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Blessed Is the Man…Blessed Are All Who Trust in Him: Approaching the Christological Nature of the Psalms

Te Deum Laudamus: History and Use

Weller's Luther Guide for the Proper Study of Theology

1700th Anniversary of the Edict of Milan

Book Review

The journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
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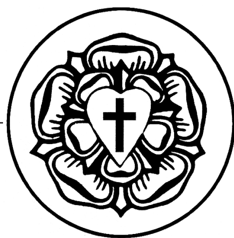

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The journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

Lutheran Synod Quarterly

Editor-in-Chief.. Gaylin R. Schmeling
Book Review Editor.. Michael K. Smith
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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. 53, Nos. 2–3 (June–September 2013)

THE ESSAY "BLESSED IS THE Man…Blessed Are All Who Trust in Him" was written by the Rev. Steven Sparley. It was presented at the 2011 and 2012 ELS General Pastoral Conferences, the first portion in 2011 and the second portion in 2012. It is the conclusion of the essayist that the five books of Psalms have Christological form and unity. Their order is not by chance. Their order is one that progresses toward an ever more full revelation of the Messiah who was to come and the nature of His kingdom. The book of Psalms, the hymnbook of Israel, is indeed the book of Christ. The Rev. Sparley is pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grants Pass, Oregon.

The Te Deum is one of the noblest hymns of the Western Church and one of the greatest confessions of faith in song. It combines praise and prayer in exalted strains of rhythmic prose. Its affirmations, almost creedal in form, constitute a basis for petitions of universal significance. In his essay, "Te Deum Laudamus: History and Use," for the 2012 ELS General Pastoral Conference, the Rev. James Krikava presents a detailed study of the history, music, and use of the Te Deum. The Rev. Krikava is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Brewster, Massachusetts.

Not unlike other anthologies or compilations of Martin Luther (1483–1546), "Weller's Luther Guide for the Proper Study of Theology" is largely a work of Luther. It is one of the few sources for Luther's thoughts on how to approach theological study. It is also rightly attributed to Hieronymus [Jerome] Weller von Molsdorf (1499–1572) who

recorded the reformer's advice to him and expanded upon it. His additions are most evident by the strong emphasis on the studying of the writings of Luther. The present translation was produced by the Rev. Timothy Schmeling, who is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Sebastian, Florida.

This year is the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan. In February 313 the Edict of Milan, published by Constantine, gave the church freedom of worship. The church was able to worship the one true God, the Triune God, without fear or harassment. Churches and monasteries were built in many places. With the privileges granted by Constantine, mission work and evangelism so increased that the Gospel of salvation in the Savior Jesus Christ was heard in every part of the empire and beyond. This essay presents the history surrounding this important edict.

Also included in this issue is a review of the book *When Christ Walked Among Us* by James F. Pope. It was reviewed by the Rev. Nile Merseth, who is pastor of River Heights Lutheran Church in East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

– GRS

Blessed Is the Man…Blessed Are All Who Trust in Him:
Approaching the Christological Nature of the Psalms

Steven R. Sparley
Pastor, Our Savior Lutheran Church
Grants Pass, Oregon

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WHEN ASSIGNED THE TASK OF explaining the Christological nature of the Psalms to a gathering of Lutheran pastors one comes to recognize at a certain point both the enormity of the task and its simplicity. Difficulty lies also in deciding where to set the level of detail between extremes as well as where to set the limits of a topic whose depths will never be fully plumbed this side of eternity. Wisdom dictates that one err on the side of simplicity in general, not perhaps so much due to the composition of the audience but to the competence of the author, and then in turn on the side of brevity in order to invite discussion.

To imagine that one could approach what is probably the most read, chanted, prayed, recited, meditated on, commented about, and translated part of God's Word—over the course of 3000 years!—and actually add to the understanding of the psalms in however small a way is itself presumptive. The only defense offered is that the task was given and not sought. The only consoling hope is that with which Martin Luther began his second exposition of the psalms:

> I do not want anyone to suppose that I shall accomplish what none of the most holy and learned theologians have ever accomplished before, namely, to understand and teach the correct meaning of the Psalter in all particulars. It is enough to have understood some of the psalms, and those only in part. The Spirit reserves much for Himself, so that we may always

> remain His pupils. … I must openly admit that I do not know whether I have the accurate interpretation of the psalms or not, though I do not doubt that the one I set forth is an orthodox one. For everything that blessed Augustine, Jerome, Athanasius, Hilary, Cassiodorus, and others assembled in their expositions of the Psalter was also quite orthodox, but very far removed from the literal sense. For that matter, this second exposition of mine is vastly different from the first. There is no book in the Bible to which I have devoted as much labor as to the Psalter. I have now come to the conclusion that as long as someone else's interpretation is pious, one should not reject it. … I see some things that blessed Augustine did not see; on the other hand, I know that others will see many things that I do not see. What recourse do we have but to be of mutual help to one another and to forgive those who fall, since we ourselves have already fallen or are about to fall?[1]

Bearing that in mind, let us approach the Christological nature of the psalms.

Assumptions about the Christology of the Psalms

Traditionally, the psalms have been categorized according to their perceived content. A popular and, in our circles, very widely used Lutheran commentary on the psalms notes that, "Luther suggested that the psalms could be divided into five main types: 1) Messianic psalms which speak of Christ (for example, Psalms 2, 22, 110); 2) teaching psalms which emphasize doctrine (Psalms 1, 139); 3) comfort psalms (Psalms 4, 37, 91); 4) psalms of prayer and petition (Psalms 3, 137, 143); and 5) thanksgiving psalms (Psalms 103, 104, 136)."[2] Approached in this way the Christology of the psalms could be addressed by examining those psalms that fall into the category called Messianic.

The same author also notes, however, that "many of the psalms fit more than one category. As a result, the specific classification of many of the psalms is debatable."[3] He insists, "Nevertheless, the idea of classifying psalms is useful."[4] The category of Messianic psalms he further subdivides into psalms of direct prophecy, typical prophecy, and

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1 Luther, *Luther's Works*, v. 14, 284-285.

2 Brug, v. 1, 6; and, similarly, Kretzmann, v. 2, 60.

3 Brug, v. 1, 6.

4 Ibid.

"prophecy with an intermediate fulfillment."[5] Certainly it is true that the individual psalms are varied in their themes; and one could attempt to classify them. Furthermore, so-called Messianic psalms exhibit in varying degrees characteristics of direct, typical, and "intermediate fulfillment" prophecy, sometimes in the same psalm. That this is true should be a given in the Christian church. However, it is legitimate to question how truly useful such classification of the psalms is, especially in regard to their Christological nature, and then possibly consider a different approach.

Jesus Christ insisted that if He gave witness of Himself, His witness would not be true. That is a strong and far-reaching statement. He continued, explaining that whereas John (the Baptizer) indeed witnessed of Him, there was a still greater witness than John. The witness He spoke of is a two-fold one: first, the works that His Father appointed for Him and that He was, by His own words, constantly proceeding to do and, second, the Father Himself, who "testified of Me."[6] This precedes immediately his well-known statement to the religious leaders of His people Israel: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."[7]

At the most basic level this would mean that the Hebrew Bible contains within it information, prophecy if you will, that is descriptive of the person and work of the promised Messiah. This in turn can be taken to mean that there are data in the Old Testament, a datum here and a datum there, which can be isolated and identified as Messianic. Proceeding with that understanding in regard to the psalms one could then classify psalms sufficiently filled with Messianic data to be Messianic psalms. In this way setting forth the Messianic nature of the psalms would remain a large task, but at least a well-defined one.

From a New Testament perspective this is, perhaps, a satisfying explanation of Jesus' words, so that all that need be done is to connect direct prophecy with direct fulfillment, type with antitype, and "prophecy with an intermediate fulfillment" with its final fulfillment, much as a school child draws lines from individual words to their definitions on a test paper. What troubles, however, is something particularly evident in John's Gospel. The religious leaders of the "Jews" (an expression characteristic of John, but not of the three earlier gospel accounts) were

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[5] Ibid., 7.

[6] John 5:37.

[7] John 5:39-40.

strongly criticized by Jesus for not believing the plain meaning of their own sacred Scriptures, if not even misunderstanding them completely. Why would He criticize them so strongly if the Old Testament Scriptures were not written primarily for the people to whom they were first addressed? In the same way preachers today preach sermons to those who sit in the pews. If their words are propagated farther by way of radio waves or the internet, that is a fine and hopeful thing. If their words are deemed so valuable as to deserve print publication or even translation into other languages, that is wonderful! However, their words were crafted for those who first heard them. They were meant to be understood and believed from the first.[8]

Moses and all the prophets have a great deal to say to the people of this 21st century, certainly as much to us as to those who first heard them. But they wrote primarily for the people of their time and place, to whom God had promised a Seed who would crush the serpent's, Satan's, head. They wrote in the language of the people of that day, its realities informing their choice of phrases and images. Those words of Moses and the prophets and the psalms, according to Jesus, contained within them "eternal life." Those words enabled the people of that era to come in faith to the Messiah, a Messiah who had not yet appeared, so that they too would have life. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."[9]

In the New Testament the efficacy of the word of God in the Old Testament is equated with that of His word in the New. Luke records the story of the rich man and Lazarus. There Jesus relates that Abraham answered the rich man's request that Lazarus be sent to his brothers, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. … If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."[10] It is surely for the very reason that the Old Testament Scriptures truly are efficacious in the creation of faith in the promised Messiah, that Jesus often commanded those who knew of His miracles, and who should have recognized Him from the testimony of Moses and the prophets—which would ordinarily exclude Gentiles—that they were to say nothing of the miracles until His

[8] For example, Jesus asserted: πολλοὶ προφῆται καὶ δίκαιοι ἐπεθύμησαν ἰδεῖν ἃ βλέπετε καὶ οὐκ εἶδαν, καὶ ἀκοῦσαι ἃ ἀκούετε καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν (Matthew 13:17). The meaning here is that those prophets and "righteous ones" knew who and what they were looking for and what would be said. They just did not live long enough to see it in their lifetime, as did, for example, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna or any of the twelve.

[9] John 8:56.

[10] Luke 16:29, 31.

resurrection.[11] They were already hearing the efficacious words of Moses and the prophets—or should be!—daily in their homes,[12] weekly in the assembly (synagogue),[13] and at least three times per year in the temple.[14] Those words would bring to them understanding and faith regarding the Messiah.

Rather than think of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms as containing data points about the Christ, it would probably be more accurate to describe them as being wholly formed and phrased by God and then given to Israel in order to bring the promised Christ into the heart of their primary hearers and, thereafter, of all who followed them, each generation helping the next to grasp their plain meaning.[15] Thus the Christology of the Old Testament in general and of the Psalms in particular is here assumed to be both sufficient and clear, if not even prolific, for the creation of saving faith for the simple reason that, as Jesus said to His own people a thousand years after the primary audience, that God so loved the world.

Given the above, the assertion made in the same popular commentary on the Psalms, "Before the Psalms were written, Old Testament believers apparently had been provided with few details about the work of the coming Savior,"[16] is not, perhaps, helpful to our understanding of the Christology of the Psalms in particular or the Old Testament in general. No special criticism is directed at the cited commentary. Similar statements are readily found in commentaries both popular and professional, Lutheran and non-Lutheran. One should not be surprised to find that this or that teaching of God's Word has become less than clear in any generation. After all the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament are themselves a record of man's inability to retain a firm grasp on the treasures God freely gives. But how it can be true of us identified with the name "Luther" that we do not see the clear and pervasive Christological nature of the Old Testament from beginning to end is more difficult to understand, since it was Martin Luther who translated Genesis 4:1,

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[11] Matthew 8:4; 9:30; 12:15; 16:20; 17:9; Mark 1:25; 1:34; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9; Luke 4:41; 5:14; 8:56; 9:21.

[12] Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

[13] Exodus 31:13, and many other places.

[14] Exodus 23:14-17; 34:10-26; Deuteronomy 16:1-17.

[15] Deuteronomy 6:20-25.

[16] Brug, v. 1, 10.

"Und Adam erkannte sein Weib Heva, und sie ward schwanger, und gebar den Kain, und sprach: Ich habe den Mann, den Herrn."[17]

If one follows the simple logic of Luther's translation it would mean that not only did Eve understand clearly the promise made to her and her husband, the primary audience of the promise, that her Seed/Son would crush the serpent's head, and thus undo the curse of death, but also that this Seed would be both human and divine, God Himself in human flesh. For all the faithful thereafter it would not be a question either of who the Savior would be or what the Savior would do, but only of how He was to be recognized in His being and doing, or as we are more used to saying, in His person and work. It should be added as well that not all information available to the ancients regarding the Messiah must be postulated as being contained in the written word of God. But what is contained within it is sufficient and clear.

If one assumes Martin Luther translated correctly, the implications for all that follows in the Old Testament are dramatically clarified and amplified. This has consequences for understanding the Christological nature of the psalms. For King David, who wrote so many of the psalms, and for all the faithful of Israel who sung and heard them, the who and the what of the Messiah were known. To be sure, they then—as we today—would need to be reminded, comforted, and strengthened in regard to the details of His person and work. In the same way, we are encouraged as preachers of God's Word to proclaim not simply law and gospel, but pointed law and pointed gospel, so that our hearers will not be left in doubt as to their proper distinction one from the other or the application of each to themselves. The psalms too have this purpose.

Who: The person of the Messiah in the Psalms

In the opening chapter of *The Two Natures in Christ*, in which Martin Chemnitz defined the terms he would use in the opus that follows, he wrote:

> Christ Himself clearly establishes that He consists of both a human and a divine nature and that He has existed and subsisted as a person before He was conceived and born of Mary according to the human nature, for He says in John 8:58: "Before Abraham was, I am." In John 17:5 He asserts that He had glory with His Father before the foundation of

[17] "And Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have gotten a man, the LORD.'"

> the world. And in 1 Cor. 10:1-5 Paul states that Christ was the One who led the Children of Israel through the wilderness. In the prophets and *especially in the Psalms* Christ *speaks frequently* before His assumption of the flesh. Hence Irenaeus [*Contra Haereses*] says that the Logos who afterwards assumed the seed of Abraham had been present with the human race from the beginning and *had spoken to the Fathers*.[18]

Chemnitz, as Irenaeus before him, refers several times to the appearances of the Son of God to the patriarchs and others. He is very careful to distinguish between these bodily manifestations and the personal union that began with His conception within Mary.[19] He also makes this distinction:

> In John 2:19 Christ calls His body the true temple of God. Thus He is referring to the fact that at one time God dwelt in a *disembodied* state in the ark of the temple, and there He wished to be sought, and thus to show His majesty; but now *in the true temple*, that is, in Christ's body He dwells and wishes to be recognized, sought, and apprehended and to reveal in and through Christ's body the whole fullness of His deity as the glory of the Only-Begotten.[20]

Regarding all such appearances or manifestations of the Son of God before His incarnation, Chemnitz cautions,

> But in dealing with this mystery we ought not dispute the question of what the Son of God in His absolute omnipotence is able to do or what mode of incarnation seems most attractive to our reason. For it is a mystery which is hidden even to the great men of this world (1 Cor. 2:7-8), which God has revealed in His Word to His church. And to this rule our faith must turn if it does not wish to err, as Paul tells us in Gal. 6:16.[21]

Chemnitz' last Scripture reference, Galatians 6:16, suggests an approach to the Christology of the Psalms: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." There surely has been an "Israel of God" as long as there

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[18] Chemnitz, 38-39 (emphasis added).

[19] Ibid., 50, 52, 77.

[20] Ibid., 118 (emphasis added).

