowable or true as the other. Christian author Nancy Pearcey gives this example:

At a Christian high school, a theology teacher strode to the front of the classroom, where he drew a heart on one side of the blackboard and a brain on the other. The two are as divided as the two sides of the blackboard, he told the class: The heart is what we use for religion, while the brain is what we use for science.¹¹

One realm is allegedly superior to the other. The message left in the minds of students is that religious knowledge is not real knowledge or at least not as true or real as scientific knowledge. Religion is not to be connected to the brain where one *knows* things. This approach is taken for granted in education at all levels, secular and even Christian.

It has its roots in evolution which assumes that matter is all there is—there is no supernatural, nothing beyond nature; and even if there is, we can never know it because all knowable facts and truths are only those which can be verified by reason and science. When most of the Christian theologians of the late 19th and 20th centuries (the future liberals) were confronted by this evolutionary train hurtling down the tracks, they didn't necessarily like where it was going. But they didn't

¹¹ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 19.

have the faith in God's inerrant Word and knowledge to challenge it. So they stupidly compromised and settled for putting religious truths in a different realm: that of the heart rather than the head; the realm of a lesser truth; not as knowable; not as objective and factual but merely subjective. These two realms—the objective and the subjective—are now assumed in education, especially higher education. You hear it when people say things like, “Well that may be true for you” or “The story of creation is not literally true, but there are spiritual truths there.” As Dr. Phillip Johnson states, this understanding of the subjective/objective split “allows the metaphysical naturalists to mollify [appease] the potentially troublesome religious people by assuring them that science does not rule out “religious *belief*” (so long as it does not pretend to be *knowledge*).”¹²

In the last several decades there has been the unfortunate transfer of items from the objective realm to the subjective realm that should not have occurred. This is not to say that the biblical worldview does not recognize a subjective realm. It does. We have always taught what the Bible says about adiaphora; there are ideas, beliefs, lifestyles, and even values that are personal and subjective, that cannot be classified as true for all people of all time. But the challenge we have today is the wholesale dumping of real absolute truths into the bin of subjectivity so they become merely “truths” for you or “truths” for your culture or subculture (like your synod). So, in the subjective realm we now have Bible “stories,” while in the objective or factual realm we have evolutionary history. In the subjective bin we have the Christian religion, beliefs and doctrine; in the objective bin we have reason, science, and math. In the relative realm we have faith, morality, beauty, goodness, and justice while in the absolute realm we have numbers, scientific laws, pragmatism, and raw facts. In the one realm we have the spiritual, in the other the secular.

The problem we run into with this divide is that we end up losing Christianity, period. If we give the impression that the recorded historical events of the Bible are less than real history, we lose forgiveness and salvation. As Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost” (1 Corinthians 15:17-18). We cannot somehow hope to keep our teachings on forgiveness, life, salvation if the stories of the Bible (like the resurrection of Christ) are mere “stories” and not real history. Biblical history and biblical doctrine are intimately and inseparably connected. Or take Genesis 1–11. If it is only a myth, if it is not

¹² Phillip E. Johnson, as cited in Pearcey, 21 (emphasis added).

real historical truth to be taken literally, then we can never know if there is a real God who is an all powerful Creator; we can never be sure that man was made in God's image and is unique and has real intrinsic and transcendent value; we can't insist that marriage is sacred and is to consist of one man and one woman; we can never be sure that man is a moral creature with moral responsibilities; we can't claim that there is something terribly wrong with man because the fall is just a "story;" we will never know that God hates sin and is a horrifying judge; we won't know if we really need a Savior; and we will never have reason to believe that God is ultimately merciful by having His only begotten Son enter time and space to single-handedly win for us that salvation.

We must teach our students that the truths of the Bible are just as real, just as true, just as knowable, just as reliable, just as factual as any other truth. We need to make sure they see that these truths are for the head as well as for the heart. For if we don't, we relativize Christian truth and doctrine for them and leave the door open to other religions and worldviews because their "truths" are no less true than Christian "truths."

#3: Teaching False Worldviews by Methodology

Not too many years ago a teacher of religion (now with the ELCA) pushed for a method of teaching religion that he claimed had a "valid academic, scholarly focus and approach," whose instructors have "real expertise and knowledge" and who bring with them "a more... academic, objective¹³ approach." This he compared to the traditional method of teaching religion which he described as "narrower," "parochial," "sectarian," in order to "indoctrinate" the student—words which today are interpreted pejoratively or negatively. In order to make this method appear biblical he added, "It is not the case, of course, that faith and the truth claims of any particular denomination *can have no place at all* with [this proposed objective method of teaching religion]. But it is the case that such concerns become, at least in theory, *tangential* [i.e. peripheral] *to and byproducts* of a more purely academic approach" (emphasis added). In other words, truth *can* be taught as truth, but there is not an obligation to do so; nor does it have to be unequivocally defended. What is important, above all, is being "objective"—fair and neutral. This assumption and practice comes from the postmodern worldview. And it sounds so good. But as confessional, Bible-believing Lutherans we do not have the luxury of being "objective" or neutral when it comes to Christian truth.

¹³ By "objective" he did not mean factual or true, but fair and neutral.

Neutrality can be used as a means, but never as an end among confessional Lutherans. Just as the math instructor must teach and defend $2 + 2 = 4$ (an important truth), so must the Christian instructor teach and defend Christian truths which are just as true and significantly and eternally more important. We can be nice. We can be, for a time, objective (neutral). We must be knowledgeable. But in the end we must also be apologetic; that is, we must defend the truth (1 Peter 3:15).

#4: Teaching False Worldviews by Silence

A science textbook teaches evolution. That's nothing new or even necessarily alarming at a Christian school. What is disconcerting is when an instructor is asked to explain what is scientifically wrong with some aspect of evolution, but the most he does is express his support for Creation; he does not seek to dismantle the false assumptions of evolution by means of his own discipline. The silence could easily lead to skepticism and doubt regarding the historical, geological, and biological record of the Bible: "Is he implying that Creation is merely a matter of 'faith' (something subjective) while evolution is real science and objectively true?" When the media and academic resources are uniformly arrayed to undermine the First Article of the Creed and we can effectively counter attack in the science classroom of a Christian school, we must do so. God's Creation—that which we can observe with the senses (a key element of science)—testifies to something other than an undirected, mindless, purposeless universe. It testifies to a Creator. Science instructors who are biblical Christians must demonstrate how it does so and how real science deflates evolution. Otherwise we leave the impression that the modernistic/Darwinian worldview is factually superior to the biblical worldview which in turn means that all the teachings connected to the First Article of the creed suffer, including the Second and Third Articles.

#5: Teaching False Worldviews by Continuing Education

A year ago at a pastoral conference I wrote:

Postmodernism understands that socially constructed knowledge is dependent on language, which also is said to be socially constructed (that is, words do not contain truth in and of themselves, but are constructed so they can influence or persuade). So the goal of each group is to manipulate or use language in order to gain and maintain power. One tool that is often used

is something called deconstruction. A postmodern deconstructionist will “read in between the lines” of the “knowledge” and “truths” of a group in power to discover what other groups with their beliefs and lifestyles are being repressed by the dominant group’s “knowledge” and “truths.” Postmodernism believes that all religions, social movements, literature, political parties, recorded histories, governments, customs, etc. are “really ‘masks’ for a sinister, though perhaps unconscious, conspiracy...”¹⁴ ...English and Comparative Literature departments in universities increasingly require readings that focus on groups (usually women, minorities, the poor, Jews, Muslims, and gays) that have been repressed by groups that are supposedly dominant and oppressive. A similar emphasis is found in K–12 literature classes....