[21] Ibid., 50.

has been an Israel, just as there have been spiritual "sons and daughters of Abraham" since Abraham was, and "sons of God"[22] from the time "men," the children of Adam, "began to call on the name of the LORD."[23] These are scriptural expressions used to describe the people of God before the incarnation, birth, and ministry of the Christ. It is manifestly true that there was an "Israel of God" before the Christ began His ministry. Zechariah and Elizabeth, St. Luke notes, "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."[24] And from the conversation between Gabriel and Mary, it is evident that she too is to be numbered among the "Israel of God." It is further worthy of note in these two cases, as Horace Hummel pointed out,

> Special attention must be called to two genuine *psalms* at the beginning of the New Testament, Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) and Zechariah's Benedictus (Luke 1:68–79). The former, of course, is in many ways *only a recension of Hannah's prayer*,[25] neither piece contains anything explicitly or overtly "New Testamentish" about it. The fact that both songs are, nevertheless, widely used in Christian worship forms a sort of paradigm, not only of the ease with which the psalms are, in fact, likewise employed, but also of the hermeneutical principles that must ultimately be spelled out if Christian use of the psalms is to be distinguished from that of the synagogue or of "religion in general."[26]

If Hummel's observation is correct, that is, Mary's Magnificat is "in many ways only a recension of Hannah's prayer," then the reverse would also be true, that Hannah spoke the words of Mary in advance. If it can be said that in Hannah's mouth are to be found the words of Mary, even more can it be said that in the mouth of David are to be found the words of the Christ. Surely, this is a good part of the reason that Martin Chemnitz, in discussing his own and Irenaeus' understanding of the Old Testament appearances of the Christ, said, "In the prophets and

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[22] Genesis 6:2.

[23] Genesis 4:26.

[24] Luke 1:6. The language in this verse is very much that of the Pentateuch.

[25] Hummel notes that among the psalms of the Old Testament are others not to be found in the book of Psalms, of which Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:1-10) is one (408).

[26] Ibid., 408 (emphasis added).

especially in the Psalms Christ *speaks frequently* before His assumption of the flesh."[27]

The Book of Psalms is strongly associated with the person of David, the king of Israel. This is true for several reasons. First, the superscriptions of seventy-three of the Hebrew Bible's (MT) 150 psalms explicitly name him as either the author or the subject of the psalm.[28] Second, David is identified as "the man raised up on high, the *anointed* of the God of Jacob,[29] and the *sweet psalmist of Israel*."[30] Third, the Septuagint (LXX) ascribes to David psalms additional to the Masoretic Text's 73.[31] Fourth, the New Testament adds yet another one to that number, explicitly citing David as the author of Psalm 2,[32] implying that there may still be more.

But it is not only the case that the person of David is strongly associated with the Book of Psalms. He is strongly associated with the coming Christ in a way that goes beyond that of simply being in the line of Messianic descent. Isaiah, speaking of the family of Jesse, leaves the name David unspoken, impressing in the hearer's mind a seemingly inseparable intertwining of Jesse's immediate son, David, and of another yet to be born, on whom the Spirit of God rests.

> There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist. … 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.[33]

[27] Chemnitz, 38-39 (emphasis added).

[28] This depends on how one understands the phrase לְדָוִד.

[29] מְשִׁיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב.

[30] 2 Samuel 23:1.

[31] Hummel, 416.

[32] Acts 4:25.

[33] Isaiah 11:1–5, 11.

One could advance the argument that Isaiah's avoidance of the name David is only a matter of style and not really of substance, a matter of poetic license. However, the second great post-Davidic prophet, Jeremiah, makes explicit the promise to Israel that Isaiah left implicit.

> "For it shall come to pass in that day," says the LORD of hosts, 'That I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and *David their king, whom I will raise up for them*."[34]

The third great post-Davidic prophet, Ezekiel, confirms that Jeremiah rightly reiterated the intent of Isaiah's words. As the Israel of God sat down and wept by the waters of Babylon, its lyres hung in sorrow, it was forced by its captives to sing songs of Zion.[35] But it was lovingly reminded by Ezekiel where to draw comfort and strength as the psalms were sung, and from whom:

> I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—*My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd*. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken."[36]

Ezekiel concludes that promise with words plainly echoing the distinctively phrased words of Psalm 95: "For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." The English Standard Version, although perhaps inelegantly, conveys the trueness of that which Ezekiel echoes: "And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the LORD God."[37] The comforting words of Israel's Savior could be both sung and heard by them and their children as they waited in patience for deliverance. He could be heard in the voice of King David:

> David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their

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[34] Jeremiah 30:8-9 (emphasis added).

[35] See Psalm 137.

[36] Ezekiel 34:23-34 (emphasis added).

[37] Ezekiel 34:31.

> children's children, forever; and *My servant David shall be their prince forever*.[38]

Psalm 95 is well known to all who are familiar with Christendom's historic liturgical practices. Its first seven verses are verbatim the *Venite exultemus* of the order of Matins.[39] More important for understanding the nature of the Christology of the psalms, however, are the immediately subsequent words,

> Today, if you will hear His voice: "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"[40]

Those words are cited in their entirety in Hebrews 3:7b–11, and thereafter repeated partially four times. This section of Hebrews in turn follows the two opening chapters of the epistle, in which there is an extended appeal to the psalms because of their inherent Christological nature, and then the opening verses of chapter three, in which it is asserted that the Torah's true author is not Moses, but the One of whom the cited psalms speak. It is significant that the psalms cited in this particular New Testament epistle—so self-evidently addressed to the Israel of God—begins with Psalm Two.[41]

As noted above, it has long been common among Christians in general and Lutherans in particular to classify the psalms. The most important category is that of the Messianic psalms. Those cited as having been fulfilled directly by the Messiah, the Christ, are termed prophetically rectilinear and those that seem to foreshadow clearly the works of the Christ, yet without direct New Testament citation, are termed prophetically typological. There has been an uneasy tension in the mind of many expositors between the rectilinear and the typological. There is, on the one hand, a fear that too great an inclination toward the typical will detract from the power and clarity of the rectilinear and, on

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38 Ezekiel 37:24-25 (emphasis added). See also Hosea 3:5.

39 See for one example among many, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, 111.

40 Psalm 95:7b–11.

41 Hebrews 1:5.

the other, that too much emphasis on the rectilinear leads to failure to perceive the wealth of Christology to be mined from the typological.

Rather than mustering with one side or the other in order to fight (refight?) battles already well and thoroughly joined, there is at least one other way to view the Messianic content of the psalms particularly. Instead of accepting the standard classification of the psalms, one can assume, following the assertion of Christ Himself, that the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures testify of Him. It remains then a matter of searching not for the who, but for the what and, possibly, the how. In the matter of the psalms the how of it appears to be clear. The Messiah speaks through David, as Martin Chemnitz and, before him, Irenaeus intimate. For this, as has been shown, there is significant scriptural confirmation. David is to be identified with the Messiah.[42]

In any literary work of quality it is important to take note of literary structure as well as verbal content. This is especially true of ancient literature; and so, surely, of every book of the Bible, whether of the Old or New Testament. The beginning and the end should be examined closely. Any indication of parts, if it is plain from the text itself and not simply from later versification and division into chapters, should be taken seriously as embodying meaning.[43] Evaluation of structure begins with a work's beginning.

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[42] As one examines the rabbinic commentaries, it is clear that virtually everything that the New Testament understands as referring to Christ, whether in the rectilinear or typological sense, has been divested of any connection to the person either of Jesus Christ or almost of a personal Christ of any kind. In the case of Israel, for example, Moses was instructed to say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD: 'Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me'" (Exodus 4:22-23). Of this a standard rabbinic commentary avers, "*Israel is My son.* This expression is here applied for the first time to Israel as a nation. *First-born.* The other nations too are God's children; and in Abraham's seed, spiritually *the first-born of them*, all the families are to be blessed (Gen. XII, 3)." Logically, Israel itself is then to be identified not simply with, but as the Messiah (Hertz, 221, fn. 22 [emphasis added]). Similarly in the case of David, the greatest of all the medieval rabbis, Rav Shlomo Yitzhaki ("Rashi"), began his commentary on Psalm 2: "WHY DO THE NATIONS ASSEMBLE? Our rabbis interpreted the subject of the chapter as a reference to the King Messiah. However, according to its basic meaning and for *a refutation of the Christians* it is correct to interpret it as a reference to David himself in consonance with what is stated in the Bible, 'When the Philistines heard that Israel had *anointed* [מָשְׁחוּ] David as king over them …' (2 Sam. 5:17)" (Gruber, 177, note 1a [emphasis added]). A modern literary commentary on the same Psalm 2 asserts: "*His anointed.* The term *mashiah* clearly is used here in its political sense as the designation of the legitimate current heir to the Davidic dynasty, *without eschatological implications*" (Alter, 5, fn. 2 [emphasis added]).

[43] In the case of the so-called five books of the Psalms, 1–41, 42-72, 73–89, 90–106, and 107–150, the reason for division is not, as was surely the case with Samuel,

An older, and valuable, commentary series notes that there is an interesting variant in Acts 13:33, which in turn is itself found in a significant context for the understanding of the Christology of the psalms. It should also be noted in regard to the second of the three citations in this context, that is, the one from Isaiah 55:3, that Isaiah seems purposely to have woven the persons of David and of the Messiah together.[44] Paul speaking to the "men and brethren" of the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, said:

> And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: *"You are My Son, today I have begotten You."* And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: *"I will give you the sure mercies of David."* Therefore He also says in another Psalm: *"You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption."* For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.[45]

Kings or Chronicles, to be attributed to the limitations of the media of writing, that is, how large a scroll could be before it became unwieldy or how small the epigraphy could be in order to fit a particular composition to the size of an available scroll. The books of the psalms were divided for a different reason, one that may become clear with close examination.

[44] Edward J. Young seems almost frustrated with the difficulty of separating the person of David from the person of the Messiah. In commenting on Isaiah 55:3-4 (the 3rd cited verse of Acts 13), "Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure (Young prefers "faithful" over "sure") mercies of David. Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and a commander for the people," Young says, "The fundamental exegetical question in this verse revolves around the object of the verb *I have given*. … Others take the suffix, *him*, as referring to the historical David just mentioned. … There are severe difficulties in such an interpretation … a reference to what God did once for the actual David seems strange at a point where the thought has to do with the introduction of the spiritual kingdom of the seed of David" (Young, v. 3, 377–8). Delitzsch recognizes the same problem (K-D, v. 7, 354–356).

[45] Acts 13:32-39.

The variant, page 459, footnote 9, United Bible Society's *Greek New Testament*, 4th Ed., instead of ὡς καὶ ἐν τῷ ψαλμῷ τῷ δευτέρῳ γέγραπται, reads ἐν τῷ ψαλμῷ τῷ πρώτῳ. Of the variant, Delitzsch remarks, "From Acts xiii. 33, where the words: *Thou art My Son* … are quoted as being found ἐν τῷ ψαλμῷ τῷ πρώτῳ, we see that in early times Ps. I was regarded as the prologue to the collection. The reading ἐν τῷ ψαλμῷ τῷ δευτέρω, rejected by Griesbach, is an old correction. But this way of numbering the Psalms is based upon tradition."[46]

In support of this assertion Delitzsch goes on to observe that in a scholium (*i.e.* marginal note), two early church fathers, Origen and Eusebius, noted that Psalm 1 and 2 were combined in at least some Hebrew manuscripts available to them.[47] They were joined in this by another church father.[48] Delitzsch then continues, noting that Albertus Magnus (13th-century Scholastic theologian) observed that: *Psalmus primus incipit a beatitudine et terminatur a beatitudine*, that is to say, "Psalm 1 begins with אַֽשְׁרֵי and Psalm 2 ends with אַשְׁרֵי." Delitzsch goes on to point out that in the Gemara of the Babylonian Talmud the two psalms are indeed regarded as a single psalm,[49] at least liturgically.[50]

It should be noted that the possibility of Psalms 1 and 2 being a single psalm or at least understood as being closely related in ancient times has been noted in other, very diverse sources.[51] However, Delitzsch concludes this intriguing and important observation about the unity of the two psalms: "As regards the subject matter this is *certainly* not

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46 Keil-Delitzsch, v. 5, 82.

47 The scholium reads: ἐν τῶ Ἑβραικῶ συνημμενοι (Ibid.).

48 Apollinaris: Ἐπιγραφῆς ὁ ψαλμὸς εὑρηθη διχα, Ηνωμενος δὲ τοῖς παρ᾽ Εβραιοις στιχοις (Ibid.).

49 Ibid.

50 In tractate Berakoth 9b <http://halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_9.html> of the online Babylonian Talmud the full context is: "Seeing that this verse, 'Let the words of my mouth be acceptable etc.' (note: Psalm 19:14) is suitable for recital either at the end or the beginning [of the *tefillah*], why did the Rabbis institute it at the end of the eighteen benedictions? Let it be recited at the beginning? — R. Judah the son of R. Simeon b. Pazzi said: Since David said it only after eighteen chapters [of the Psalms], the Rabbis too enacted that it should be said after eighteen blessings. *But those eighteen Psalms are really nineteen? — 'Happy is the man' and 'Why are the nations in an uproar'* form one chapter. For R. Judah the son of R. Simeon b. Pazzi said: David composed a hundred and three chapters [of psalms], and he did not say 'Hallelujah' until he saw the downfall of the wicked, as it says, Let sinners cease out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Hallelujah. Now are these a hundred and three? Are they not a hundred and four? *You must assume therefore that 'Happy is the man' and 'Why are the nations in an uproar' form one chapter*" (emphasis added).

51 E.g.: Sarna, xx; Pfeiffer-Harrison, 495; and Lillegard, 16.

true."[52] He points out that there are some similarities in form. Psalm 1 begins with אַ֥שְֽׁרֵי, and Psalm 2's concluding verse with אַ֝שְׁרֵ֗י. The former declares that the "blessed man" meditates on the Torah day and night (וּֽבְתוֹרָת֥וֹ יֶהְגֶּ֗ה יוֹמָ֥ם וָלָֽיְלָה) Psalm 1:2, while in the latter the nations plot a vain thing (לָ֭מָּה רָגְשׁ֣וּ גוֹיִ֑ם וּ֝לְאֻמִּ֗ים יֶהְגּוּ־רִֽיק) Psalm 2:1.[53] The first psalm ends by saying (1:6) וְדֶ֖רֶךְ רְשָׁעִ֣ים תֹּאבֵֽד, even as the second psalm echoes it with (2:12) וְתֹ֬אבְדוּ דֶ֗רֶךְ. Nevertheless, he still insists, "These two anonymous hymns are only so far related, as that the one is adapted to form the *prœmium* of the Psalter from its *ethical*, the other from its *prophetic* character."[54]

Having registered his denial of any thematic connection between the psalms Delitzsch proceeds to speak glowingly of Psalm 1: "As the New Testament sermon on the Mount, as a sermon on the spiritualized Law, begins with μακάριοι, so the Old Testament Psalter, directed *entirely* to the application of the Law to the inner life, begins with אַשְׁרֵ֥י."[55] Delitzsch then moves on to reveal what is, apparently, his serious concern: "The First book of the Psalms begins with two אַשְׁרֵ֥י i. 1, ii. 12, and closes with two אַשְׁרֵי, xl. 5, xli. 2. A number of Psalms begin with אַשְׁרֵי, Ps. xxxii. xli. cxii. cxix. cxxviii.; but we must not suppose the existence of a special kind of *ashre*-psalms; for, *e.g.*, Ps. xxxii. is a מַשְׂכִּיל, Ps. cxii. a *Hallelujah*, Ps. cxxviii. a שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת."[56] It is a curious thing to see a biblical scholar of Delitzsch's era, the era that represents the high-water mark of the Documentary Hypothesis, a hypothesis in which the supposed structure of the Hebrew Bible was used to destroy its plain meaning, deny that structure has any bearing on meaning or that structure and meaning should be overlooked so as to defend and retain a classification system.

In his denial, however, Delitzsch touches on connections that do challenge the accepted manner of classifying psalms and, more importantly, lead to another, perhaps, better way to examine the theme and purpose of the Book of Psalms itself. In the opening sentence of his *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (Exposition of the Psalms) Augustine wrote, "Blessed is the man that has not gone away in the counsel of the ungodly Psalm 1:1. This is to be understood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord

[52] K-D, v. 5, 82 (emphasis added).

[53] Rashi simply translated these two sets of words sharing the same verb as, "AND HE *THINKS* ABOUT HIS TORAH", Psalm 1:2, and "AND PEOPLE *THOUGHT* VAIN THINGS", Psalm 2:1 (Gruber, 175, 177, respectively [emphasis added]).

[54] Ibid., 82 (emphasis added).

[55] Ibid., 82-83 (emphasis added).

[56] Ibid., 83.

Man." Martin Luther followed Augustine in this bold assertion in his first series of lectures on the psalms, beginning in the fall of 1513: "The first psalm speaks literally concerning Christ thus: 1. *Blessed is the man*. He is the only blessed One and the only Man from whose fullness they have all received (John 1:16) that they might be blessed and men and everything that follows in this psalm."[57] Much of what follows in his comments is explicitly Messianic, as was the case in Augustine's ancient commentary as well.

In his second treatment of this same psalm, which began to appear about six years later, he seems to have altered his thinking. Much had transpired in those six or seven years. Luther had not begun a serious study of Greek until 1514, and only sometime thereafter Hebrew. It was not until about 1520 that his maturing ability in the biblical languages began to make itself known in his writings. Some of this is reflected in his second explication of Psalm 1(:1):

> "Man" is used in the Scriptures in a threefold way. It signifies age, sex, or humanity. It is used for age in 1 Cor. 13:11: "When I became a man, I gave up childish ways"; for sex in Matt. 1:16: "Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary," and in John 4:16: "Go, call your husband"; and for humanity in 1 Sam. 26:15: "And David said to Abner, 'Are you not a man?'" And in this third sense man is called blessed here, so that the female sex is not excluded from the blessing.[58]

Luther admits in the preface to his commentary, addressed to the Elector Frederick, "this second exposition of mine is vastly different from the first."[59] He strategically placed this admission between an acknowledgment that the ancient fathers, Augustine, Jerome, Athanasius, Hilary and Cassiodorus, wrote what was to be considered "orthodox," but was "very far removed from the literal sense." Thereafter, in an almost apologetic tone, Luther states, "One falls short in some ways, another in more ways. I see some things that blessed Augustine did not see; on the other hand, I know that others will see many things that I do not see." There is clearly a difference in Luther's treatment of Psalm 1. But is it really a retreat from what he had said earlier or simply a new caution, a caution that comes from the realization of the many difficulties in dealing with ancient Hebrew poetry and the recognition that the Psalter is a different

[57] *Luther's Works*, v. 10, 11. The first lectures were given in the years 1513-16.

[58] LW, v. 14, 288.

[59] Ibid., 285.

genus of Holy Writ. He plaintively asks of his readers, "What is the Psalter but prayer and praise to God, that is, a book of hymns?"[60] And although Martin Luther would meditate on the psalms for the rest of his life, he would not again attempt to produce another treatment of them.

The Book of Psalms is certainly what Luther said. But it is also certain that this hymnbook of Israel is chiefly the work of David, according to the Word of God both of the Old and New Testament. The voice and person of David pervades the psalms; and David is to be identified with the Messiah.

What: The work of the Messiah in the Psalms

When Luther, in his second treatment of Psalm 1, delineated three meanings in the Scriptures for the word "man," it is odd that for the first two meanings he did not cite from the Old Testament Scriptures, but from the New. It is also odd that his example for the third, that of David's question to Abner, "Are you not a man?" is really, when examined in context, a much better example of his second meaning than the third. If the point of Psalm 1:1's man, אִישׁ, were what Luther said, use of the word אָדָם or אֱנוֹשׁ would have allowed him to find far, far better examples. But there is more here than just the psalmist's choice of the word אִישׁ. The phrase אַֽשְׁרֵי־הָאִישׁ is unparalleled, found nowhere else in the Old Testament. It is true that אַשְׁרֵי־אִישׁ is to be found in Psalm 112:1. But there it is clearly to be understood according to Luther's second sense, that is, a man, a husband, a head of household. What is more noticeable in that context, it does not have the definite article. It is any man, husband, or head of family, and so surely also, by extension, applicable to all persons.

Psalm 1:1 points to a particular man, הָאִישׁ. With the resources of more than a thousand years of native-speaking insight into the nuances of Hebrew words and phrases from rabbinic commentaries at his disposal, Nahum Sarna makes this comment on what is said of "the man" of Psalm 1:1:

> These are qualities demanded of one who would maintain moral integrity when surrounded by evil. And it is not unintentional that it is an individual, not a class, this is discussed, in sharp contrast to the "wicked"—in the plural—soon to be mentioned. It is the one against the many that is the focus of interest. Nor

[60] Ibid., 286.

is it by chance, as we shall presently see, that here it is not the righteous versus the wicked, as so often in the Bible; but simply *'ish*, a person. … The person he has in view "has not walked in the counsel of the wicked." That individual has resisted societal pressures to conform with prevailing mores. The wicked are many. By dint of their plurality and seeming success, it is they who set society's standards, who fix the patterns of behavior, and who wield the power to shape popular conceptions of right and wrong in accordance with their own perceived self-interests. Nevertheless, in an atmosphere of seductive depravity, our individual withstands the powerful allurements offered by the life style of the wicked. *This person stands apart from the crowd*.[61]

In regard to the word אַשְׁרֵי, Sarna wrote,

The Hebrew *'ashrei* is a noun in the construct state, that is, in the form it takes when joined to another noun on which it is dependent. Hence, the phrase is really an exclamation meaning, "O for the happiness of that person…!" It is the discriminating judgment of an observer who expresses wonderment and admiration over another's enviable state of being. More than this, *'ashrei* is in the plural, the inflectional form denoting intensity. This "plural of intensity," as it is called, communicates energetic focusing upon the basic idea inherent in the Hebrew root. It is the highest form of happiness that the psalmist has in mind. It is happiness, be it noted, not pleasure, that concerns the psalmist. Pleasure may be self-centered, a transient, agreeable sensation or emotion, an instinctive response to a particular stimulus that gratifies the senses; and it may be frivolous and illusory. By contrast, happiness is deep-rooted; it penetrates the very depths of one's being, and it is serious and enduring. In fact, it is this last quality which most distinguishes it from pleasure. For this psalmist, the happy state of which he speaks is not a matter of natural disposition, nor does it stem simply from the cultivation of the proper mental attitudes. It proceeds necessarily from actions that are wholly controllable by the individual. Happiness results from the deliberate assumption of a commitment to a certain way of life, a course that is governed by God's teaching *(torah)*.[62]

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[61] Sarna, 31-32 (emphasis added).

[62] Ibid., 30.

Sarna certainly does not express himself in the familiar and to us well-known terms and categories of Christian theology. However, one must in seriousness ask: what is he describing here? Is it not the same thing as in the exclamation of the woman of Luke 11:27? "And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts that nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"[63] One begins to wonder, *contra* Delitzsch, whether the word אַשְׁרֵי is not freighted with more significance than is generally appreciated.

What Sarna characterizes as "wonderment and admiration over another's enviable state of being" is well reflected also in the exclamation of the crowd in Mark 7:37, "He has done all things well." What Psalm 1:1ff describes is an active, willing, joyful obedience to the will of God. Of this obedience Sarna asserts, "The psalm implicitly proclaims unquestioned faith in the power of the individual to transform society, no matter how seemingly invulnerable be the forces of evil. This, too, derives from the Torah's teachings."[64]

Nearly all expositors of the psalms note that Psalm 1 is unusual in form; and so express to greater or lesser degree puzzlement as to why it introduces the Psalter. This is true whatever their theological perspective. For example, the mid-20th century Lutheran, H. C. Leupold observes,

> Though we rightly regard the Psalter as a prayer book we need not be alarmed by the observation that this psalm [Psalm 1] is

[63] Luke 11:27-28, "blessed" is, μακάριοι, and the word keep, φυλάσσοντες. These verses directly precede strong criticism of the understanding of that generation, which leads to the claim, "a greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31) and culminates thus: "'Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the *key of knowledge*. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.' And as He said these things to them, the scribes and Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him. In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Luke 11:52–12:1-3, emphasis added). Regarding the phrase, *key of knowledge*, Isaiah 22:22 and its context, in which is found the phrase, "the key of David," should be examined carefully, and thereafter its application in Revelation 3:7ff. This is likely to be important to the Christology of the Psalms as well.

[64] Sarna, 29.

> not specifically a prayer. Though it lacks the formal characteristic of direct address to God it may yet be regarded as a prayer in the broader sense in that it presents reflections made, as it were, in the very presence of God. Most readers of this psalm would not notice that it is not strictly a prayer, unless this fact were specially drawn to their attention. It must, therefore, be freely conceded that, from one point of view, this is a didactic poem in the finest spirit *of the Book of Proverbs*.[65]

Alter is succinct: "In content, it is a Wisdom psalm, affirming the traditional moral calculus (to which Job will powerfully object) that it pays to be good, whereas the wicked will be paid back for their evil."[66] Delitzsch also, as noted above, labeled the theme of Psalm 1, "ethical," which is another way of saying it has more in common with wisdom literature than the Psalter it introduces. Sarna, although noting all the same things, again makes a simple and, one might even say, brilliant observation,

> Given the persistent tradition about King David's paramount role as a composer of psalms, it is extraordinary that the opening composition lacks the heading, "A Psalm of David." In fact, it has no superscription at all. It is what, in rabbinic parlance, is quaintly called "an orphan psalm." Even more strangely, its vocabulary, style, and theme do not conform to the usual pattern of Psalmody. These have more in common with biblical Wisdom literature, the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, than with biblical poetry. Moreover, on the surface, Psalm 1 can hardly be termed "devotional" in the usual sense of the term, for it features no outpouring of the soul. One looks in vain for any invocation of God. Neither praise nor petition is present, neither lamentation nor jubilation. *It is the human being, not God, who is the focus of attention*. Considering all these peculiarities, according this psalm pride of place is indeed puzzling. Why was the composition chosen to head the Book of Psalms? *The selection must communicate an intention to make a statement, to inculcate at the outset certain fundamental ideas, and to promote some essential teachings*.[67]

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[65] Leupold, 33 (emphasis added).

[66] Alter, 3.

[67] Sarna, 26-27 (emphasis added).

It is indeed strange that the introduction, especially in light of the content of the first book of Psalms, is unattributed in its authorship, when all the others in the first book are attributed to David.[68] Moreover, Sarna is certainly correct here in noting the wisdom literature-like focus of Psalm 1 is indeed man,[69] not God, something not at all characteristic of psalmody.

However, if the evidence of older traditions noted above is correct, that Psalm 1 and 2 are at the very least strongly linked together in more than just form, if not in fact a single psalm, Delitzsch's objections notwithstanding, there is a very plausible explanation. It is one not in conflict with any part of Scripture, either of the Old or the New Testament, or any locus of Christian theology or any point of Hebrew grammar, usage or syntax.

"The man" of Psalm 1 is the Seed of the woman, the אִישׁ to whom Eve gave birth, thinking him to be the Promised One. It is this man, the "anointed," the psalmist writes, who has been set upon the "holy hill of Zion" as the "King." In some ways this is not a particularly radical suggestion. Yet in other ways its acceptance could prompt a rethinking of the standard classification of psalms and, in turn, a re-evaluation of the nature of the Christology of the psalms.

Among the parallels between Psalm 1 and 2 Delitzsch noted but disallowed is the verb of 1:2 and 2:1. This is not always noticed in English translation. In the NKJV, often used in our circles, יֶהְגֶּה is translated "meditates." In 2:1 the same verb, יֶהְגּוּ, is translated "plot." What is even more interesting, as Sarna points out, is that the word "carries a decidedly oral nuance, as anyone who consults a concordance of the

[68] In the Hebrew Bible, Psalms 2, 10 and 33 are unattributed. However, as noted before, Acts 4:25 names David the author of Psalm 2, and in the Septuagint Psalms 9 and 10 are joined as if one, and Psalm 33 (LXX 32) bears a superscription naming David as author.

[69] But on this point the seriousness and the choice of the Nicene Creed's words should not be passed by quickly: "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven *and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man*." It emphasizes that the Christ's humanity is made most clear in connection with Mary, His mother. In the verses that bracket Jesus' visit to the temple as a twelve-year old boy, during which he was "sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions," and at the end of which He said to Mary and Joseph, "I must be about My Father's business," it is to be noted before that incident it is said, "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke 2:40). Afterwards it is said, "Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased *in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*" (Luke 2:51–52).

Hebrew Bible for the stem *h-g-h* will soon discover.[70] From this Sarna draws yet another intriguing parallel,

> True, the Hebrew *lev*, "heart," also appears as the subject of *h-g-h* but, as has been shown, the heart in the Bible can also be an organ of speech. Moreover, the verb many times appears in a parallel relationship with another verb denoting sound. … This understanding of verse [1:]2b as being recitative, not meditative, is reinforced by other biblical passages. *A strikingly similar one* is in God's address to *Joshua* upon his assumption of the leadership of Israel following Moses' death. It reads: "Let not this book of Teaching *(torah)* depart from your mouth, but *recite (vehagiyta) it day and night*" (Joshua 1:8).[71]

In parallel to the stated happiness/blessedness of "the man" who "meditates (aloud[72]) day and night" upon God's *torah* (וּֽבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה), Psalm 1:2, the nations are aroused and the people "murmur[73] vain things" in Psalm 2:1. How better to describe the actions of those who "set themselves" and "take counsel together, against the LORD and against His anointed," Psalm 2:2, than that this is the "counsel of the ungodly," Psalm 1:1? Psalm 2:1-2 is the mirror image, that is to say, the reverse (chiasm?) of Psalm 1:1-2.

Taken in this way, the "anointed" of Psalm 2:2 becomes "the man" of 1:1. After all, it is only men, human beings, who are anointed in the Scriptures. The act of anointing symbolizes the induction of a particular man into a particular office, in this case, the office of King, part of the three-fold office of Messiah.[74] From this point forward in the first book

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[70] Sarna, 38. See also Alter, 3, 5.

[71] Sarna, 38 (emphasis added).

[72] Proof for this lies outside the scope of this essay, but it should be borne in mind that verbs of meditating or reading in the Scriptures should first be assumed to have a verbal as opposed to a silent aspect. Context alone can determine this.

[73] Alter, 5.

[74] Again, it lies outside the scope of this essay, but a serious dispute arose when Jonathan, the youngest son of Mattathias (the Hasmonean patriarch) and successor as king to Judas (Maccabeus), officiated as high priest at the Feast of Tabernacles in 153 B.C., thus formally uniting in one person—for the first time in the history of Israel!—the office of king and of priest. This would become one of the tensions between the soon-to-appear Pharisees and Sadducees, both of whom would appeal to the Scriptures for support or denial of how and to whom this state could apply rightly. The very fact that Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted psalm in the New Testament—and Psalm 2 next!—is probably a direct reflection of a serious and far-reaching dispute within Israel of its King/Priest.

of psalms (1-41) the words that will issue from David's mouth will be those of a king and yet also those of the subject of the king, those of a priest, a mediator, and yet also those of a supplicant, and those of a prophet, a preacher, and yet also those of one who simply hears and believes. He will evince at times an activity and then at other times a passivity that gives the psalms a dynamic that is often difficult to describe or digest.

As noted above, Delitzsch said of Psalm 1, "As the New Testament sermon on the Mount, as a sermon on the spiritualized Law, begins with μακάριοι, so the Old Testament Psalter, directed *entirely* to the application of the Law to the inner life, begins with אַשְׁרֵי."[75] Lutherans would not, of course, quite agree with his characterization of the subject of Psalm 1 or that of Jesus' eight beatitudes as spiritualized law. But, again, there is far more than a superficial connection here. The sermon on the mount, the first recorded sermon of Jesus in the New Testament, represents in effect the introduction of the man Jesus of Nazareth to the physical and spiritual descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the introduction of Him whose origin Matthew presented with the first words of his Gospel: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the *Son of David*, the Son of Abraham."[76]

It seems more than a coincidence that the first recorded public words of Jesus would begin with the first word of the first book of psalms (1–41), psalms that are without controversy the words of David. As with the introductory Psalm 1 and 2, the introductory Beatitudes begin and end with the word "blessed." In the former, the state of blessedness first is predicated of "the man," 1:1, and then applied to "all who put their trust in him," 2:12, so in the latter the state of blessedness is described in eight couplets, the first of which is "blessed are the poor in spirit," Matthew 5:3, and then in conclusion it is applied in a form that is almost the same, but not a beatitude as such, "Blessed *are you* when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."[77]

This in turn leads one to another of Delitzsch's observations: Not only does the introduction to the first book of Psalms (1–41) begin and end with אַשְׁרֵי, but its concluding psalms do the same. Psalm 40, a psalm long recognized for its Messianic content, says

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[75] K-D, v. 5, 82-83 (emphasis added).