After my presentation a pastor came up to me and explained that this is exactly what was taking place in his son’s PhD program at a major university. He told me his son (a graduate of Bethany) felt uncomfortable but did not really grasp that he was being fed postmodern assumptions. According to the postmodernist, truth and knowledge, which are merely human constructs and conveyed by humanly constructed language, are used by one group to retain or gain dominance over other groups. All truth and knowledge—including Christian truth—therefore become relative (even sinister) and ultimately meaningless in a postmodern worldview. There are two concerns here. One, obviously, is for the young PhD student. Will he or will he not be persuaded to adopt the postmodern assumptions regarding truth and eventually apply them to the truths of his Christian faith? It could easily happen since there is some truth found in the postmodern worldview (e.g., there are groups that construct their own “truths” which they then use to oppress others). The other concern is this: Here we have a man who grows up all his life in our fellowship, graduates from Bethany, and then goes on to earn his PhD. Sounds like a prime candidate for a teaching position at one of our Christian schools. But the question is, what worldview will he bring back with him and to what degree will it impact his teaching? If he recognizes and rejects the false assumptions of postmodernism, that’s absolutely wonderful and commendable. But if he doesn’t....

¹⁴ Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways Books, 1994), 53f.

Encouraging teachers to further their education makes sense. But if instructors go off and, knowingly or unknowingly, are tutored in and adopt part of or an entire false worldview, the results could be—will be—devastating. The solution is not to deter instructors from further education but to further their education even more. I am convinced they need to be thoroughly equipped with the assumptions of the Christian worldview in order to recognize more easily what is false; they also need to be educated in the major assumptions of false worldviews, especially those that are most likely to affect their specific discipline.

#6: Teaching False Worldviews by Failing to Judge, Defend, and Demolish

In Matthew 7 Jesus told His disciples not to judge. Non-Christians love this verse these days because of its current postmodern interpretation and application. Many Christians and their churches have jumped on this “don’t judge” bandwagon. After all, it’s not only the command of Jesus, it is also the “loving” thing to do.

It is quite interesting, however, that right after Jesus tells people not to judge He proceeds to make judgments—He calls people hypocrites, dogs, pigs, ferocious wolves, and false prophets—all in the same chapter. Was Jesus contradicting Himself? Actually the Christian church has to a degree lost a very valuable tool. When the Lord told His disciples not to judge He meant in the sense that they not put themselves above others or read evil motives into others’ hearts. That’s the bad kind of judging, and it’s horrible. But there is clearly a good and necessary kind of judging as well. Jesus commands believers to “make a right judgment” (John 7:24) and the apostle John tells his readers to “test [i.e., judge] the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). An example of this good judging would be the Berean Christians (Acts 17). In other words, Christians are to compare any and all teachings, practices, lifestyles, religions, philosophies, and worldviews to God’s Word, the ultimate standard and then simply concur with God whether they be right or wrong. This is the good and necessary judging. Think of what would happen if we would not do this.

And once we discern that something is contrary to the Word we must also realize that it is or will be used against the Christian faith. The recent vote regarding homosexual pastors in the ELCA has redefined sin. Thus those caught up in this sin (that is no longer a sin) no longer need a Savior from that sin because it’s not sin. What ought Christians

to do? What should we do when our fortress is attacked? “Always be prepared to give a *defense* to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). We are not only to state what we believe but also defend what we believe. In the first several centuries after Christ one of the main branches of theology was apologetics—the defense of the Christian faith. That was because Christianity was a minority view; it was surrounded by many false religions and philosophies, many of them government-sanctioned. So Christians defended their religion and they did so intelligently and scripturally. They did not acquiesce to the popular thinking of the time: all religions are pretty much equal. No, instead they said, “You have your religion, your gods, your philosophy and you are wrong; there is no salvation in what you believe. We have our religion and our Savior Jesus Christ. It is the only true religion and we know it will save. Let me give you the reasons why...” We have come full circle. True Christianity is again a minority view in a sea of false religions, philosophies, and worldviews. For the sake of the lost and for the sake of our children we must defend the truth and the confident hope given us by grace.

But a defense without an offense is no way to win a game. So, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). We go on the attack. When we are able to we need to show how a false worldview has inadequate answers, how it doesn’t deal with reality, how it gives faulty interpretations of the evidence, and how it fails to meet man’s ultimate need. We can use the Bible, we can use reason, we can use philosophical arguments, we can use empirical science—depending on the worldview that needs to be demolished. The Gospel alone saves, but the false worldviews are given credibility and an open door if they are not shown to be false. Christ did this all the time with the false worldviews of the Pharisees and Sadducees—he spent a lot of time arguing with them and demolishing their arguments (see Matt. 22:15ff., Mark 2:6ff., Luke 20:27ff). And so did his followers (see John 9:30ff., Acts 17:16ff.).

I believe the schools of our fellowship provide the best Christian education there is. But best is a relative term. To say that they are the best is not to say they can’t also be dangerous. I understand we will always be the Church Militant—always struggling; I have no utopian dreams. But to be the Church Militant means that we must necessarily be militant. We must not only believe and teach what we confess, we

must also “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) or we and our children will cease to be the Church.

In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness
That pure we keep, till life is spent,
Thy holy Word and Sacrament.

O God, how sin’s dread works abound!
Throughout the earth no rest is found,
And false-hood’s spirit wide has spread,
And error boldly rears it head.

And ever is there something new
Devised to change Thy doctrines true;
Lord Jesus! as Thou still dost reign,
Those vain presumptuous minds restrain;

And as the cause and glory, Lord,
Are Thine, not ours, to us afford
Thy help and strength and constancy,
And keep us ever true to Thee.

Thy Word shall fortify us hence,
It is Thy Church’s sure defense;
O let us in its pow’r confide,
That we may seek no other guide.¹⁵ LSQ

¹⁵ “Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide,” *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (St Louis: MorningStar Music Publishers, 1996), #511, verses 2, 4, 6, 7, 8.

Ulrich Vilhelm Koren: The Centennial of the Death of a Saint

*Craig A. Ferkenstad
Pastor, Norseland and Norwegian Grove Lutheran Churches
Saint Peter, Minnesota*

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THROUGHOUT HER HISTORY, the Christian Church has recalled the death of the saints. It is at the time of death when new life begins in heaven. In December 2010, we remember the centennial of the death of Pastor Ulrich Vilhelm Koren. At his funeral service, it was said that he was “one of the greatest men God has given to the Norwegian emigrants to America.”¹

As a Pastor

Ulrich Vilhelm Koren was born December 22, 1826, in Bergen, Norway where he grew to adulthood. He received his education in Norway. But because there were no calls available in Norway for seminary graduates, Koren became a teacher.