[76] Matthew 1:1.

[77] Matthew 5:11-12 (emphasis added).

in the fifth verse, "Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies (אַ֥שְֽׁרֵי הַגֶּ֗בֶר אֲשֶׁר־שָׂ֣ם יְ֭הוָה מִבְטַח֑וֹ וְֽלֹא־פָנָ֥ה אֶל־רְ֝הָבִ֗ים וְשָׂטֵ֥י כָזָֽב)." Here the word is not הָאִ֗ישׁ, but הַגֶּ֗בֶר. Although here applied to the singular person, this is simply the reflection of Psalm 2:12, "blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." It would appear to bespeak the man—David?—who understands and believes what has been revealed in the intervening psalms about "the man" of Psalm 1. Finally, Psalm 41:1 rejoices, "Blessed is he who considers the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble (אַ֭שְׁרֵי מַשְׂכִּ֣יל אֶל־דָּ֑ל בְּי֥וֹם רָ֝עָ֗ה יְֽמַלְּטֵ֥הוּ יְהוָֽה)."[78]

It is clear from the content of the intervening psalms that one of those poor in spirit is David himself, who now praises "the man" who is not only blessed in and of himself, but also blessed precisely because he does consider the poor. These are words that not only fittingly begin the conclusion of the first book of psalms, psalms that are indisputably David's, but they are words that resound across ten centuries to reverberate powerfully in the first beatitude spoken by Him who is, as Matthew said, "the son of David."[79] It is no wonder then that Matthew observed that "when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."[80] Was this not, as Sarna put it, just the "discriminating judgment of an observer who expresses wonderment and admiration over another's enviable state of being"?[81]

The psalms are indeed, as Delitzsch said, "directed *entirely* to the application of the Law to the inner life," so long as it is understood by the word "Law" is meant "*torah*," the teaching of God. But the first psalm is not about ethics. To be sure it is about the keeping of the Law, about actively following the will of God in thought, word, and deed, what Lutherans have called, in reference to Jesus Christ, His *active obedience*. It is sometimes overlooked in the preaching of the Gospel that not only is the atoning, substitutionary death of Christ credited to believers, so that their sins are forgiven them, but that His life lived in perfect, active obedience to the will of the Father is also credited to them. Or, put another way, that not only is the debt of their sin—red ink, so to speak—*expunged* from their account, but that a righteousness that avails before God, one that "exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20) is *added* to their account.

[78] The "he" here must be "He." Compare this verse with Psalm 22:11.

[79] Matthew 1:1.

[80] Matthew 7:28-29.

[81] Sarna, 30.

The work of "the man" of Psalm 1:1, who is also the LORD's "anointed" of Psalm 2:2, is the achieving of righteousness. It sets him apart from "the counsel of the ungodly," "the path of sinners," and "the seat of the scornful." One who achieves this is righteous before God. On the other hand, "the ungodly are not so." They will not "stand in the judgment" nor "in the congregation of the righteous [ones]." The way of the "righteous [ones]" is known to God. So, the dilemma presented by Psalm 1 is that there is one, "the man," who is unquestionably righteous; then there are the ungodly. Yet, somehow there is a "way of the righteous" and an "assembly of the righteous."[82] But how the righteousness of the one, "the man," is extended to the others is not made clear in the psalm. Psalm 2, while not solving that dilemma, simply concludes, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are all those who trust in Him," Psalm 2:12. The "Him" is the "anointed," the "Son" whom the LORD has "begotten."

The rest of the first book of psalms (1–41) are the utterances of the king who ruled from Zion, the city of David. The words of David then, are the guide to the person and work of the "anointed," the "Son" begotten of the LORD. But this One cannot be David himself, as his confessions of his own sin make clear. For David is not righteous of himself. David did not prosper in all things whatever he did, as was predicated of "the man." David's life would end, in fact, with regret about his own deeds, and yet without doubt about the righteousness of Another.[83]

Too often the Messianic nature of the psalms is detected only in obvious examples, examples that are directly cited in the New Testament. Such examples are usually associated not with the active obedience of Christ, but with the passive, that is to say, with His suffering and death on the cross. But one third of all Old Testament instances of the terms "righteousness" and "righteous" are to be found in the Book of Psalms, and righteousness is described by example in nearly every psalm, often in contexts the reader struggles with. For example, David, who in one psalm will confess his sins and weaknesses, for example, "do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions. … Look on all

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[82] Both of these are plural in Psalm 1.

[83] Psalm 32, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," presents the solution to the dilemma of Psalms 1 and 2. Here is answered the question of how one of the "ungodly" becomes "blessed:" through repentance: "For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found" (Psalm 32:6). Note well in this regard what precedes the Beatitudes in Matthew 3:2 and Matthew 4:17.

my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins,"[84] confidently avers in the very next psalm,

> Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the LORD; I shall not slip. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites. I have hated the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked. I will wash my hands in innocence; so I will go about your altar, O LORD, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works. LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells. Do not gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands is a sinister scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in my integrity; redeem me and be merciful to me. My foot stands in an even place; in the congregations I will bless the LORD.[85]

Delitzsch is, perhaps, correct in denying that there is no special category of אַשְׁרֵי psalms. But there can be no denying that the word is a strong marker and guide to the nature of the Christology of the psalms. The two אַשְׁרֵי that signal the thematic unity of the introductory psalms stretch across the whole of the first book of the psalms to form a chiasm with the final two אַשְׁרֵי that signal the thematic unity of the last two psalms and, thereby, of all the intervening ones.

The Book of Psalms, the hymnbook of Israel, is chiefly the work of King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. David is to be identified with the Messiah as the later prophets made clear. Those prophets and the righteous longed to see Him whom David personified and to hear Him whose voice came from David's mouth. But they did not live long enough to see and hear Him.

Nevertheless, in David the Israel of God did see and hear the Messiah by faith. They saw His passive obedience to God in suffering and death, atoning for the sins of Israel and all the nations of the earth, and His active obedience in not walking in the counsel of the ungodly, not standing in the path of sinners, and not sitting in the seat of the scornful. Where David Himself failed, the blessed Man of the very first

[84] Psalm 25:7, 18.

[85] Psalm 26.

words of the Psalter did not; and He would supply the righteousness David lacked, and so enable everyone who meditates on the psalms to see him- or herself in David, to see how the blessedness of the One, could by faith become the blessedness of the many, how the righteousness of the One would be given to the many, who were so very poor in spirit.

Approaching the Christological Nature of the Psalms

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, whether a single psalm or not, are linked in theme. They are the introduction to the psalms in general and the first book of psalms (1–41) in particular, providing an approach to the psalms that helps the hearer to grasp their nature, which is entirely bound up in the person and work of the promised Messiah. As such the psalms should not be classified into those that are Messianic and those that are not. Psalm 1 and 2 lead to the realization that the psalms are as a whole Messianic, but in different ways, ways that may not yet or ever be fully grasped or appreciated. In them is to be found rectilinear and typological prophecy, prophecy about the nature of the coming Christ and the works that He would do in order to reconcile holy God and fallen man in His own body, not only in patient sheep-like passivity on Calvary's tree, but in the active fulfillment of God's will in thought, word, and deed as well.[86]

It is in fulfillment of Christ's active obedience that a re-evaluation of the Christological nature of the psalms would seem to be called for. In this regard, it should be noted that at one point in His ministry, near its end, Jesus Christ was asked if He would go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. He answered, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."[87] Later, He went. Once there, He said to those who confronted Him,

> My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He

[86] Again, it should be emphasized that directly preceding His statement that the Scriptures testify of Him, Jesus said, "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me" (John 5:36). That this precedes the atonement, His passive obedience unto death, underscores the point.

[87] John 7:6-8.

> who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and *no unrighteousness is in Him*. Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?[88]

Later at the same feast, Jesus said to those who continued to confront Him,

> Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed … because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. *Which of you convicts Me of sin*? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.[89]

If Jesus here is "the man" and they who oppose Him the "ungodly"—whoever they may be—it is clear that Jesus' argument is grounded very recognizably in what is stated in Psalm 1 and 2. The argument, so briefly stated here in John 7 and 8, is recognizable as the same argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is there greatly expanded and oh so gently, powerfully, and lovingly made to the Israel of God, and initiated with the citation of Psalm 2:7![90]

This statement was made previously: "Psalm 1 and 2 lead to the realization that the psalms are as a whole Messianic, but in different ways, ways that may not yet or ever be fully grasped or appreciated."[91] Following the assertion that the Book of Psalms is indeed a unit and not simply a collection assembled according to some unknown and unknowable principles, this part of the essay will examine its structure as a unified whole, a whole introduced by Psalm 1 and 2 so that the hearer would grasp its Christological nature.

David Scaer made the observation in regard to James 1:12 that "it reflects a mode of speaking that can be traced back to Psalm 1:1."[92] He goes on to make the following significant observation:

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88 John 7:16-19 (emphasis added). The word "doctrine" here is διδαχή, an almost exact translation of תּוֹרָה, that which the "blessed man" meditates on (or recites) day and night.

89 John 8:34-36, 45-47.

90 Hebrews 1:5.

91 On page 161 of this article.

92 Scaer, 51.

> The Messiah was so closely connected with His people that the Jew believed he shared in all the benefits the Messiah earned. As the Jew read in Psalm 1 about the Messiah, that one ideal Jew, he also saw described in those words what God wanted him to be and what he would become in the Messiah. Without the Messianic interpretation Psalm 1 can too easily be understood only as moralistic injunctions. The Beatitudes without a primary Christological understanding suffer the same moralistic doom. *When Psalm 1, and for that matter the other related psalms, are understood in a wider Messianic sense,* then the Beatitudes and the James passage become clearer. *Using dogmatic terms, Christology and sanctification constitute a totality.*[93]

There is an underlying Christological presence running throughout the psalms that makes itself known in connection with two seemingly opposite qualities, poverty and sanctity, or, put another way, poorness toward God and richness toward God. Thus the Man who is "blessed/happy" in Psalm 1:1 is rich toward God, as the following three verses enumerate. All others are poor toward God, as verses four through six make clear. Yet there is, according to the psalmist, a "way of the righteous [ones]" that "the LORD knows." There is a "congregation of the righteous" that does not contain "sinners," the "wicked," the "chaff" that the wind drives away. The interplay between these two opposites will occupy the thoughts of the psalmists for the remainder of the Psalter. In this interplay the person and work of the Messiah is revealed.

The Structure of the Psalter

The Psalter is composed of five books, consisting of Psalms 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, and 107–150, respectively. The divisions themselves are evident from the text of each book's concluding psalm's last verse(s).[94] However, when they were divided, by what criteria, and by whom are vexing questions.

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[93] Ibid., 52 (emphasis added).

[94] Psalm 41:13: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen." Psalm 72:18-20: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be His glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen! The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." Psalm 89:52: "Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen." Psalm 106:48: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the LORD!" Psalm 150:6: "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!" On the other hand, the whole of Psalm 150 could be viewed as the concluding doxology.

Answers were advanced in ancient times. Epiphanius, as an example, quoted Hippolytus as saying, "Let this not escape you, O philologist, that the Hebrews divided the Psalter into five books, so that it would be another Pentateuch."[95] Similarly a Midrash from the Talmudic period states, "As Moses gave five books of laws to Israel, so David gave five Books of Psalms to Israel."[96] This ancient observation is undisputed by most Lutheran commentators, but is for the most part left unexplored. However, the concept has been taken up and expanded in recent years by a number of Dispensationalists, Evangelicals, and other groups.[97] We will leave aside, for the moment, an examination of the significance of the psalms being grouped into five books.

Regarding the antiquity of the arrangement of the psalms into five books there is no scholarly consensus. Mitchell Dahood warns, "Each of the five books ends with a doxology of benediction, and though these doxologies are found in the Greek translation of the second century B.C., this is not explicit evidence that the translators considered these benedictions as closing out individual Books of the Psalter."[98] He concludes with a more balanced view of the situation than many earlier scholars.

> The timeless nature of many of the psalms makes it impossible for us now to trace the history of these collections or the process by which they were combined. Though direct evidence enabling us to date the completion of the entire collection is lacking, the vast difference in language and prosody between the canonical Psalter and the Qumran Hodayot makes it impossible to accept a Maccabean date for any of the Psalms, a position still maintained by a number of critics. Nor is a Hellenistic date more plausible. The fact that the LXX translators were at a loss before so many archaic words and phrases bespeaks a considerable chronological gap between them and the original psalmists. The earlier the composition date of the Psalms, the greater the likelihood that the grouping into five Books was early rather than late.[99]

[95] Keil-Delitzsch, vol. 5, 14-15.

[96] Dahood, *Psalms I*, xxx-xxxi.

[97] A quick search of the internet will yield several examples.

[98] Dahood, xxxi.

[99] Ibid., xxxii.

On this point it should be noted that the song of thanks David commanded be sung on the occasion of the ark of the covenant being brought from Kiriath-jearim to its new resting place at Jerusalem is composed of Psalm 105:1–5, Psalm 96:1–13, and Psalm 106:1,48.[100] Significantly, the quoted portion of the last psalm, Psalm 106, includes the doxology that marks the end of Book 4!

However, let us take note that just because there is no certainty as to why the Psalms were grouped into five books does not mean that some possibilities cannot be eliminated. The Psalms as a whole have been treated and referred to as a single book in every enumeration of the Old Testament Scriptures of every era. This itself is noteworthy. If one were to assign a numeric value of 1.00 to the total volume of words contained in the Psalms, one can quite easily ascertain that the next largest book similarly treated as a single unit in every era, Jeremiah, has a comparative volume of .975; the next book, Ezekiel, .901; the next, Genesis, .875; the next, Isaiah, .847; and so on. On the other hand, books that have been treated variously as single or two-parted at different times are very close in size to the Psalms, but slightly larger. Samuel has a comparative word volume of 1.044; the next, Chronicles, 1.062; and the last, and largest, Kings, 1.098.

Very likely the chief cause of the division of the last three books into two parts has to do with the medium of writing at the time. Scrolls of a certain size, if the letters are not to be rendered in a size too small for general public readability, simply become too unwieldy for convenient use. However, there is most likely another factor in play as to why the Psalms remained undivided even though from a rather early period they were recognized as being composed of five Books,[101] and thus easily divisible into two smaller scrolls.

The Unity of the Book of Psalms

It seems undeniable that the Psalms were purposely kept together as a single unit when they could easily have been divided, as were Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. In fact, it would seem to have been a more appropriate outcome, since, as also in the case of the Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, the Psalms have more than one author, something that was never a consideration in antiquity regarding the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel.

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[100] 1 Chronicles 16:8-36.

[101] The proportion of the five Books to the whole is: Book 1, 25.34%; Book 2, 19.17%; Book 3, 14.55%; Book 4, 12.73%; Book 5, 28.21%.

Nevertheless the unity of the Psalms is to be sought and comprehended in its five parts or books. As we begin to consider the matter, it is evident that the five books were not ordered according to size, nor authors of their constituent psalms, nor the time of the composition of their constituent psalms. With the exception of Book 1,[102] each of the five includes psalms of more than a single author. What is more, older psalms are often mixed with later. In Book 5, for example, Psalm 137, a psalm obviously written during or after the Babylonian captivity, precedes eight psalms of David.

Various ideas have been put forward as to the order both of the five books and even of the individual psalms in them.[103] Keil-Delitzsch notes with skepticism several attempts to discern in the five books a progression of moral perfection or of principal thoughts.[104] The skepticism is not unwarranted.

Rather than examining earlier attempts, almost all of which understood Psalm 1 as akin to wisdom literature or a didactic psalm describing the godly, let us proceed with the understanding that Psalm 1 is explicitly Messianic. Together with Psalm 2, as discussed above, it provides the introduction to the entire collection of psalms and, therefore, to the Five Books of the Psalms. From that it follows that the unity of the psalms is one that concerns the blessed Man of Psalm 1, the Messiah, who is the Anointed One, King, and Son of Psalm 2. The ordering of the five books is a Christological one.

Backward: The Five Books of the Psalms and the Five Books of Moses

As noted above the Five Books of the Psalms were said in ancient times to be a reflection of the Five Books of Moses, both by Christians and Jews. While it is tempting to try to draw specific parallels between the corresponding books of each, one must exercise caution when it comes to direction. That is to say, it is certainly true that the Scriptures are their own best and surest interpreter. It is also true that the Old Testament Scriptures, Christocentric as they are *in toto*, always direct their hearers backward in time in regard to the truth and dependability of what God said, commanded, and promised, often explaining and expanding on His faithfulness in all things of the past. At the same time

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[102] See footnote 68.

[103] Martin Luther attempted to explain the progression of thought from one psalm to the other in a work of 1524, *Sämmtliche Schriften,* vol. iv, col. 523-525.

[104] Keil-Delitzsch, vol. 5, 19.

they look forward in time in regard to the fulfillment of God's promises to His people and thus, defer full understanding of His word and will to the future, yet urging and giving hope and faith on the strength of His past faithfulness.

Ultimately then the Torah looks over and beyond the psalms to the fulfillment that will come in God's chosen time. That being the case, it would seem that the Torah would be of only limited usefulness in explicating the psalms, but the psalms hugely useful in explaining and expanding on the Torah.

We could draw some obvious parallels between the books of Moses and those of the psalms. For example, Genesis is where man first meets God, and where the realities of perfection and righteousness, evil and sin are introduced and their effects both temporal and eternal made known. In a similar way, Book 1 of Psalms develops these realities, showing that sin has separated man from God even though neither desires the separation. It examines the possibilities of man attaining to God and the manner of God reaching down to man. It does so in the person of David, both as sinner and as righteous, if indeed he could only attain such righteousness before God.

Book 2 of Psalms widens the scope of concern to others beyond David, even as Exodus moved beyond the successive individuals Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the whole of the children of Israel. Indeed, we find the sons of Korah taking the place of David in the first eight psalms, confessing sin and unrighteousness to the same God, while desiring to be counted righteous before Him and enjoy fellowship with Him. Thereafter David returns as the focal point until the last psalm, which envisions a king unlike David, one like no other, much as Moses becomes the mediator between God and His people.

Book 3 of Psalms, which then reflects Leviticus, correspondingly is composed largely of psalms authored by Levites, the stewards of the temple and its rites. The only exception is the Davidic Psalm 86. These psalms generally extol the glories of Zion and its temple, where God dwells in the midst of His people in order to bless them.

Moses, whose only psalm in the entire Psalter is Psalm 90, leads his hearers into Book 4 of Psalms as he once led Israel out of slavery in Egypt to Mt. Sinai and thence through the wilderness to the verge of the Promised Land. Several of the psalms that follow recount events of that journey before the book itself closes with Psalms 105 and 106, both long and extensive recollections of the faithfulness of God as He,

through Moses, led, guided, and shepherded Israel to safety, and ever closer to the fulfillment of His promises to them.

Psalm 107, an anonymous psalm, opens Book 5 of Psalms with the call to all Israel to join the psalmist, in exclaiming, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever." With Book 5 the psalms of David return in force, even as in Deuteronomy the covenant God gave to Israel at Sinai and mediated through Moses is reviewed. In those psalms is found one that would become the single most quoted psalm in the New Testament, Psalm 110, a Messianic promise more powerful than Moses' statement in Deuteronomy, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren. Him you shall hear."[105]

Those are all obvious parallels. More could be found. However, it must not be forgotten that the psalms look not only backward to God's faithfulness in the past, but also and chiefly, forward to the coming of the same One whom Moses had declared, the Messiah.

Forward: The Five Books of the Psalms and the Five Sermons of Jesus

It has been noted that the five sermons of Jesus in the Gospel according to St. Matthew appear to be the skeleton around which his Gospel is constructed, and that these in turn are patterned on the Torah, the Five Books of Moses. There is not, of course, universal agreement in this. But David Scaer responds:

> Not every scholar agrees that Matthew's arrangement of the sayings of Jesus into Five Discourses is *a deliberate attempt to pattern His Gospel after the Pentateuch*, the technical term for the five books of Moses, but *it is difficult to avoid this conclusion*. Throughout the Gospel, Moses is a paradigm for Matthew's picture of Jesus. This can be seen as both are persecuted in their infancy, both are called out of Egypt, both give the new law, both feed the crowds in the wilderness, both institute a ritual meal, and both conclude their earthly lives on mountains. Thus it is not unreasonable to conclude that Matthew arranged the teachings of Jesus into five discourses to resemble the five books of Moses. *Matthew also values numbers*, which can be seen in his arrangement of Jesus' genealogy in three sets of fourteen *to which he himself calls attention* (1:1–17). *Thus his arrangement*

[105] Deuteronomy 18:15.

> *of the teachings of Jesus into five discourses would not seem to be incidental*, especially for Matthew's Jewish hearers for whom the five books of Moses composed the heart of their religion. These five discourses would be reminiscent of the journey of God's people from the call of Abraham (Genesis) to the preparation of the twelve tribes of Israel to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy). Catechumens would be led through a catechetical pilgrimage to the new land promised in Baptism (28:19–20) and the Eucharist (26:29). They would be led on this pilgrimage by the apostles (28:16), who stand in the place of the twelve patriarchs (19:28).[106]

It is, in the view of the current essayist, difficult to avoid Scaer's conclusion. It is further difficult to avoid the conclusion that if Jesus' sermons in Matthew's Gospel are patterned after the Five Books of Moses then they also reflect the pattern of the Five Books of Psalms, itself patterned on the Torah. This should come as no complete surprise since the very first verse of Matthew is, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the Son of David*, the Son of Abraham." The direct connection is drawn to both Torah and Psalms from the start.

If that connection were somehow missed, it is strongly emphasized in what immediately follows, for Matthew's genealogy of Jesus is a royal genealogy, a genealogy of a King, descended of Israel's greatest king through a line of kings. Thereafter the birthplace of Him who is "born king of the Jews" is underlined as being Bethlehem of Judea, the home of David. For Matthew Jesus manifestly is the one of whom the psalmist wrote, "I have set My King on Zion, My holy hill."[107] Thereafter Matthew portrays Him speaking His first sermon set on a hill, one that opens with the same word (אַשְׁרֵי, Greek: μακάριοι) with which the introduction to the Psalms begins,[108] to those who, as the introduction continues, are then called blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) because they "take refuge in Him."[109] Matthew will continue to the last sermon where, again, Jesus, set on a hill,[110] explains the words of the psalmist, "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision," by telling of the end

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[106] Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew,* 25-26 (emphasis added).

[107] Psalm 2:6.

[108] Psalm 1:1.

[109] Psalm 2:12.

[110] Matthew 24:3.

of all things when God, "will speak to them" who oppose Him "in His wrath and terrify them in His fury."[111]

Moses, in the last of his five books, promised Israel,

> The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—*it is to him you shall listen*—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, "Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die." And the LORD said to me, "They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And *I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him*. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him."[112]

It is Matthew who records the reaction of the people to Jesus' first sermon, the one delivered on the mountain, "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were *astonished at his teaching*, for he was teaching them *as one who had authority, and not as their scribes*."[113] The Five Books of Psalms stand between the Five Books of Moses and the five sermons or discourses of Jesus. Of the psalms, it will be remembered, Martin Chemnitz stated, "In the prophets and *especially in the Psalms* Christ *speaks frequently* before His assumption of the flesh.[114] One should expect to hear the voice of the Messiah in the psalms.

Messianic Cords Binding the Five Books of Psalms

Among the many paths of inquiry that could be followed through the psalms in order to appreciate what it is that binds the Five Books of Psalms together, three will be examined. The first cord that binds is an obvious one, suggested by the introductory psalm(s) as well as by David's own vocation as king. This cord will be explored in some detail. The nature of the king of Psalm 2 and of His kingdom is progressively developed throughout the Five Books of Psalms. The second of the three deals with the matter of how the blessedness of the One becomes the blessedness of the many. "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי)" is freighted with a Messianic significance that spans all Five Books of Psalms and helps bind them

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[111] Psalm 2:4–5.

[112] Deuteronomy 18:15–19.

[113] Matthew 7:28–29.

[114] Chemnitz, 39. See above, 140–141.

together for the hearer. The last of the three cords is one that, as with "blessed (אַשְׁרֵי)," has been, in the estimation of the essayist, underappreciated or even overlooked. In the Bible there are a number of acrostic poems. They are found not only in the psalms, but also in Proverbs,[115] Lamentations,[116] and, perhaps, in Nahum.[117] There is strong Messianic significance to the acrostics in Psalms.

King, Kings, and the Messiah's Kingdom: The First Cord

The historical context of David's reign as king of Israel should not be forgotten as Psalm 2 introduces the king who reigns in Zion. According to the psalmist the LORD set him on His holy hill of Zion. But what exactly did this mean to the people of that day? Kingship was a new thing for Israel; and David was in a very real sense Israel's first king.[118] Certainly the people of Israel knew about kings and their kingdoms from other peoples, from the Egyptians in whose land they'd dwelt and from which they'd fled, from the many different peoples whose land, Canaan, they'd taken, from the peoples of the lands around them, with whom they still struggled, and even from the peoples of *Aram Naharaim*, Mesopotamia, from which Abraham, their revered ancestor, had emigrated. In most of these lands kingship was understood to have come from the gods, with the kings often incorporating the name of their divine sponsor into their own name. Thus the king was assumed to have a special relationship to the God whose name he bore. In the case of Egypt, the monarch was himself said to be a god. It was also not uncommon that the king in most of these lands was depicted in art and literature as the shepherd of his people.

The modern reader is inclined to miss this important point, and assume things that are now clear only in hindsight. But the natural tendency of people would have been to understand the king of Psalm 2 as David himself, who enjoys a special relationship with the God of

115 Proverbs 31:10-31.

116 Lamentations 1:1-22; 2:1-22; 3:1-66; and 4:1-22 (yet strangely missing in 5:1–22).

117 Nahum 1. See Brug, "Near Eastern Acrostics and Biblical Acrostics," 4.

118 Having anointed Saul, Samuel asked, הֲלוֹא כִּֽי־מְשָׁחֲךָ֧ יְהוָ֛ה עַל־נַחֲלָת֖וֹ לְנָגִֽיד, "Has not the LORD anointed you to be *prince* over His people?" 1 Samuel 10:1 Later Samuel told Israel, "Today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, 'Set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your thousands" (1 Samuel 10:19). Then "Samuel said to all the people. 'Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.' And all the people shouted, 'Long live the king!'" (1 Samuel 10:24).

Israel little different from that of other kings of other nations. For example, most rabbinic commentaries tend to do exactly that.[119] The real difference, they insist, is that David's God really is God. But this only serves to underscore the reality that if the Messiah, the Christ, is divorced from the psalms in any degree their import is changed, and David becomes a king little different from other ancient monarchs.

The king of whom Psalm 2 speaks cannot rightly be understood in isolation from the other psalms, either in our day or, especially, in David's. The psalms that follow it add to the understanding of both speaker and hearer. This would seem to be an inarguable point. If they do so in a cohesive, purposeful manner, this should be detectable.

Psalms 1 and 2 leave the hearer with a few principal ideas: 1) There is an ideal man who, in contrast to all the wicked, is truly "blessed (אַשְׁרֵי)" in the sight of God. 2) There is a "way of the righteous." 3) The LORD God has dominion over all kings, nations, and peoples of the earth. 4) God establishes His king on Zion, His holy mountain. 5) His king will triumph over all kings and, by implication, their non-existent gods. 6) The kings of the earth are admonished to be wise and embrace "the Son." 7) Those who take refuge in the Son are, like the ideal man, called "blessed (אַשְׁרֵי)," and so enjoy the favor of the LORD. The questions left to the hearer are: 1) Who is this ideal man? 2) How are the ideal man and the king set on Zion, whom God also calls "my Anointed" and "my Son," related to each other? 3) How is it that those who are not ideal are deemed "blessed (אַשְׁרֵי)" like the ideal man, and so join the "congregation of the righteous?"

The First Book of Psalms sets the person of David against the background of these initial ideas and then proceeds to address the questions. The sequence of Psalms 23-25 is particularly important. In the first of the three, David, the shepherd and king of Israel, himself has a shepherd, who is the LORD.[120] In the second of the three the question is asked directly, "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?"[121] The psalm indicates that there is such a one. He will have "clean hands and a pure heart."[122] Yet, as the psalm

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[119] Rav Shlomo Yitzhaki is probably the most revered of all rabbinic commentators on the *Tanach,* so much so that the acronym for his name, Rashi (RŠY), has been popularly cast as *Rabban Šel Yisrael*, "The teacher of Israel." In his commentary on Psalm 2 he firmly asserts that the king of Psalm 2 is simply and only David (Gruber, 177-78).

[120] Psalm 23:1.

[121] Psalm 24:3.

[122] Psalm 24:4.

transitions to its conclusion, exhorting the gates of Zion to open before the king of glory, whose hands are clean and heart pure, the question is asked directly, "Who is this King of glory?"[123] It is answered definitively, "The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory."[124] Somehow God Himself and the king He sets on His holy mountain are the same. The third of the three, an acrostic, puts to rest any possibility the king of Psalm 2, the King of glory, can be David himself. For David's hands are not clean, nor his heart pure. He cannot be the one who will "redeem Israel … out of all his troubles."[125] Only God Himself can do that.

Psalms 40 and 41 bring the First Book of Psalms to a close with the truth that both David and his kingship have failed: "Evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me."[126] His enemies clearly see his failure and ask, "When will he die, and his name perish?"[127] Their confidence is unbounded, "They say, 'A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies.' Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them."[128] David concludes, "By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever."[129]

Book Two of Psalms opens with something new and thus surprising: a psalm that is not of David, a psalm of one separated from Zion. He longs to return and "appear before God,"[130] weeping at his circumstances as those around him ask, "Where is your God?"[131] Yet, confidence returns with Psalm 45. "My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king: my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever."[132] There is another king to come!

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[123] Psalm 24:8.
[124] Psalm 24:10.
[125] Psalm 25:22.
[126] Psalm 40:12.
[127] Psalm 41:5.
[128] Psalm 41:8-10.
[129] Psalm 41:11–12.
[130] Psalm 42:2.
[131] Psalm 42:3.
[132] Psalm 45:1.

Who is he? Psalm 45 echoes the answer of Psalm 24: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."[133] The hearer now knows that not only is there a close relationship—even an identification of the two as one!—between the king anointed by God to sit on Zion and God Himself, but that the God so identified Himself looks to God! The psalm that follows describes the kingdom of this King in terms that directly address the ideas raised in Psalm 2: "There is a river whose streams makes glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."[134] Psalms 47 and 48 agree. The King who rules from Zion will subdue the nations, will triumph over his enemies, just as David said in Psalm 2.

Psalms of David return, with David himself confessing the enormity of his sins of adultery and murder, and thus the failure of his kingship. He concludes his confession with the prayer, "Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem."[135] From here one psalm of David follows another, each one drawing on the events of David's life to show beyond doubt that the king of Psalm 2 is not David. Finally, there is a prayer: "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son."[136]

The king who is to come will "defend the cause of the poor … the needy,"[137] of whom David himself is to be counted one.[138] He will exercise dominion to the ends of the earth. All kings will bow before him, all nations serve him, "for he delivers the *needy* when he calls, the *poor* and him who *has no helper*. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy."[139] In so doing, the First Book of Psalms' closing psalm's declaration is made clear: the promised king is the one of whom it was said, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the one who considers the poor."[140]

[133] Psalm 45:6–7.