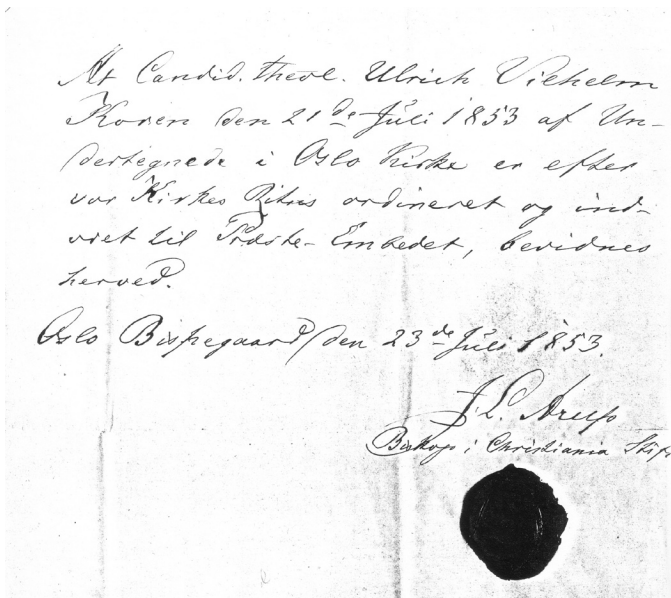
There were few Norwegian pastors in America to serve their



¹ H.G.Stub, quoted in H.A. Preus, “Ulrik Vilhem Koren, A Biography” *The Clergy Bulletin*, X (June 1951): 104.

fellow countrymen with the gospel and the sacraments. Koren personally knew three of them who had been his schoolmates in Oslo: Herman Preus, Jakob Ottesen, and Nils Brandt were serving congregations in Wisconsin. But no one was serving the immigrants who had settled west of the Mississippi River. Soon, a call arrived from four congregations in northeast Iowa. On the basis of that call, Koren was ordained on July 21, 1853. In September, along with his bride Else Elizabeth, he began the eleven-week voyage to America. He arrived at his new home at Washington Prairie, near Decorah, Iowa on December 23, exactly fifty-seven years prior to the date of his funeral service. Pastor Koren preached his first sermon in Iowa on December 25, 1853. His sermon text was Luke 2:1–11 which served as his Christmas sermon text for the next 50 consecutive years.²

Koren was the first Norwegian pastor to accept a call to serve west of the Mississippi River. The Rev. C. Clausen and the Rev. N. Brandt had visited Iowa and established congregations. The Rev. C. Clausen also had moved to Iowa as an itinerant pastor six months before Koren's arrival. The immigrant pastors faced grave difficulties in their callings. The Rev. H.A. Preus summarized those days:



Ordination certificate signed by J.L. Arup, Bishop of Christiania, 23 July 1853.

² "Rev. V. Koren, D.D.," *Lutheran Herald*, V (December 1910): 1223.

A good share of the work of our pastors is like that of missionaries. This is especially true of the pastors stationed on the frontier where the emigration is in full swing. Try to imagine it. One is called to the pastorate of six or seven congregations, all a good distance from one another. He begins work among them and thinks he has his hands full and can hardly cope with the burden on his shoulder. Then one fine day there arrives a letter or a deputation from a new settlement—it happens day after day. They explain to him that somewhere out there is a group of his countrymen without a pastor or spiritual care. They ask him if he would be so kind as to come out and visit them. He answers that he cannot handle the work of the congregations already in his charge and that he hardly knows how he could take them on too. Then they begin to describe their needs to him. They have been there two, three, four, sometimes as many as seven years without a visit from a Norwegian Lutheran pastor.... In all these years they have not partaken of the Lord's Supper and many of them have children, some of them large, who are not baptized.... They truly are sheep without a shepherd.³

But the pastor goes. He visits these people. He serves them with the gospel in the Word and the sacraments. As he does so, he also endures the uncertainties of pioneer life. Koren wrote in his memoirs:

The land was new, and there were no landmarks or names that could serve to guide the way. Only when I learned about how the land was surveyed and divided into townships and sections did I find something that helped me to orient myself. I arranged a map laid out in that way and, by using all the letters of the alphabet and numbers I knew, I was able to indicate which farmers lived in the various sections by using a letter or number to indicate each one, writing the explanation around the borders of the map. This helped me.⁴

There were more people to meet, congregations to be organized, church buildings to be constructed. There also were the times of trial. The parsonage was destroyed by fire in 1873 and the Koren family

³ H.A. Preus, *Vivacious Daughter*, trans. Todd W. Nichol (Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1990), 43–44.

⁴ U.V. Koren, *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. 4, trans. John Robert Christianson, in “Dr. Koren, the Immigrant Pastor and Theologian,” (presented at the ELS Historical Society Annual Meeting in Mankato, Minnesota on 19 June 2010).

lived in Decorah for one year while the new parsonage (still in use) was constructed in the fashion of an eastern Norway manor home. On one occasion while the young pastor was traveling to Saude, he “met the entire congregation fleeing to Calmar” for fear of Indian attack.⁵

Today we often think of Pastor Koren as one of the veritable fathers of the Synod. But we need to remember that he was a young man, only twenty-seven years old, when he arrived on the mission field in Iowa and had no practical experience as a pastor. But he was armed with the Word of God. He only had preached two sermons in Norway and a fellow-pastor commented on his graduation sermon that the bishop “had heard many poor sermons.”⁶ Yet God’s promise is that His Word shall not return empty (Isaiah 55:11). God multiplied the blessings of His Word and His grace. The arrival of Pastor Koren in Iowa in December 1853 was met with a flurry of activity. Fourteen services and meetings were held in January in the four-county parish of northeast Iowa. In 1863, he baptized 170 persons, confirmed 69 and lost 69 to death. He was alone in the field which soon came to number 10,000 souls. Eventually, his field covered eight counties in Iowa and Minnesota; at least twenty congregations were later formed from that original mission field. Because of the size of the parish and the responsibilities of synodical duties, four assistant pastors served with him from 1874 until the time of his death.⁷ Of the twenty-five full-time Christian Day Schools which were established throughout the Norwegian Synod,⁸ one was conducted in the congregation served by Koren at Calmar.⁹ The congregations in our Evangelical Lutheran Synod which today trace their heritage to Pastor Koren are located at Waukon, Calmar, Saude, and Jerico, Iowa. We remember the pastor because he “spoke the word of God” (Hebrews 13:7). He demonstrated a love for his Savior and for the means of grace. His pastoral love is evidenced by a tribute to a layman engraved on a cemetery marker at Saude, Iowa:

⁵ Andrew Estrem, “An Early Norse Settlement in Iowa,” *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 29 (October 1941): 394–95.

⁶ H.A. Preus, quoted in H.A. Preus, “Ulrik Vilhem Koren, A Biography,” *The Clergy Bulletin X* (June 1951): 106.

⁷ Assistant pastors were: O.Turmo (1874–82), J.Björgaas (1882–84), A.K.Sagen (1884–88), and Paul Koren (1888–1910).

⁸ Walter H Beck, *Lutheran Elementary School in the United States* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), 143.

⁹ Serving as a teacher at Calmar was Lars Lillegard (1881–89), who was the father of ELS pastor George Lillegard.

A patriarch with long grey locks,
Who old with honor grew,
A pattern for his children dear,
In life and doctrine true.
Upright, –peace-loving,
Trusting in God's care.
In Jesus sought he rest
And found it there. V.K.¹⁰

As a Churchman

As demanding as was the work of the parish, a new church body also was being established. The Norwegian Synod, of which the Evangelical Lutheran Synod is the successor, had been organized only two months before Koren's arrival. Soon he became a leader in the fledgling church body and is remembered today with respect as one of the "fathers" of the synod. Two years after his arrival, he was elected as the secretary of the synod. Subsequently, he also served as a member of the Church Council, president of the Iowa District, vice-president of the synod, and from 1894 until his death, as the president of the synod.

Koren took a lead in Christian education which was apparent with the establishment of Luther College in 1861. It was he who secured the thirty-acre site exactly 150 years ago and served as the secretary of the building committee for the first building which was dedicated on October 14, 1865. Following its destruction due to a fire, the second main building was dedicated on October 14–15, 1890. These dates became so significant for the members of the synod that they became known as "Founders' Day" and, until recent years, many subsequent dedication services throughout the synod were held near this anniversary date. Koren served as a temporary instructor of Norwegian at the college from 1874–76. It was considered a great event to have Koren appear on the campus.