[134] Psalm 46:4–7.

[135] Psalm 51:18.

[136] Psalm 72:1.

[137] Psalm 72:4.

[138] "As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me" (Psalm 40:17).

[139] Psalm 72:12-13.

[140] Psalm 41:1.

The psalm, although often taken as being "of Solomon," can as easily be understood as "for Solomon (לִשְׁלֹמֹה)." In this psalm the king who is established on Zion, inexplicably both God and man, whose kingdom will have no end is not David. He is David's son. And the kingdom that extends "to the ends of the earth" will pass to him. Thus "the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended."[141]

As one might expect, given the last verse of Book Two, the focus shifts from David and his son Solomon to the temple and its service. Book Three begins as did Book Two on a note so gloomy that the hearer must be reminded from the start that "truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart."[142] Psalm 74 continues the same tone, telling the hearer the reasons for the melancholy. Evidently, it is a time when the king, the shepherd of the people, is no more,[143] the temple has been plundered,[144] and the prophetic voice is no longer heard in the land.[145] Even so, the psalmist directs the nation to look backward in time and gain confidence, "Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth."[146] The somber tone continues even as the psalmist assures Israel that God "chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves. He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep-folds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with skillful hand."[147]

By this point in the psalms the hearer knows that in some way God is the king in Israel; He is also its temple and priest; and He is the voice of the prophet, so that even as those who fill these offices fail, He remains unchanged. Thus the cry goes up, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, *shine forth* … and come and save us … let your *face shine*, that we may be saved … let your *face shine*, that we may be saved … let your hand be on the *man of your right hand*, the *son of man* whom you have made strong for yourself … let your *face shine*, that we may be

141 Psalm 72:20.

142 Psalm 73:1.

143 "O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture" (Psalm 74:1).

144 "Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt. Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins; the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary" (Psalm 74:3–4).

145 "We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long" (Psalm 74:9).

146 Psalm 74:12.

147 Psalm 78:68-72.

saved!"[148] This manner of expression is very similar to that of Daniel in his great intercessory prayer.[149] The hearer knows that David is not the king of Psalm 2, but his name is intimately bound up with that king, even as that king is intimately bound up with God Himself.

In the closing psalm of Book Three, the psalmist verifies the above, testifying of God, "You have said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.'"[150] Before the psalm brings Book Three to its close, the promise is repeated. The king who will be of the offspring of David, "Shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock of my salvation.' And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."[151] Then it is repeated yet again, "Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me."[152] The psalmist then brings Book Three to conclusion, praying, "Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David? Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked, and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations, with which your enemies mock, O LORD, with which they mock the footsteps of your anointed. Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen."[153]

It is very difficult to deny that the psalmist's words are not a direct appeal to the promise of Psalm 2. And it is equally difficult to deny that there is a clear progression of teaching regarding the king, with Book One ending on the note that it is not David, Book Two on a note of its being one greater than Solomon, and now Book Three pointing to an "anointed" one yet to come who will be a direct descendent of David, who will call God Father, and himself be called the "firstborn" by the Father.

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148 Psalm 80:1, 3, 7, 17, 19.

149 Daniel 9:17–18, 9:20. Here, the meaning of Daniel's words, "make your face to shine upon your sanctuary," can be seen from what follows. He is praying that the incarnation of the Savior King would take place quickly. It is no coincidence that the book of Daniel again and again deals with the difference between earthly kingship and kingdoms and the king and kingdom God had in mind when He made His promises to His people.

150 Psalm 89:3–4. This is an explicit confirmation of 2 Samuel 7:8–17.

151 "The highest of the kings of the earth," would be in effect King of kings (Psalm 89:26–27).

152 Psalm 89:35–36.

153 Psalm 89:49–52.

Book Four of Psalms takes up the essence of the problem that confronts Israel and all mankind, turning the hearer to the authority of Moses with its opening psalm. David cannot be the king God has set on His holy hill of Zion, for David, being sinful, has gone the way of all flesh. The contrast of the holiness of God, who is eternal, to the sinfulness of man, who must die, is put starkly from the start, echoing Moses' own words of Genesis 3:19.[154] "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You return man to dust and say, 'Return, O children of man!'"[155]

Psalm 95, familiar to us from the Order of Matins, intimates why Book Four seems to have changed the subject, turning its focus from David to Moses. It points out that the Rock of Israel's salvation has always been God Himself, "for the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods."[156] Significantly, as the psalm summons "the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" to come and worship God, it warns, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work."[157] These two incidents illustrate man's continual twin difficulties: on the one hand, to trust in God's ability to work the impossible through a man,[158] and, on the other hand, to give all glory for so doing to God alone.[159]

Moses, by his own testimony, one that was immediately verified by God, is a type, a foreshadowing, of the Messiah who was to come.[160] He is the one who goes from shepherding sheep in the wilderness to shepherding Israel safely through the wilderness. He does the work of a prophet, giving Israel God's own instruction (תּוֹרָה), but is recalled by God Himself in the last words of the Old Testament only as "my servant Moses."[161] He does the work of a priest, interceding for the people, but his brother Aaron is called to be high priest. He does the work of a king,

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154 "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

155 Psalm 90:1–3.

156 Psalm 95:3.

157 Psalm 95:7–9.

158 Exodus 17:1–7.

159 Numbers 20:2–13.

160 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet *like me* from among you," and "I will raise up for them a prophet *like you* from among their brothers" (Deuteronomy 18:15 and Deuteronomy 18:18, respectively).

161 Malachi 4:4.

building and ruling a nation, yet does not ever bear the title of king, a title that will not be given until centuries later. It is precisely in these duties he carries out without title that the hearer is to understand the significance of his and God's description "like me" and "like you."

The argument put forward in Psalm 95 is the same one made in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which draws on this psalm,[162] repeats its warning, "Today if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts,"[163] and then mixes it with the "today" of Psalm 110, pointedly reminding the hearer that it was David who spoke these words, the words of Psalm 110, "so long afterward."[164]

Book Four of Psalms ends with Psalm 106, which, as it summarizes, warns by way of the same reference to look what happened to Israel in the wilderness: "They angered him (i.e., God) at Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke harshly with his lips."[165] Book Four closes with a prayer for one like Moses, one like David, for another one greater than either: "Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, 'Amen! Praise the LORD!"[166] Significantly, these last words of Psalm 106 also form the conclusion of the song of thanksgiving King David himself commanded be sung when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem from Kirjath-jearim, a conclusion that is there preceded by other psalms, all drawn exclusively from Book Four of Psalms.[167]

"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever!" With those words Book Five begins, and then quickly turns to three psalms of David, from whom so little was heard in Books Three and Four,[168] climaxing in Psalm 110. Here the king whom God sets on Zion is identified. He is David's Lord. He is also a priest forever, like Melchizedek, without beginning or end. He will subdue all the enemies of God's people as he sits at the right of the LORD. He is the

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162 Hebrews 3:15.

163 Hebrews 4:7.

164 Hebrews 4:7, 5:5.

165 Psalm 106:32–33.

166 Psalm 106:47–48.

167 1 Chronicles 16:8–36. It is further interesting to note that middle psalm of the three that David chose, Psalm 96 (1 Chronicles 16:23–33), could be seen as the answer to Psalm 95.

168 Book Three contains a single psalm of David and Book Four only two.

"Anointed." He is the cause of the psalmist's confidence in proclaiming that "He who sits in the heavens" laughs at the raging, plotting, and counseling of the nations, peoples, and kings of the earth against Him and His Anointed.[169] He is the King, and the Son.

Leaving the rest of Book Five aside for the time being, it should be noted that the book draws to its close with three psalms that testify of the destruction of the kings who, in the case of the first two, once threatened the very existence of God's people[170] and, in the case of the third, who will be destroyed for the sake of the harm he is still doing to them.[171] Thereafter come, significantly, eight psalms of David, concluding with Psalm 145: "I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will praise you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable."[172]

At the heart of this final psalm, an acrostic, David says of those who will in the future thank and bless God for his grace and mercy, "They shall speak of the glory of your *kingdom* and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your *kingdom*. Your *kingdom* is an everlasting *kingdom* and your dominion endures throughout all generations."[173] David's final word in the psalms is at once his own vow and an exhortation to all the people of God, "My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever."[174] The sound of David's voice speaking this truth was to reverberate long past his lifetime.

With that Book Five of Psalms gives answer to the final exhortation of the king with five separate psalms, as if to acknowledge the fivefold unity of the Book of Psalms. Each one of these last psalms begins, "Praise the LORD!" Each also ends with "Praise the LORD," except the final one, which enjoins, "Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens," as if to imply that the psalms will be chanted by God's faithful people in his sanctuary continuously and also under his heaven until the heavens are no more.[175]

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[169] Psalm 2:1–6.

[170] Psalms 135 and 136.

[171] Psalm 137.

[172] Psalm 145:1–3.

[173] Psalm 145:11–13. These three verses contain four of the seven occurrences of the word kingdom (מַלְכוּת) in all the psalms. They also are the כ, ל, and מ verses, which of course spell the Hebrew word for "king" when reversed.

[174] Psalm 145:21.

[175] It is to be wondered if the Epistle to the Hebrews' extensive use of the psalms, especially in introducing its call to faithfulness of its hearers, is not itself a purposeful

Blessed is the Man, and Blessed are All: The Second Cord

In the introductory psalm(s), Psalm 1 and 2, an exchange between the blessed man and those who take refuge in him is implied. The contrast is stark. There is, on the one side, an ideal man, who simply put has nothing in common with evil people (אַֽשְׁרֵי־הָאִ֗ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹ֥א הָלַךְ֮ בַּעֲצַ֪ת רְשָׁ֫עִ֥ים) or evil itself, as the subsequent verses make clear. On the other side, there are all those who find refuge in him (אַ֝שְׁרֵ֗י כָּל־ח֥וֹסֵי בֽוֹ), the implication being that their taking refuge in Him consists in their taking shelter in His righteousness.[176] The blessedness of the one in some way becomes the blessedness of the all. The psalms, ordered as they are into five books, progressively set forth this way, which the psalmist from the beginning identifies as "the way of the righteous," which "the LORD knows."[177]

The first evidence of this exchange in Book One is found in Psalms 6 and 7, a penitential psalm of David wherein his confession of his own sins is followed by his confession of faith, which pointedly uses in its first verse the same word employed in Psalm 2:12: "O LORD my God, in you do I *take refuge*."[178] That the two psalms immediately precede Psalm 8, in which the insignificance of man is compared to the majesty of God, heightens the contrast between what is to be found below amid fallen humanity with that which is above in the presence of God. At the same time the psalm indicates that that which belongs to God is (to be)[179] given to man. Following this group of psalms comes the first acrostic of the Psalter, Psalms 9/10, of which more will be said below.

The first extensive treatment in Book One of this way of the righteous, those called "blessed," begins in Psalm 32. In this psalm, which

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echo of David's last vow and exhortation, and the concluding psalm's implication that as long as the mighty heavens remain, God is to be praised in his kingdom of grace, a kingdom built on His Son.

176 It should be noted that the term, אַשְׁרֵי, is regularly translated as μακάριος/μακάριοι in both the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. From the earliest Greek literature (e.g., Hesiod and Homer) the word's use speaks to a state of happiness or blessedness that is to be found only among the gods, that is, one that is wholly apart from the burdens of human existence. This use continues throughout the apostolic era.

177 Psalm 1:6.

178 Psalm 7:1.

179 Commenting on these verses the author of Hebrews writes, "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see every-thing in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:8–9).

tellingly follows one that often makes use of the word *refuge*,[180] David declares, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the man (person, אָדָם) against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."[181] Then he promptly begins to acknowledge his sin before God. Having done that, David says, "Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found."[182]

Then he advises, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit or bridle, or it will not stay near you."[183] With these words David reveals in a most concrete manner that the way of the righteous is one where the righteous confess that they are not righteous! This seems completely counterintuitive, as David's analogy of horse or mule make clear. The way of righteousness is not the way that the reason of man would think. He will naturally shy away from it as a horse or mule.

Psalm 33 follows in thought the advice David has just given, contrasting "the counsel of the nations," that is, human reason, with "the counsel of the LORD." He says, "The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!"[184] The psalm concludes with further contrasts between the counsel of the nations and the counsel of the LORD before commending those who patiently trust His counsel, even though they do not fully understand.

What follows is another acrostic in which the psalmist, speaking of the patient trust of the preceding psalm, commends everyone who has taken to heart that counsel of the LORD. To such a one David exclaims, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed (אַֽשְׁרֵי) is the man (הַגֶּבֶר) who takes *refuge* in him!"[185] Psalm 34 then concludes with the affirmation: "The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take *refuge* in him will be condemned."[186]

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[180] Psalm 31:1, 31:2, 31:4, 31:19.

[181] Psalm 32:1–2.

[182] Psalm 32:6.

[183] Psalm 32:8–9.

[184] Psalm 33:10–12.

[185] Psalm 34:8.

[186] Psalm 34:22. In Hebrew, the last words are "who take refuge in him" (כָּֽל־הַחֹסִ֥ים בּֽוֹ).

Book One of Psalms concludes with Psalms 40 and 41 which, as already noted above, acknowledge the failure of David's kingship to be the kingship to which Psalms 1 and 2 look forward. Both have clear, rectilinear Messianic verses that are cited in the New Testament.[187] In these two psalms the person of David and the person of the Messiah seem to be commingled, making it difficult to decide who is being spoken of in the key phrases as blessed. "Blessed (אַ֭שְׁרֵי) is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie,"[188] seems to have in mind David, the believer, more than David, the type of Christ. On the other hand, "Blessed (אַ֭שְׁרֵי) is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies,"[189] seems more mindful of David, the type of Christ, than David, the believer in Christ, for the reason that David has been shown by the end of the First Book of Psalms to be one of the poor and needy, poor in spirit, to whom only the true King can give the kingdom of heaven. The reason for the apparent commingling is probably bound up in the very exchange that was implied from the beginning, that the One who is rich toward God would give of his wealth to those who are poor in spirit, to those who take refuge in His righteousness.

The term אַ֭שְׁרֵי occurs only once in Book Two, but in a significant context. Here David proclaims, "Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come. When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. Blessed (אַ֭שְׁרֵי) is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple."[190] As noted in the previous section, the hope for the coming of Psalm 2's king moves from David to David's offspring. The blessedness of the blessed One comes to those who despair of their own righteousness and seek refuge in His. Such blessedness is now, in Psalm 65, associated directly with the temple and

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[187] Psalm 40:6–7, which is quoted in Hebrews 10:5–7, is in turn followed with, "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart," a direct response to Psalm 1:2. Psalm 41:9, which is quoted in John 13:18, is followed with, "But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them! By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever," a direct response to Psalm 2:4–6.

[188] Psalm 40:4.

[189] Psalm 41:1.

[190] Psalm 65:1–4.

the presence of Him who dwells there, who draws the poor in spirit to Himself. This thought will be picked up in Book Three and greatly expanded.

Psalm 84 extols the beauty of the temple of the LORD for the very reason that the LORD Himself promises to be found there. He is "my King and my God," the psalmist joyfully cries out to God, and, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praises. Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways of the LORD."[191] Here the "way of the righteous" is described as being external and internal at the same time for all those who trust in Him. Externally it consists in their being physically present in the temple, wherein the LORD Himself is present. Internally it consists in the highways of the LORD being present in the heart of those who walk in His way, who long to have the LORD abide also with and in them.

In the middle of Book Three's closing psalm's three-fold testimony to the ongoing validity of the promise made to David, blessedness is again associated with the temple, and Him who is present there. "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of *your face*, who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted. For you are the glory of their strength; by your favor our horn is exalted. For our shield belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel."[192] To walk in the way of the righteous is to walk in the light of the LORD's face.[193]

In Book Four the word אַשְׁרֵי is found only twice. Its use in Psalm 94 follows the thinking of Psalm 2 very closely. "He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the man (הַגֶּבֶר) whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law (וּמִתּוֹרָתְךָ)."[194] Those disciplined by the LORD are not like horse or mule, led by coercion, by bit and bridle, but are led by faith, by trusting in the promise of the LORD that the king whom He sets on Zion, His holy hill, will provide righteousness to cover all sin.