The lead in preparing the synod's hymnbook [*Salmebog*], which was the first hymnbook prepared and published by Scandinavian immigrants in this country in 1870, also fell to Koren. It was due to Koren's influence that Grundtvig's hymn, "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage," was included. Among its hymns also were twenty-seven original hymns written by U.V. Koren and twenty-one translations of Lutheran chorales prepared by him. The hymn authored by him which

¹⁰ U.V. Koren, trans. T.N. Teigen, from M.W. Tweit in a letter to the author, 11 April 1979.

has endured in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* is “Ye Lands, to the Lord Make a Jubilant Noise” which is a paraphrase of Psalm 100. This hymn became very dear to the members of the synod and it was used as the opening hymn for most installation, ordination, and dedication services throughout the history of the Norwegian Synod and into the re-organized Norwegian Synod. It has been said, “Following the appearance of the *Synodens Salmebog*, Vilhelm Koren was established as the grand old man of Norwegian American Lutheran hymnody and, until his death in 1910, the leader in every attempt to create a new hymnal among Norwegian Lutherans.”¹¹

It was, however, at the time of the “Election Controversy” [*Naadevalgsstriden*] in the 1880s where Koren’s theological leadership became especially apparent. Koren, the chief theologian of the synod, wrote about the controversy saying, “Now if God’s grace is made dependent on something which we ourselves provide, then justification by faith is destroyed and all true comfort gone.”¹² The controversy was not without division even within his own congregation. It was Koren who authored the lengthy document of sixty-three theses entitled *An Accounting to the Congregations of the Norwegian Synod* [*En Redegjørelse*] which gave “an accounting” for what was taught by the pastors of the Synod. It was signed by 107 pastors in 1884 and said in part, “The doctrine of election stands in close connection with the fundamental chief articles of the Christian faith, such as: That fallen man is completely corrupted and dead in sin; that God desires the salvation of all men; that salvation is by the grace of God alone; and that it therefore is gained through faith alone without the works of the law.”¹³

Koren took an active part in American Lutheranism and frequently wrote on theological matters. Along with the members of the synod, he found fellowship among the brethren of the Missouri Synod and especially the Rev. C.F.W. Walther. Koren wrote about his relationship with them, “We learned nothing new from them... but what we had already learned in Norway, theoretically. ... We saw the glory of the Lutheran Confession, already well-known to us by word, actually carried out as we

¹¹ Gracia Grindal, “Dano-Norwegian Hymnody in America,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, VI (Autumn 1992): 272.

¹² U.V. Koren, “What the Norwegian Synod has Wanted and Still Wants,” *Faith of Our Fathers* (Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1953), 66.

¹³ U.V. Koren, “An Accounting,” in *Grace for Grace* (Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1943), 181.

had never seen it before.”¹⁴ This close relationship was reflected in 1903 when, upon the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Norwegian Synod, the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis conferred upon Koren the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In the same year, the King of Norway and Sweden made him a Commander of the Order of St. Olaf.

A collection of Koren’s writings in the Norwegian language was published by his son in four volumes the year after his death under the title *Samlede Skrifter* [Collected Writings]. Today, we have access to some of Koren’s writings in English:¹⁵

In the *Lutheran Sentinel* translations by the Rev. M.C. Waller all selected from *Samlede Skrifter*:

“The Meeting at Red Wing, Minn., October 14, 1885,” beginning at 11 (October 3, 1928) page 634.

“Still an Effort,” beginning at 12 (April 3, 1929) 14, page 213.

“Reply to N. Tøsseland” [re: conversion], beginning at 12 (November 13, 1929) page 502.

“From a Letter,” beginning at 13 (March 5, 1930) page 78.

“Sermon: Luke 21:25-26 (Second Sunday in Advent),” 13 (December 10, 1930) pages 384–89.

“Sermon: Matthew 11:2-11 (Third Sunday in Advent),” 13 (December 24, 1930) pages 403–08.

“Sermon: Matthew 2:19-23 (Sunday after New Year),” 14 (February 4, 1931) pages 33–38.

“Sermon: Isaiah 60:1-6 (Epiphany),” 14 (February 18, 1931) pages 48–53.

“Sermon: Matthew 3:13-17 (Quinquagesima),” 14 (March 14, 1931) pages 67–70.

“Sermon: Matthew 4:1-11 (First Sunday in Lent),” 14 (March 18, 1931) pages 84–87.

¹⁴ U.V. Koren, “Why is there no church unity among Norwegian Lutherans in America?” trans. C.U.Faye, *The Clergy Bulletin*, XII (November 1952): 39.

¹⁵ Additional translations include:

The Diary of Elizabeth Koren 1853-1855, trans. David T. Nelson (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-Historical Association, 1955).

Memories from the Little Iowa Parsonage, Caroline Mathilde Koren Naeseth, trans. Henriette C.K. Naeseth (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association, no 13 [1943]: 66ff).

In *The Clergy Bulletin*:

“Synodical address (1890),” beginning at vol. X (November 1951) page 56.

“Why is there no church unity among Norwegian Lutherans in America?” beginning at vol. XII (September 1952) page 3.

In the *Journal of Theology* translations by the Rev. C.M. Gullerud all selected from *Samlede Skrifter*:

“Speech at Luther College (May 1, 1904),” 31 (March 1991) pages 2–7.

“Memories from my youth and early times in America,” 32 (June 1992) pages 2–23.

“A lecture delivered before the theological students at Luther Seminary,” 4 (December 1992) pages 2–18.

In *Grace for Grace* (1943):

“An Accounting to the Congregations of the Norwegian Synod” – reprinted in *LSQ* 33 (1993) pages 8–27, and *LSQ*, 43 (2003) pages 128–47.

In *Faith of our Fathers* (1953):

“What the Norwegian Synod has wanted and still wants” –also in *LSQ*, 32 (1992) pages 10–98.

“The right principles of Church government” –also in *The Clergy Bulletin* –beginning at vol. XI (October 1951) page 13.

“On the use of the Word of God” [1909 synodical address] –also in *The Clergy Bulletin* beginning at XII (February 1953, page 69.

In *Truth Unchanged, Unchanging* (1978):

“Introductory remarks to a discussion regarding justification by faith.”

“The inspiration of scripture.”

“Can and ought a Christian be certain of his salvation?” –also in: the *Lutheran Sentinel* beginning at 14 (March 18, 1931) page 92 and *LSQ*, 43 (2003) pages 148–88.

“What hinders the merger of the various Norwegian Lutheran synods?”

“The requirements which the present condition of our church body demand of our clergy.” –also in *LSQ*, 24 (1984) pages 46–69.

A number of other sermons and addresses.

It was Pastor Koren who suggested that the motto of the Norwegian Synod be the words which Jesus spoke when tempted by Satan, “It is written.” These words still today are found as the masthead of the *Lutheran Sentinel*. They also are inscribed on the obelisk which marks his grave.

As a Saint

He was a pastor. He was a churchman. He was a leader. He was a servant of the Lord. But, above all, Koren was a sinner who was justified by grace. Luther College historian, Knut Gjersest, wrote, “In the many struggles for orthodox Lutheran doctrine waged in those times, no one quite equaled him in thorough scholarship, critical discernment, dialectic skill or resourceful leadership.... He frowned upon emotionalism, but clung with unswerving fidelity to the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. The word *gegraptai* (It is written) engraved on the seal of the Synod was like a device emblazoned on his spiritual armor in every religious controversy. But although he was found in the forefront of every battle where purity of doctrine was at stake, he loved peace, and counted it his chief mission to do a pastor’s work of preaching the Gospel to his congregations.”¹⁶ During this anniversary year, we remember what God has worked for His Church through the life of U.V. Koren. He was a pastor who faithfully served the means of grace. He was a theologian who “[contended] for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3). The anniversary dates of the deaths of God’s saints are also a cause for joy. The apostle Peter writes that here, we “are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9).