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191 Psalm 84:5-6.

192 Psalm 89:16–19.

193 For more see above, note 149.

194 Psalm 94:10–12.

Book Four closes with Psalm 106, hearkening back to Moses and Israel's trials in fleeing Egypt, at Mt. Sinai, and in the wilderness.[195] The psalmist says, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare his praise? Blessed (אַ֭שְׁרֵי) are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times."[196] The language is very similar to that of Leviticus, where God said to Moses,

> "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules (וּשְׁמַרְתֶּ֤ם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי֙ וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַ֔י); if a person does them, he shall live by them (אֲשֶׁ֨ר יַעֲשֶׂ֥ה אֹתָ֛ם הָאָדָ֖ם וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם אֲנִ֖י יְהוָֽה): I am the LORD."[197]

Here the psalmist urges those who trust in the LORD to continue following the pattern of devotion and piety laid out by Moses in regard to the tabernacle, and later the temple, and its services. He who continues in this way, walks in the way of the LORD; and so, dwells in the place where God is present in order to bless with His grace and mercy all who come in faith to Him there.[198]

The word אַ֭שְׁרֵי occurs ten times in Book Five of Psalms, more often in fact than in Book One. It first appears in Psalm 112, an acrostic. It is here that the three cords become intertwined and continue thus to the end of the Psalter.

[195] When considering the meaning of such recollections in the psalms both for the people of that time and for today, it is good to bear in mind the interpretation put on these events in the New Testament, particularly that given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1–13.

[196] Psalm 106:1-3, which has אַ֭שְׁרֵי שֹׁמְרֵ֣י מִשְׁפָּ֑ט עֹשֵׂ֖ה צְדָקָ֣ה בְכָל־עֵֽת.

[197] Leviticus 18:1–5. This is the Old Testament lesson chosen for Trinity 13 of the historic pericope, whose Epistle and Gospel are, respectively, Galatians 3:15-22 and Luke 10:23-37.

[198] Exodus 20:24; Numbers 6:23–27; Deuteronomy 10:8.

The Acrostic Psalms and their Purpose: The Third Cord

There are, if one counts Psalms 9 and 10 as one psalm,[199] eight acrostic psalms in the Psalter, four in Book One and four in Book Five. All four in Book One are imperfect to varying degrees, with Psalm 9/10 being by far the most irregular. The idea has been advanced many times that the purpose of an acrostic was to aid the memory of either speaker or hearer. However, there are few adherents of this theory anymore. John Brug belongs to the majority of modern scholars in offering the most plausible theory. He puts it this way: "It appears that the most important purpose of biblical acrostics is simply stylistic. Often acrostics are intended to convey an impression of comprehensiveness."[200] There do not appear to be any compelling reasons to disagree with him.

If these two purposes are accepted as valid, then what would the effect be if the psalms in question were not, as often supposed, chiefly didactic,[201] but in fact put to whatever purpose the psalmist has in mind, which the context will reveal? The first, most important purpose therefore would be to emphasize by stylistic difference a particular psalm, and thus draw attention to it.

It was noted above that Psalm 9/10 follows a group of thematically connected psalms, the first of which emphasizes the weakness and sin of man, his need to take refuge in God, and then the wonderment of the psalmist that almighty God would concern Himself with insignificant man and promise him dominion over the entire creation. The emphasis of Psalm 9/10 seems to be that God's intention is being actively thwarted by the nations, the wicked. The psalmist, who was gazing heavenward in Psalm 8, seems to have in mind the statement of Psalm 2 that "He who sits in the heavens laughs," holding in derision all the nations, peoples, kings, and rulers who set themselves against Him and His "Anointed." Thus the psalmist cries out, "Arise, O LORD! Let not man prevail; let the nations be judged before you! Put them in fear, O LORD! Let the nations know that they are but men!"[202] But then in the next verse, which is the first verse of Psalm 10, his frustration and impatience show: "Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide

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[199] Psalm 9 contains the א through כ verses, with the ד verse missing. Psalm 10, which, unusually for the psalms of Book One, bears no title, continues with the ל through ת verses, with the מ, נ, ס and ע verses missing.

[200] Brug, "Near Eastern Acrostics and Biblical Acrostics," 4.

[201] "Although praise and petition occur in biblical acrostics, most acrostics have a didactic flavor. This didactic tone seems to be a common emphasis of biblical acrostics" (Ibid.).

[202] Psalm 9:19–20.

yourself in times of trouble?" Then, later in the psalm, after recounting the seeming victories and arrogance of the wicked, he again cries out, "Arise, O LORD, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, 'You will not call him to account'?"[203] He closes the psalm(s) with a plea to the LORD, who alone is king, to set things right.

Following the great Messianic Psalm 22 comes another group of three psalms mentioned above, Psalms 23–25, the last of which is another acrostic. It too is irregular, but only slightly. It follows directly the question and answer, "Who is the King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory."[204] To this David answers with—literally!—a comprehensive description of the very faith that both asks and confidently answers the question, "Who is the King of glory?"

The third acrostic, Psalm 34, again slightly imperfect, is also third in a group that, as explained above, is introduced by Psalm 32, a penitential psalm. In it David describes that the way of the LORD is walked with contrition and faith. Psalm 33 follows, in which the personal faith of David is identified with the public confession of the nation as a whole. It concludes, "Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you."[205] Psalm 33 has 22 verses as also does the acrostic Psalm 34 that follows, veritably exhorting both speaker and hearer to perceive the reflection of the one in the other, or even, perhaps, to join in enumerating the faith letter by letter. The final verses present a very anthropomorphic picture of the God to whom this faith clings. He has eyes (verse 15), a face (verse 16), ears to hear His people (verse 17), and a heart filled with compassion for the "brokenhearted" and "crushed in spirit" (verse 18). The psalm closes, "The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned."[206] Not only are the psalm's last words (in the Hebrew text) virtually identical to the last words of Psalm 2 that follow אַ֥שְֽׁרֵי, but the doublet which comprises the ת verse (verse 21–22 in the ESV) neatly paraphrases Psalm 1:5–6.

The final acrostic in Book One again appears as a part of a group of three, all of which concern the struggle of the righteous against the wicked. There is none of the language of sin and confession of sin here.

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[203] Psalm 10:12–13.

[204] Psalm 24:10.

[205] Psalm 33:20–22.

[206] Psalm 34:22.

תְּמוֹתֵ֣ת רָשָׁ֣ע רָעָ֑ה וְשֹׂנְאֵ֖י צַדִּ֣יק יֶאְשָֽׁמוּ׃ פּוֹדֶ֣ה יְ֭הוָה נֶ֣פֶשׁ עֲבָדָ֑יו וְלֹ֥א יֶ֝אְשְׁמ֗וּ כָּֽל־הַחֹסִ֥ים בּֽוֹ.

It is only light and dark, good and evil, righteous and wicked. Psalm 35 holds echoes of Psalm 22. Psalm 36 contrasts the wicked in its first verses with the righteous in the last verses, closing with the victory of "the upright of heart" over "the evildoers."[207] The acrostic Psalm 37, the letters of which often introduce more than one verse, are again almost but not quite perfectly ordered. There is a sense of absolute confidence as letter by letter the victory of the righteous over the wicked is detailed. The psalm's final phrase, as that of the previous acrostic, Psalm 34, again mirrors the final phrase of Psalm 2. Psalm 37 is a ringing proclamation of victory to those of whom it was there said, אַשְׁרֵי כָּל־חוֹסֵי בוֹ.

The acrostic psalms of Book Five are the opposite of those of Book One; they are all complete and perfect.[208] This fact alone should draw our attention.

As noted above, the word אַשְׁרֵי first appears in Book Five in Psalm 112, which is the second of its acrostic psalms, the first being Psalm 111. Interestingly, these back-to-back acrostics follow the single most quoted psalm of the New Testament. If Psalm 110 is read in conjunction with the Psalter's introductory psalms, especially Psalm 2, it is difficult to miss the connection between the one David calls "my Lord," whom he clearly distinguishes from "the LORD," and the one he also clearly distinguishes from "the LORD" in Psalm 2, calling him, his (i.e., the LORD's) "Anointed," and thereafter, speaking for "the LORD," calling him, "my King" and "my Son." It should be noted that Psalm 2 then continues with the admonition to all "kings" and "rulers" of the earth to be wise, and so "serve the LORD " and "kiss the Son," lest the wrath of God fall on them. Psalm 2 concludes with a promise, אַשְׁרֵי כָּל־חוֹסֵי בוֹ, "blessed are the ones taking refuge in him," which phrase, again, is clearly echoed in the last words of Psalms 34 and 37, the last two acrostic psalms of Book One.

Psalms 2 and 110 are the chief citations for the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Psalm 2 introduces the entire argument.[209] Psalm 110 is the key text for the proof, being referred to often, as well as quoted directly four times.[210]

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[207] Psalm 36:10-12.

[208] The final acrostic, Psalm 145, is missing the נ verse. However, as noted in the critical apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Greek and Syriac versions all supply such a verse. Brug also notes that Qumran manuscript 11QPs[a] and at least one Masoretic type manuscript supply the verse as well (Brug, "Near East Acrostics and Biblical Acrostics," 1). Thus there is textual support for the inclusion of the verse.

[209] Hebrews 1:5.

[210] Hebrews 1:13; 5:6; 7:17; 7:21.

The author of the epistle pointedly ties the two psalms together as the crux of his argument.

> And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." In the days of his flesh, *Jesus offered up prayers and supplications*,[211] with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard *because* of his reverence. *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation* to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.[212]

At this point is appropriate to recall what David Scaer said about Christology and sanctification: "When Psalm 1, and for that matter the other related psalms, are understood in a wider Messianic sense, then the Beatitudes and the James passage become clearer. *Using dogmatic terms, Christology and sanctification constitute a totality*."[213] The acrostic psalms of Book One fairly cry out for One who will both be and do what Israel could not and cannot do, what David, the man after God's own heart, himself could not and cannot do. They plead—"Arise, O LORD!"[214]—that the Savior King be revealed to Israel.

The acrostics of Book Five are God's answer to the pleas that are voiced in the acrostics of Book One. Psalm 110 removes all doubt as to the identity and the nature, the two-fold nature, of Psalm 2's King and Savior. Psalm 111 opens, "Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart in the company of the upright, in the congregation." This is a direct connection to Psalm 1:5. What follows is an enumeration of the faith of the "congregation of the righteous," the ones who walk in the "way of the righteous,"[215] who seek their refuge in the "man" of Psalm 1:1, who is the "Anointed," "King," and "Son" of Psalm 2. They recognize Him in Psalm 110, and rejoice in Him.

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[211] This is a critically important statement, one which the author expects his hearers to know and understand on the basis of the psalms.

[212] Hebrews 5:5–10.

[213] Scaer, *James*, 52.

[214] The plea occurs twice in the first acrostic, Psalm 9:19 and Psalm 10:12.

[215] Psalm 1:5 and 1:6, respectively.

Psalm 112 opens with, "Praise the LORD! Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the man—אִישׁ!—who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments." This is the man of Psalm 1, who "walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seats of scoffers; but *his delight* is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." The verses that follow are the description, from A to Z, of Him who loves the LORD His God with all his heart and soul and might. He is the embodiment of the Son God called out of Egypt, "You shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, Let my son go that he may serve me."'"[216]

The psalms that follow, 113 through 118, are known as the *hallel*. Historically, they were used in the worship of Israel for all major religious festivals, except the Day of Atonement.[217] They are particularly and intimately associated with the celebration of Passover, where they are sung on each of the eight days of the festival. Matthew records that it was the last of these psalms, Psalm 118, the crowds were chanting when Jesus entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover.[218] Matthew also records that Jesus quoted another part of the same psalm later in the week of Passover.[219] Still later in that week, while being questioned by those of the party of the Pharisees, He took the opportunity to ask them about the meaning of Psalm 110.[220] Clearly, Psalm 118 holds great significance not only because of what it says about the Messiah itself, but also because of the context in which it was used liturgically in the history of Israel, which culminated in the events of Palm Sunday. The psalm is significant also because Jesus quoted it as applying to Himself.[221] And He did this in the face of what He characterized as misinterpretation by the teachers of Israel!

It is difficult to believe that, preceded by Psalm 110, the two perfect acrostics that are responses to it, then the six psalms that by ancient tradition are sung at Passover, the last of which is deeply Messianic, that

216 Exodus 4:22–23.

217 Holladay, 143.

218 Matthew 21:9, quoting Psalm 118:25-26.

219 Matthew 21:42, quoting Psalm 118:22-23.

220 Matthew 22:41-46.

221 In his treatment of Psalm 118 (1530), Luther wrote in the dedication, "These thoughts of mine I decided to send you as a gift. I have nothing better. Though some may consider this a lot of useless drivel, I know it contains nothing evil or unchristian. This is my beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, *I fell in love with this psalm especially*. Therefore I call it my own" (LW 14, 45).

what follows would be simply a didactic psalm.[222] Keil-Delitzsch, in refuting the opinion of Ewald that Psalm 119 is simply a "long prayer of an *old experienced teacher*," makes an astounding—and accurate!—observation.

> The poet is a young man, who finds himself in a situation which is clearly described: he is derided, oppressed, persecuted, and that by those who despise the divine word (for apostasy encompasses him round about), and more particularly by a government hostile to the true religion, vers. 23, 46, 161. He is lying in bonds (ver. 61, cf. 83), expecting death (ver. 109), and recognizes in his affliction, it is true, God's salutary humbling, and in the midst of it God's word is his comfort and his wisdom, but he also yearns for help, and earnestly prays for it – The whole Psalm is a prayer for steadfastness in the midst of an ungodly, degenerate race, and in the midst of great trouble, which is heightened by the pain he feels at the prevailing apostasy, and a prayer for ultimate deliverance which rises in group *Kaph* to an urgent *how long!* If this sharply-defined physiognomy of the Psalm is recognized, then the internal progression will not fail to be discerned.[223]

The psalmist wrote, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently."[224] It is not unusual for the word אַשְׁרֵי to be applied to groups. It was done in, for example, Psalms 84, 89, and 106. What is unusual is that which follows.

The next 171 verses are entirely the prayer, the pious meditation, of a single person. There is no confession of sin to God whatsoever on the

[222] "The first Hebrew word, *'ashrey*, with an initial *aleph* marks the beginning of what we may call the Long Acrostic—an alphabetic acrostic in which each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet begins eight lines of poetry. The result is the longest psalm in the collection and the longest chapter in the Hebrew Bible, 176 verses or lines of poetry. Perhaps this extravagant mnemonic was deemed appropriate because of the *manifestly didactic nature* of the poem. The edifying truth of *unflagging loyalty* to God's word was intended to be inculcated in those who recited the text, inscribed in their memory" (Alter, *Psalms,* 419). Keil-Delitzsch entitles the psalm, "A TWENTY-TWO-FOLD STRING OF APHORISMS BY ONE WHO IS PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF HIS FAITH" (K-D, v. 5, 232).

[223] K-D, vol. 5, 243–244.

[224] Psalm 119:1–4.

part of the young man who prays, except, perhaps, for the very last verse. There is only praise of God, acknowledgement of the truth, beauty, and wisdom of His word, and his heartfelt petition for God's help to remain faithful to His word and will as he is surrounded by the wicked, so that his enemies will not triumph over him and so advance their evil purpose. The subject himself and progression of thought through the psalm are exactly as Keil-Delitzsch described. The subject evinces exactly what Robert Alter said, "unflagging loyalty to God's word," even as he realizes that his affliction is caused by God for his "salutary humbling."