Koren was the last of the synod’s “three Fathers” to depart this life. He entered the Church Triumphant with faith in his Savior Jesus Christ on December 19, 1910.¹⁷ Four days later, he was buried in the

¹⁶ Luther College Faculty, *Luther College Through Sixty Years, 1861–1921* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1922), 383–84.

¹⁷ He was survived by his wife and seven children: John (who served as the organizing pastor of the ELS congregation now located at Burlington, Massachusetts), Paul (pastor at Washington Prairie where he succeeded his father until 1941), William (professor at Princeton University), Henriette (at home), Marie (at home), Caroline (married to Prof. Christen Naeseth of Luther College), and Elizabeth (wife of the Rev. I.B. Torrison of First Lutheran Church in Decorah, Iowa).

Washington Prairie Lutheran Cemetery. The following account was published of his funeral:

The funeral took place Friday, Dec. 23, just fifty-seven years from the day Dr. Koren arrived at Washington Prairie. The service for the family, which occurred in the forenoon was conducted in the parsonage by Rev. J.W. Preus of Minneapolis ... [who] spoke on the text [Hebrews 13,14]....

After the brief service in the home the remains were taken to the church, where, from eleven o'clock till one o'clock, all who wished to do so were given the opportunity of taking a farewell view of the face of the departed. During this two hour interval music on the organ was rendered by Prof. Carlo A. Sperati, of Luther College.

The service in the church began at one o'clock.... The funeral sermon was preached by Rev. J. Nordby, President of the Eastern District. His text was Luke 2:29-31: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." He spoke of the great loss that had been sustained by Dr. Koren's family, his congregations, and the Synod as a whole, and what a void would be left in the life of the bereaved widow who had been a loving, faithful helpmeet to her husband during all these fifty-seven years of devoted service to the Lord. Rev. Nordby emphasized especially the fact that the deceased had lived and died as the servant of the Lord, that other titles, other honor, had been to him as nothing compared with this. He had served the Lord as a devout Christian, as the pastor of his congregations, as a leader in the church in general. In all that he did he had been a faithful servant, accepting the word of God as his only guide and the grace of God through Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation; therefore he relied, not on his own deeds or piety, but his final comfort was the comfort of the aged Simeon, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people."

The Washington Prairie church choir then sang verses 1 and 2 of the translation Dr. Koren had made during his last illness of the hymn "I Cannot Do Without Thee."

During the funeral service, ten other individuals also spoke. Two hymns were sung in addition to a solo, and two selections were sung by a double quartette.

Rev. Paul Koren performed the service at the grave, where hymn No. 60 ["I Pray Thee, My Lord and God, Open Thy Merciful Ear..."], the hymn used by Dr. Koren at all the funerals he conducted, was sung.


There were four sets of pall-bearers. Members of the Washington Prairie congregation carried the casket from the home to the hearse; members of the Calmar congregation carried it into the church; members of the theological faculty of Luther Seminary, of the faculty of Luther College, and district presidents carried it to the door of the church; and thence it was borne to the grave by younger ministers.

Though the day was cold the attendance at the funeral was very large. The fact that the funeral was held two days before Christmas made it very difficult for ministers from a distance to attend. About twenty-five ministers were present....¹⁸

The Norwegians know December 23 as "Little Christmas Eve." It was on that day, 100 years ago, when a funeral service proclaimed that because of the birth of the Son of God, we are justified by faith alone and have received the gift of eternal life. Other Lutheran bodies often dissuade their heritage as something from the past which must be put behind them. There are those who feel it is good to have moved beyond "strict orthodoxy." Yet upon this anniversary we pause to remember that the old paths and the lessons which we can learn from them remain important today. God's Word and sacraments have not changed. God's desire that all people come to a knowledge of His Son and be saved is constant. During this anniversary year, we heed the words of the inspired author, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7).

¹⁸ "Rev. V. Koren, D.D.," *Lutheran Herald*, V (December 1910): 1224-28.

I could not do without Thee,
O Savior of the lost,
Whose wondrous love redeemed me,
At such tremendous cost;
Thy righteousness, Thy pardon,
Thy precious blood must be
My only hope and comfort,
My glory and my plea.

I could not do without Thee,
I cannot stand alone,
I have no strength or goodness,
No wisdom of my own;
But Thou, beloved Savior,
Art all in all to me;
And weakness will be power
If leaning hard on Thee.
(The Lutheran Hymnary,
Augsburg Publishing House, 1913) 

The Melanchthon Anniversary (1497–1560)

Gaylin R. Schmeling
President, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
Mankato, Minnesota

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AS LUTHERANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD gear up to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017, they are reminded of another important anniversary. This year is the 450th anniversary of the death of Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560). The importance of this key member of the Wittenberg Circle can hardly be exaggerated. Philipp Melanchthon played a leading role along with Martin Luther in introducing humanist curriculum reforms to the University of Wittenberg that facilitated the Lutheran Reformation, reintroduced a restricted Aristotelianism to Lutheranism, and laid the foundation of the German education system as the *Praeceptor Germaniae*.¹ He participated in the reform of a number of territories, shaped later generations through his influential theological treatises, was one of the chief architects of the Lutheran Symbols, and assumed the role of spokesman for Lutheranism, but he ended his life mired in controversy.

Philipp Schwarzerd was born February 16, 1497, at Bretten in the Electoral Palatinate, son of an armourer for Emperor Maximilian. After his father's death in 1508, Philipp and his brother, Georg, were taken to Pforzheim to continue their education. During this time the

¹ Lewis W. Spitz, "The Course of German Humanism," in *Itinerarium Italicum: the Profile of Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations*, ed. H. A. Oberman et. al., Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, no. 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 434–435; John Michael Weiss, "Humanism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2:266.

celebrated Hebrew scholar, Johann Reuchlin, a great uncle of Philipp, “not only strongly encouraged the young Philipp but conferred on him the humanist name ‘Melan-chthon,’ a Greek translation of the German ‘Schwarz-erde.’”² He attended the University of Heidelberg and the University of Tübingen. By age 17 he had earned his MA degree and began to teach. At the ripe old age of nineteen Philipp had already caught the attention of the famous humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam who recognized Philipp’s many talents and spoke highly of him. He was an excellent Greek scholar.

In 1518, Melanchthon was called to teach the Greek language and literature at Wittenberg University. Here he came into contact with Martin Luther, an encounter which changed the course of his life. He was greatly influenced by Luther and was a powerful influence on Luther.³ In Melanchthon’s disputation on September 9, 1519, for the Bachelor of Theology (*Baccalaureus biblicus*) at Wittenberg, one of the first reformational statements on forensic justification is found.⁴ This was the heart of the Gospel discovery. He worked side by side with Luther in the Reformation and was by far his greatest co-worker. Over the years the relationship between these two men developed into a deep, lifelong friendship. Melanchthon would say of Luther, “I would rather die than be separated from this man.”

In 1520 he married Katharina Krapp, daughter of the mayor of Wittenberg, Hieronymous Krapp. It was a happy marriage in spite of Katharina’s inability to manage money, which was also one of Melanchthon’s failures. Their marriage, which would continue until Katharina’s death in 1557, was blessed with four children. Melanchthon’s son-in-law, Casper Peucer, was a physician and eventually a member of the Wittenberg faculty. He became the leader of the Philippists, in contradistinction to the Gnesio-Lutherans.⁵ He considered himself to be the interpreter of Melanchthon’s writings.

² Carter Lindberg, editor, *The Reformation Theologians* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 68.

³ Lowell C. Green, *How Melanchthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel* (Fallbrook, California: Verdict Publications 1980).

⁴ Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1999), 276.

⁵ After the death of Martin Luther, two groups arose among the Lutherans, the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans. The Gnesio-Lutherans stressed the importance of Luther’s writings and believed they were giving an authentic presentation of his teaching, while the Philippists believed that Melanchthon’s insights were also important to Lutheranism. The Philippists tended to read Luther through the sieve of

The University of Wittenberg achieved worldwide fame—fame that would last through the mid-1600s—during Melanchthon's tenure with it. More than 2,000 students, many of them future pastors, would attend his lectures. He is credited with the founding of schools, writing of textbooks, and initiating of educational reforms.

Luther was the prophet of Wittenberg. He worked endlessly on evangelical theology. But this gave him little time to systematize its various doctrines. In 1521, Melanchthon took on this task, writing the first summary of the evangelical faith (*Loci Communes Rerum Theologicarum*). Luther was so enthusiastic about the book that he recommended it over many of his own books.

At Augsburg we see Melanchthon at his finest. Using several other Lutheran statements and with considerable input from Luther, he summarized the faith of Luther and his followers in a statement which has become known as the *Augsburg Confession*, the basic confession of the Lutheran Church. It was read for the diet at 3:00 p.m., Saturday, June 25, 1530. Shortly thereafter he wrote the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*.

The tragedy of Melanchthon's life was his lack of leadership qualities. After Luther's death the mantle logically fell to him but he vacillated in times of crisis. A case in point was the Leipzig Interim where he accepted as adiaphora things which were not adiaphora.⁶ Also he continued to tamper with the *AC* and the *Apology* producing the *Variata* forms of these confessions implying a different doctrine from the original.⁷

Melanchthon. In the late medieval context, Philippists appear as conservatives while Gnesio-Lutherans are viewed as radicals.

From the perspective of the year 1500 the Philippists took relatively more conservative positions on ecclesiastical usages and on doctrinal questions in the area of theological anthropology. In contrast, the Gnesio-Lutherans were more radical, both in their rejection of some medieval usages and in their use of Luther's radical critique of late medieval views of the relationship between God and his human creatures, of the role of law in the Christian life, and of the power of human creatures to contribute to their own salvation. (Robert Kolb, *Luther's Heirs Define His Legacy* [Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1996], I:2ff).

⁶ Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), 152–160, 309–317.

⁷ For example, there was a weakening of the doctrine of the real presence in the Sacrament from the 1530 to the 1540 edition of the Augsburg Confession. The 1530 edition states:

De Coena Domini docent, quod corpus et sanguis Christi vere adsint, et distribuuntur vescentibus in Coena Domini; et improbant secus docentes.

Concerning the Lord's Supper, they teach that the body and blood of

The influence of Melanchthon on classical Lutheran theology has caused some to imply that Lutheran orthodoxy did not give a true presentation of Luther's teaching. This, however, is not the case.

... during the 1940s and 1950s Richard Caemmerer, Jaroslav Pelikan, and others started applying to a particular church body, the Missouri Synod, one of the considered conclusions from the Luther Renaissance and other late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century theological and historical scholarship. This conclusion was about Melanchthon, the "*praeceptor* of Germany," his differences with Luther, and his alleged deleterious effect on the subsequent classic Lutheran theology that the Missouri Synod represented. ... More recently in the wider world of scholarship, however, the historiography on Melanchthon has been shifting. It has moved away from some of the thinking that informed Caemmerer, Pelikan, and others.⁸

In October 1557, while in Worms attending religious discussions, Melanchthon learned of his wife's death. From that time on he became increasingly ill. He also took hard the hostile treatment he received from those who accused him of leaving the theology of Luther and the Reformation. He is to have prayed for deliverance from the "fury of the theologians."⁹ His last public lecture came on April 11, 1560. He died eight days later and was buried adjacent to his friend and fellow reformer, Martin Luther, in the floor of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. His grave reads, in Latin: "Here rests the body of the most commendable

Christ are truly present [under the form of bread and wine (German text)], and are distributed to those who eat in the Lord's Supper. And they reject those that teach otherwise.

The 1540 edition states:

De Coena Domini docent, quod cum pane et vino vere exhibeantur corpus et sanguis Christi vescentibus in Coena Domini.

Concerning the Lord's Supper, they teach that with bread and wine are truly exhibited the body and blood of Christ to those that eat in the Lord's Supper. (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, 4th ed., vol. 1 [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877], 241.)

⁸ Ken Schurb, "Twentieth Century Melanchthon Scholarship and the Missouri Synod: With Particular Reference to Richard Caemmerer's 'The Melanchthonian Blight,'" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* Vol. 62, No. 4 (1998): 287–288. A reading of this entire article would be beneficial for any orthodox Lutheran.

⁹ David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 79.

Philipp Melanchthon, who died on 19 April 1560, in this town after he had lived for 63 years 2 months and 2 days.”

Philipp Melanchthon was greatly influenced by Luther and was a powerful influence on Luther. He worked side by side with Luther in the Reformation and was by far his greatest coworker. Thus he remains one of the great enigmas of the Reformation. On the one hand he is praised as the preceptor of Germany. Luther hailed him as one of the greatest theologians that ever lived, and of the *Loci* Luther said they should be esteemed next to the Bible.¹⁰ On the other hand, his fluctuation in doctrine after Luther's death caused him to be denounced as a rationalist, a synergist, and a traitor to the Lutheran Reformation. One of his successors at Wittenberg, Leonhard Hutter, went so far as to trample on his picture in public—a sign of contempt for a traitor.¹¹ He remains an enigma. LSQ

¹⁰ LW 33:16; see also LW 54:440.

¹¹ Joseph Stump, *Life of Philip Melanchthon* (Reading, PA: Pilger Publishing House, 1897), 263.

Note and Book Reviews

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2010 Meeting of the Theological Commission of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) Mankato, Minnesota

The Theological Commission of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) met on June 8–10, 2010, at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota. The members of the Theological Commission of the CELC are the Rev. Andreas Drechsler, Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK), Germany; Prof. Lyle Lange, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS); the Rev. Takeshi Nadaira, Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (LECC), Japan; Prof. Gaylin Schmeling, Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS); and the

Rev. Steven Petersen, CELC president, *ex officio*.

The Theological Commission reviewed a statement entitled “Eagerly Await the Savior: The Doctrine of the Last Things (Eschatology)” for publication and presentation to the 2011 CELC convention. In addition the commission began preparing a statement on mission, which is a summary of the essays presented at the 2008 CELC Convention in Kiev, Ukraine. These topics will be Article V and Article VI respectively of *The Eternal Word: A Lutheran Confession for the Twenty-First Century*. Article I is a study of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, Article II of the doctrine of justification, Article III of the work of the Holy Spirit, and Article IV of the person and work of Christ. These statements may be found in PDF form on the CELC website under the heading “Where We Stand” <www.celc.info>.

The members of the commission had the opportunity to visit several congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. There were tours of the Bethany Lutheran College campus in Mankato and the Martin Luther College campus in New Ulm.

The triennial convention of the CELC will be held in New Ulm, Minnesota, on June 4–6, 2011. The officers of the CELC are: president, the Rev. Steven Petersen; vice-president, the Rev. Daniel Koelpin; secretary, Prof. Thomas Nass; planning committee, Prof. William Kessel and the Rev. Wayne Mueller.

As one surveys Lutheranism in the world, three major options for wider fellowship become visible. The first option is the Lutheran World Federation, which is by far the largest organization of Lutherans in the world. However, this organization has lost its Lutheran heritage. It no longer makes its stand on the

inerrant Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Theologians are tolerated within the organization that do not confess the central truths of the faith.

The second option is the International Lutheran Council. This organization is made up of those church bodies that are in fellowship with the LCMS. Their doctrinal stance is closer to that of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Yet a wide spectrum of doctrinal deviation is permitted within these church bodies. Here one finds religious pluralism.

The third option in our world today is the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. It is the smallest of the three groups, but it continues to uphold our great Lutheran heritage. It boldly confesses the doctrine of the inerrant Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Its purpose has been and continues to be to preserve and promote this confessional stand throughout the world. This is its doctrinal emphasis. At the



(left to right) Rev. Takeshi Nadaira, Prof. Gaylin Schmeling, Prof. Lyle Lange, Rev. Andreas Drechsler, Rev. Steven Petersen

same time, it is firmly committed to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin to all people.

– Gaylin R. Schmeling

LSQ

Book Review: ***Here We Stand:*** ***A Confessional Christian*** ***Study of Worldviews***

Here We Stand: A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews. Curtis A. Jahn, compiling editor. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010. 350 pages. \$20.50.

“Where are my glasses?” The eccentric professor scurried around his office overturning “strategically positioned” stacks of books and rummaging through “conveniently placed” piles of notes. In the mad charge to the latest possibility of their whereabouts, he caught a glimpse of the mirror on the back of his office door. He stopped dead in his tracks to take another look. He found the glasses staring back at him. *Here We Stand: A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews* proves that we are, whether we realize it or not, wearing glasses. This book is a compilation of essays whose authors “use the truth of God’s Word to examine such secular worldviews as Darwinism and science, Islam, New Age, atheism, pantheism... postmodernism, and ... moral relativism.”¹

¹ Back cover.

Pastor David Thompson presents seven direct benefits resulting from the study of worldviews in the introduction.

First, we better understand the confessional Christian world view.... Second, we will better grasp false worldviews and how they conflict with God’s Word. Third, we will have a better understanding of false worldviews and know how they manifest themselves in culture, the different avenues through which they come.... Fourth, we will be better equipped to guard our faith and help others guard theirs. Fifth, we will know how better to defend the truth of Christianity and challenge the false worldviews. Sixth, we will be more aptly prepared to proclaim law and gospel, sin and grace, within the culture context of false worldviews. Finally, we will know better how to love our neighbor.²

The book certainly provides these benefits.

Pastor David Jay Webber supplies the best definition of a worldview in the first chapter of the book.

A worldview has been described as the collection of presuppositions with which a person examines and evaluates reality, or as the set of “lenses” through which a person sees and interprets everything around him. A worldview is a basic way of understanding how things are

² xvii ff.

and the reasons why things are they way they are. It deals with the fundamental organizing principles by which a person understands his own existence and by which he governs and measures his interactions with others.³

Following are some highlights of the book.

- Pastor Webber's thorough coverage of the Lutheran worldview and his rich use of Lutheran Confessions and the Lutheran fathers. He carefully lays out the uniqueness of the biblical and confessional worldview by critically contrasting it to the worldview of other branches of Christianity and society in general.
- The discussion of the two kingdoms, and the Christian's role in both, is taken up in a number of the essays. Mr. Eidsmoe, in Chapter 4, draws some interesting parallels between the kingdoms. He spends considerable time demonstrating the connection between the interpretation of the Bible and the Constitution of the United States. He convincingly argues that the false worldviews of today, especially Evolutionism, affect biblical and constitutional interpretation. He states, "I believe Luther would have strongly approved early American theories of constitutional interpretation, with emphasis on jurisprudence of original intent. But I believe Luther would have deplored the modern view of a 'living Constitution' that is to be

interpreted according to an evolving standard."⁴

- The presentation of moral philosophies by Dr. MacPherson is very clear and evangelical. He handles the topic in a straightforward manner. Evangelism is an obvious concern of Dr. MacPherson and reaching out to the moral skeptic is a strong subtheme of the chapter. A conversation with an academic colleague, Rebecca, is used as a backdrop for the essay. Dr. MacPherson retells how he tried to move her from one set of "moral" glasses to the next with the goal that she would begin seeing the world through the lens of divine command moral objectivism. This conversation and his explanation of it provide a real-life use for the material.
- Prof. Quist's summary of The New Pantheism provides insight into its beliefs and how it is being promoted in society through literature. He especially focuses on how children are being taught to see the world through pantheistic glasses because it is being deliberately promoted in school reading material.
- The critique of the violent history of Islam was extremely valuable. Dr. Schmidt outlines the atrocities that Mohammed and his heirs have committed, particularly against Christians. This chapter certainly shows how much the media has "softened" society toward Islam. Dr. Schmidt's essay removes the scales of Islamic apologetics from our eyes so that we see once again that Islam is the religion of the sword, not of peace.

³ 1.

⁴ 104.

- Dr. Schmidt's "Cultural Erosion of Christianity's Contributions" is a brief overview of some of the negative effects that false worldviews have caused in our culture today. He argues that even the word faith has been undermined and changed in meaning. He says, "For some time Americans, as well as other English-speaking people, have been equating faith with religion, regardless of whether that religion is Christian or not.... Seeing faith and any religious belief or religion as synonymous has two unfortunate effects. It slights Christianity, and it supports polytheistic civil religion."⁵

Here We Stand: A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews achieves its objectives. It proclaims the truth concerning Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior. It equips the Christian with tools for recognizing and confronting false worldviews. It defends the true faith. Pastors, teachers, parents, college and high school students, curious Christians, concerned citizens, and analytical minds will be well served by reading this book.

Where are your glasses? Maybe a better question would be "What are your glasses?" You are wearing them. Make sure that they are Lutheran, biblical, and confessional. *Here We Stand: A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews* will help you do that.

—Timothy A. Hartwig

LSQ

Book Review: ***Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible***

Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible. C.F.W. Walther. Edited by Charles P. Schaum. Translated by Christian C. Tiews. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010. 514 pages. \$29.99.

"My friends...."

With these words begin each of the lectures that make up C.F.W. Walther's discussion on the doctrines of Law and Gospel.

The word "friend" is used much these days in Christendom. Congregations use it in their advertising to attract visitors to come through their doors, as in, "Come join us; we offer a *friendly* place for you to be." The congregation hopes they will be viewed as unthreatening and having a comfortable environment in which someone can come and "sit a spell" and learn things about God. The problem with this is that a church being faithful to the Word of God, "rightly dividing" his Word of truth, must speak some patently *unfriendly* things that may move a visitor to vow never to return.

The hard truth of Christian evangelism is that when *both* the Law and Gospel are properly distinguished, when *both* are preached in all their harshness and sweetness respectively, this is the most friendly thing *any* church and her pastor can do even though it may *not* lead to numerical growth.

Hence Walther begins each lecture by calling his hearers “My friends.” Following that greeting were some words that would hardly engender friendly feelings on the part of the hearers for their lecturer no matter how winsome the delivery. Even a cursory reading of them finds them filled with the condemnation of the Law that accused each person there – including Walther and this reader – of sin so degrading as to disallow salvation.

As a warning and as a cudgel he said in the Third Evening Lecture, “In the same way, an entire audience can be subject to spiritual and eternal death when they listen to a sermon to which the poison of false doctrine has been added. People can be deprived of their soul’s salvation by a single false comfort or a single false rebuke administered to them” (24).

Then, to illustrate the *true* teaching of the Law, Walther states in the Thirteenth Evening Lecture, “Accordingly, we must not preach the Gospel but rather the Law to secure sinners. We must preach them into hell before we can preach them into heaven. By our preaching our hearers must be brought to the point of death before they can be restored to life by the Gospel. They must be made to realize that they are terminally ill before they can be restored to health through the Gospel” (131).

Yet the human heart rebels against such preaching just as might the preacher’s to speak these words; hence, these lectures.

As explained in the section “Law & Gospel in Walther’s Teaching” set before the main body of the book

and under the heading “Pietism,” the editors discuss the perversion of the Law into something that gives a quantifiable and reliable indicator of true Christian spirituality. They describe the change in focus from “what a Christian was according to categories defined in Scripture, to what a Christian does” (lxviii). Elsewhere, they give it its name: “To avoid persecution, on the one hand, and atheism, on the other, a person might try to be religious in the sense of individual faith and moral life. This attitude generally coincided with a movement called Pietism that arose among Protestants, but especially among Lutherans” (lxvii).

Most who are familiar with Walther’s life understand his lectures in light of his earlier years. At the University of Leipzig he became a member of the “Holy Club.” This group of theology students, ostensibly to combat the rationalism so prevalent in their school’s lecture halls, sought to demonstrate by their holy lives that the Christian faith was a valid, living, breathing thing. (Walter explains this all himself in Thesis IX, Lecture 15 under the margin note: “Walther’s pietistic past,” 157.)

As “Law & Gospel in Walther’s Teaching” details, though, what these students were endeavoring to do actually had its roots in rationalism. That is, the process of thought that sought after proofs of truth and rejected the supernatural was, to an extent, one and the same with the basic tenets of Pietism (a similar comparison is made with Revivalism). That is, the Pietists sought after tangible evidence of their faith via the senses as the Rationalists

sought tangible evidence for truth via their reason, neither of which are acceptable proofs considering the orthodox teachings of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*.

In a chronology of Law and Gospel in the Church's theology, it is stated:

Walther argues extensively against Pietist and Rationalist views in the lectures on Law and Gospel because a number of advocates for these positions use the theology of eternal predestination in a way that says, "If I love God and am doing right, then I know I have faith because only faith can produce such a life." They go from effect to root cause in a manner similar to scientific reasoning. Walther realizes that biblical, Christian faith does not work like that. Such thinking not only ignores the biblical doctrine of sin, but it also crowds out Scripture itself as a necessary Means of Grace in favor of human works.

This is important to see especially with regard to the more immediate context of these lectures: the Election Controversy. Walther gave these lectures beginning in 1884 as this dispute came to a head especially among the members of the Missouri Synod and the Norwegian Synod. The point of controversy, as described in *A City Set on a Hill*, was related to

...the doctrine of conversion, and it soon became evident that Prof. Schmidt had an explanation for conversion, even as for

election, in regard to why some are saved and not others. In a discussion with Pastor Ottesen before the voters of the West Koshkonong congregation on Dec. 9, 1881, Prof. Schmidt said:

"When of two ungodly persons only one is converted, then there must have been a difference in their resistance; for if not, both would be converted, or else it is not true that God wills equally as much the salvation of all. We must reject all our Lutheran books of doctrine if we do not distinguish between natural and malicious resistance. It is true that all good comes from God; but what concerns hindrances, that depends on the man, whether he will use his evil in order to hinder God..." (E.L.K., 9,5 [Feb. 3, 1882], 68).

To this, Dr. Walther had said already in 1877, "...If my nonresistance is the final and real basis, I am virtually my own savior, my redeemer, my source of salvation and on the Last Day I could call out to those who then stand at the left hand of their Lord: "You could also have stood at the right side, could have been every bit as blessed as I, had you only acted exactly as I did. I just didn't resist." (29)

As there really *is* "nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9), it is both the distant and immediate contexts and Walther's considered responses

to them in these lectures that give tremendous value for those who would read them today, especially in this Reader's Edition.

The Dau edition of *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* is still rightfully used as a textbook in the homiletics classes at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. For beginning preachers it deflates that "puffed up" (1 Tim. 3:6) sense of self-importance that is prevalent in those who have a little knowledge. It teaches that the reliance is *not* to be upon the preacher, his ability to draw people to himself, his winsome personality. It is only to be found in the right division of Law and Gospel which the Lord will use as He wills.

Yet in each of us the spirit of enthusiasm lives on...and it is *not* a holy spirit. In this day of "lifestyle preaching," it is well that we heed what Walther intoned in his sixteenth lecture:

[Luther] writes (St. Louis Ed. 3:1691-94): "Notice that our new fanatics and enthusiasts are leading the people to trust in their own works!" True enough, the fanatics do not issue orders such as "You must give this certain amount to the poor, or you must forgive your enemy. These things will get you to heaven." But simply by declaring that people need to *do* things in addition to believing the Good News of the Gospel, we have enough evidence to define these new sects and non-Christian. For only people who believe that they are saved

by *grace* are Christians. Once a person becomes a Christian, it is all right to tell him that he must now work and struggle because he already *has* faith. In fact, we *must* tell him this – so he does not mistakenly believe that he will get to heaven because of the work and worry he went through **first**. (177)

Because there is widespread misunderstanding in Christendom about even these basic issues of faith and life, this *Reader's Edition* has tremendous value. Because the language from the Dau translation has been updated and somewhat simplified, and because of the supplementary materials (the historical outlines, biography of Walther, margin notes) it becomes far more accessible and beneficial for both preachers and hearers.

The preachers, so that they understand by (hopefully) repeated readings, will learn how better to construct their sermons and classes so that the distinction between these two teachings is maintained. This is not just a mechanical exercise: "Law first...then Gospel," but it is far deeper than that. It is the purity of the doctrine that leads to the salvation of souls that is at stake here, because otherwise the hearers will be given, as Walther names it, "poison."

It is very easy to get caught up in fads and what the world would want and see as "relevant." But relevancy is *not relative*. Only the pure Word of the Lord God, His Law and Gospel, is eternally relevant and only these are applicable to the spiritual lives of

the members of Christ's holy Church. Walther in his third lecture states:

It is easy to lose your way when you are taking a narrow and rarely traveled path through a dense forest. Without intending to do so and without being aware of it, you might make a wrong turn to the right or left. It is just as easy to lose the narrow way of pure doctrine, which likewise is traveled by few people and leads through a dense forest of false teachings. You may land either in the bog of fanaticism or in the ravine of rationalism. This cannot be taken lightly. False doctrine is poison to the soul. If people at a large banquet drink from wine glasses to which arsenic has been added, they can drink physical death from their wine glasses.

For hearers, this book has a twofold benefit. First, their understanding of Bible teaching will be strengthened as will their faith from its clear discussion of what they can and, especially, *cannot* do. This is then tempered with the declaration of what God has done for them through Christ.

Second, the benefit for the Church's laity reading these lectures along with the introductory material will help them better to discern the spirits that are so contending for a false view of God's Law and Gospel, even in their pastors. No one is immune to enthusiasm, not even the called and ordained. The temptation is very great to quantify the success of their preaching and teaching and, when the

numbers do not seem to add up, to move more to a preaching of the Law, to what itching ears of those who want to justify themselves (including himself) desire to hear. In doing this, the preaching of the cross of Christ becomes at the very least, secondary. With this volume in the hands of faithful laymen, though, the opportunity more accurately to test what they are hearing is greatly increased and as they gently and as a friend speak to their shepherd aid him as well.

— James M. Braun

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Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
6 Browns Court
Mankato MN 56001

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