In the silence that follows Keil-Delitzsch's observation, one can hear Martin Chemnitz say, "In the prophets and *especially in the Psalms* Christ speaks frequently before His assumption of the flesh."[225] And one should remember the words of Hebrews, "In the days of his flesh, ***Jesus offered up prayers and supplications***, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard ***because*** of his reverence."[226]

The last verse of the psalm comes, perhaps, as something of a surprise. To this point the one who speaks has presented himself to God as one who has never failed to keep His law and prays only for the strength to keep it and do His will to the very end. But at the end he prays, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments."[227] It seems to be a statement out of place, at odds with all that has preceded it, all 171 verses. But if one considers that the lead up to Psalm 119 is the *hallel*, the psalms of the Passover liturgy, the situation begins to clarify. And if one carefully considers the closing words of the final *hallel* psalm, it becomes very clear. "The LORD is God, and he has made *his light* to shine upon us.[228] *Bind the festal sacrifice with cords*, up to the horns of the altar."[229]

Psalm 119 is the meditation and prayer of the King who would enter the gates of Jerusalem to cries of "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD," and only days later experience the very things that the psalm describes. From his threefold prayer in Gethsemane to His final cry of "My God, My God, why have Your forsaken Me," the words of the psalm are the prayer of the Lamb of God, the Word made flesh, who takes the sins of world upon Himself to become the festal sacrifice that propitiates the sins of all.

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[225] See above, note 114.

[226] Hebrews 5:7.

[227] Psalm 119:176.

[228] See above, note 149.

[229] Psalm 118:27.

Psalm 119's opening two verses deem those blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) "whose way is blameless, who walk in the law (i.e., the teaching) of the LORD," and "who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart." In saying that, they speak to those described in the acrostic psalms of Book One. They are the ones who "take refuge in him."[230] His righteousness, so evident in the words that follow, becomes their righteousness. He is their righteousness. That is the exchange that the introductory psalm(s) intimated. That is why his prayer is that he not fail, even though surrounded by the wicked. For their defeat at His hands will give the victory to those who trust in Him.

Psalm 119 is surely the most noticeable in the Psalter, both for its sheer size and also its form, an eightfold and perfect acrostic. It is the consensus of most scholars that biblical acrostics are not acrostics in the proper sense. That is to say, their initial letters do not, as acrostics[231] found in other languages and cultures, spell out any further word or message. However, if one accepts the second of the purposes Brug cites, "Often acrostics are intended *to convey an impression of comprehensiveness*,"[232] that is not precisely true. Psalm 119's eightfold praise of the perfection of the word of God, repeated twenty two times, once for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, conveys not only an impression of comprehensiveness, but a true and perfect comprehension of the content of that very word.[233]

The two acrostics that precede Psalm 119, Psalms 111 and 112, tick off, as it were, respective alphabetic laundry lists of all which God has promised His people and then of the thoughts, words, and deeds of the One who will keep those promises to His people. Their A to Z form bespeaks comprehensiveness. It is very possible that the attributive title of God the Father in Revelation 1:8 and 21:6, and thereafter of the exalted Christ in Revelation 22:13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," is traceable to this very idea.

The question then becomes one of form concerning Psalm 119's *ogdoades* or octaves. Why eight verses per letter? David Scaer's observation that "Matthew *values numbers*,"[234] though made in regard to the matter of the five sermons of Jesus and their correlation with the five

[230] Psalm 34:23, 37:40.

[231] Whether truly acrostics or telestichs, that is, those whose final letters are ordered.

[232] Brug, "Near Eastern Acrostics and Biblical Acrostics," 4.

[233] "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39).

[234] See above, note 104.

books of Moses, may provide a hint to the answer. The reaction of those who heard the first of Jesus' five sermons, the Sermon on the Mount, as also noted above,[235] "were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."[236] Part of their reaction may have come from their recognition—the faithful understand!—of Jesus' grasp of the Christological nature of the psalms as opposed to that of their teachers, the scribes, elders, and priests, whose understanding of their own Scriptures was already decidedly non-messianic.

The Beatitudes, with which the sermon begins, are an eightfold presentation of the alien righteousness the Messiah was to earn for, and bring to, the people of God. The eighth and final Beatitude, and Jesus' concluding statement make this clear, "Blessed are those who are persecuted *for righteousness' sake*, for *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely *on my account*. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted *the prophets who were before you*."[237]

The number eight is not without Messianic significance in the Old Testament. It is in fact directly connected to the promise of salvation God made to Abram and all his offspring, a promise grounded in the One who was to come.[238] The Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, strictly enjoined upon Abram to be administered on the eighth day of a child's life, was a sign pointing inexorably to the necessity of the incarnation of the Son. That Psalm 119 is not only an acrostic, but a grand acrostic cast in eightfold segments, is significant. This is the feature distinguishing it from all other psalms. It encloses all that is said by the young man about the perfection, beauty, and certainty of the word of God, the Word made flesh.[239] It points to the human nature of the One who will not be swayed from fulfilling the will of His Father, the One who will Himself be the festal sacrifice, the perfect Lamb who will be slain to atone for the sins of the world.[240]

"And at the end of *eight* days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb."[241]

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235 See above, note 113.
236 Matthew 7:28–29.
237 Matthew 5:10–12.
238 Genesis 17:9–14.
239 John 1:14.
240 John 1:29.
241 Luke 2:21.

The final acrostic of Book Five and of the Psalter as a whole is, as noted above, one that describes the kingdom of Psalm 2's king. This confession comes from the mouth of King David himself. The psalm is bracketed before and after with the declaration, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are the people whose God is the LORD,"[242] and, "Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God."[243] David's voice would become the confession of faithful Israel.

A Threefold Cord is Not Quickly Broken: Conclusion

That statement in Ecclesiastes is immediately followed by a verse that does, in its own way, sagely answer the admonition of the introductory psalms: "Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are all who take refuge in him."[244] For Solomon continues, "Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice."[245]

Tracing the three cords of the King, the blessed One and ones, and the acrostic psalms began as a result of realizing that Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 are together the introduction to the whole of the Book of Psalms. Furthermore, the two psalms are clearly Messianic in nature and therefore point the speaker and hearer of the psalms to that which truly binds them together and gives them form. The psalms are to be understood as Messianic in their entirety.

To say that there are three such cords, or threads, is not to say that there are not more such threads. Undoubtedly that is so, as others will discover. But to say there are three such, and trace them from beginning to end, is to assert that the Book of Psalms is not simply an atomistic conglomeration of psalms defined and definable on their own terms and not in light of each other and the order in which they are placed in the Psalter.

By analogy one could say that our own synod's *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* is a collection of hymns drawn from many different tongues over the course of many centuries. They are almost always used according to the judgment, need, and taste of the pastor, congregation, chaplain, school, or family, who employs them, singly or in connection with

242 Psalm 144:15.

243 Psalm 146:5.

244 Psalm 2:10–12.

245 Ecclesiastes 4:13.

others, even as were and are the psalms. But those many hymns were not put into the *Hymnary* at random. There is a discernable form to their arrangement and order, a unity of purpose, and an editorial hand at work. Their form and unity are Christological, as is the form and unity of the Book of Psalms.

This approach to the Christological nature of the psalms has neither dealt with nor accounted for each psalm and its positioning in relation to others. It is by no means certain that that is possible. But it is the conclusion of the essayist that the Five Books of Psalms have Christological form and unity. Their order is not by chance. Their order is one that progresses toward an ever more full revelation of the Messiah who was to come and of the nature of His kingdom.

It is the hope of the essayist that this will in some small way increase the use of, interest in, appreciation for, and understanding of, the Book of Psalms, the hymnbook of Israel, whose substance and center is Christ. LSQ

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Te Deum Laudamus: History and Use

James A. Krikava
Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church
Brewster, Massachusetts

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I HAVE MADE FUN OF Lutherans for years—who wouldn't, if you lived in Minnesota? But I have also sung with Lutherans and that is one of the main joys of life, along with hot baths and fresh sweet corn.

We make fun of Lutherans for their blandness, their excessive calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed and also for their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like them. If you ask an audience in New York City, a relatively Lutheranless place, to sing along on the chorus of Michael Row the Boat Ashore, they will look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Lutherans they'll smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! And down the road! Lutherans are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony.… We're too modest to be soloists, too worldly to sing in unison.… I once sang the bass line of Children of the Heavenly Father in a room with about three thousand Lutherans in it; and when we finished, we all had tears in our eyes, partly from the promise that God will not forsake us, partly from the proximity of all those lovely voices. By our joining in harmony, we somehow promise that we will not forsake each other. I do believe this: People, these Lutherans, who love to sing in four-part harmony are the sort of people you could call up when you're in deep

distress. If you're dying, they'll comfort you. If you're lonely, they'll talk to you. And if you're hungry, they'll give you tuna salad![1]

Garrison Keillor is not the first to poke fun of Lutherans. We laugh along with him because of his keen ability to find just those things about us that deserve a good ribbing. The "Keillors" of the past, however, were not so gentle with their parodies. If the sentimental folk tunes of 19th-century hymnody, with their circling of V^7 chords sliding into home plate, are fodder for modern parodies of Lutheranism, it is only because they are so popular.[2] In Luther's day, it was the *Te Deum Laudamus* that was so beloved that it became the target of the satirist. An Italian parody of the first lines of the *Te Deum* written against Luther demonstrates this (The bite is in the text, the humor in the clever Latin parallels):[3]

Standard Latin Text	**Parody Text**	**Translated Parody Text**
Te Deum laudamus:	Te Lutherum damnamus;	We curse you, O Luther,
Te Dominum confitemur.	Te haereticum confitemur.	We acknowledge you a heretic.
Te aeternum Patrem	Te errorum patrem	As the Father of error,
omnis terra veneratur.	omnis terra detestur.	the whole world detests you.
Tibi omnes angeli;	Tibi omnes angeli,	All the angels,
Tibi coeli et universae potestates;	Tibi justi et universae religiones:	All just men, all religions,
Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim	Tibi clerici et laici	clergy and laity alike,
incessabili voce proclamant:	detestabili voce proclamant:	all proclaim in a voice of execration:

[1] Garrison Keillor, *Singing with the Lutherans,* <http://www.holytrinitynewrochelle.org/yourti95941.html>.

[2] "Children of the Heavenly Father" ends with such a beloved sliding chord progression ($I – V^7/ii – ii^{4–3} – V^7 – I$) that it almost makes a person want to go to the barbershop.

[3] Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History of Documents* (New York: Schirmer Books, 2007), 89–90.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,	Dirus, Dirus, Dirus,	"Horrid, horrid, horrid
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.	Blasphemus in Deum Sabaoth!	blasphemer against the Lord of Hosts!
Pleni sunt caeli et terra	Pleni sunt caeli et terra	Heaven and earth are filled
majestatis gloriae tuae.	Horrendae miseriae tuae.	With your horrible dirty work!"
Te gloriosus	Te adulterinus	The adulterous
apostolorum chorus,	apostatarum chorus,	choir of apostates,
Te prophetarum	Te hypocritum	the damned number
laudabilis numerus,	damnabilis numerus,	of hypocrites,
Te Martyrum candidatus	Te excommunica-torum male	the accursed army of the anathematized
laudat exercitus.	dictus laudat exer-citus.	sing your praises.

Introduction

Cantors, church organists, and choir directors affectionately refer to the *Te Deum* as the "TeDium," partly because it is long by modern standards (yet in the past it was beloved for its brevity and succinctness with only ca. 150 words in Latin and ca. 250 words in English), partly because it is written in rhythmic prose (versus metric poetry) which is harder to feel, partly because it is a chant, which to many makes it seem like it shouldn't be sung in the first place, and partly because some simply will not be out-punned by ELS president, John Moldstad.

But the *Te Deum Laudamus* is anything but tedious. Its ancient origins are shrouded in the same mystery as the Apostles' Creed. Much ink has been spilled attempting to determine its age and authorship. Textual observations of ancient manuscripts of the *Te Deum* give rise to debate over its original intended meaning. Subtle and not so subtle differences in interpretation are reflected in how the *Te Deum* has been translated into other languages.

Its use in the Church through the ages has had a broad application. The musical tones used to carry its message have sadly become like a dead language, or at least a foreign one, to modern Christians, for whom music began during the Enlightenment and reached its climax in Romanticism … or worse. A revival of pre-Enlightenment music is

not only important for the sake of its own beauty, but since this was the music of Luther and the Reformation, understanding it gives insight into how and why Luther and his musician friends and colleagues decided upon the musical settings for various texts, including the *Te Deum*. But one thing is certain: The *Te Deum* is universally one of the most beloved songs of the Church of all ages. It is one of a select few hymns worthy of special attention by the Church. It deserves to be learned and sung by young and old alike, for it sets the standard of how the Church from her ancient beginnings has understood the Apostle's imperative: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16; NKJV).

Date, Authorship, and Text

Martin Luther was not a big fan of legends. He frequently criticized the popular preaching of his day for letting the Gospel become silenced by them. Already in his Lectures on Romans (1515) he said, "[T]his is what unlearned preachers are concerned about as they mislead the common people. They preach or read about the great works in the legends of the saints and inculcate and impress on them only these ideas. And when the unlearned people hear that such works are the real thing, they immediately strive to imitate them to the neglect of everything else…."[4] In his "Treatise on Good Works" (1520) he laments that the preachers themselves did not know the Gospel: "That is why sermons ramble off into good-for-nothing fables, and thus Christ is forgotten. We are then in the position of the man in 2 Kings 7[:19]: we see our riches but do not enjoy them.… And so we see countless numbers of masses, and yet we do not know whether the mass is a testament, or whether it is this thing or that thing, just as if it were any other ordinary good work in itself."[5] By the time he wrote his evangelical reforms of the liturgy (1523) he again rehearses the abuse of the mass that "when God's Word had been silenced such a host of un-Christian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons were introduced that it is horrible to see.…such divine service was performed as a work whereby God's grace and salvation might be won. As a result, faith disappeared.…"[6]

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[4] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, volume 25 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 409.

[5] Luther, LW 44:57.

[6] Luther, LW 53:11.

When it came to the *Te Deum*, however, Luther was a bit more gracious. The *Te Deum* was very popular in the middle ages, so Luther's love of the great hymn is no surprise. He numbered it with the three ecumenical creeds as a classic confession of the Christian faith.[7] In the introduction to a work entitled, *The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith,*[8] he not only calls the *Te Deum* the third symbol, only after the Apostles' and Athanasian creeds, but references the legend of the authorship of the *Te Deum* in a gentle way: "The third symbol is said to be of SS. Augustine and Ambrose, and is supposed to have been sung at the baptism of St. Augustine. Whether that is true or not—and *it does no harm whether one believes it or not*—it is nevertheless a fine symbol or creed (whoever the author) composed in the form of a chant, not only for the purpose of confessing the true faith, but also for praising and thanking God."[9] Luther seems to view this legend as innocent enough—no harm, no foul—similar to the way he could be critical of allegorizing and yet turn around and practice the method himself so long as it preached Christ and did not contradict Scripture.[10]

The traditional Ambrosian authorship of the *Te Deum* can be traced back as far as A.D. 856 in a dissertation of Hincmar of Rheims in which he refers to it, saying that St. Ambrose and St. Augustine composed it on the eventful day of the latter's baptism in A.D. 387. It was such a lovely story that it caught on and more than a few manuscripts, breviaries, and psalters from that time on include titles such as *Hymnus Ambrosianus*, *Hymnus Augustini*, *Hymnus sanctorum doctorum Ambrosii et Augustini*, etc.[11]

Against the Ambrosian authorship, however, there are numerous arguments. First, the writing style of the *Te Deum*, referred to as poetic or rhythmic prose, fits a time frame earlier than the 4th century. The

[7] Luther, LW 53:199.

[8] This work actually includes four creeds, including the Nicene Creed, which Luther likens to the Athanasian Creed and only includes his German translation of it with a few marginal notes, almost like an afterthought since "it is sung in the mass every Sunday" (LW 34:228).

[9] Luther, LW 34:202 (emphasis mine).

[10] Cf. Daniel Metzger, "*Christ in the Psalms: A Consideration of Luther's Preface of Jesus Christ,*" (2008) <http://logia.org/blogia/?p=29>. Here Luther is shown to have embraced the "multiple-sense approach to the text" of antiquity, with the proviso: "In the Scriptures … no allegory, tropology, or anagogy is valid unless the same truth is expressly stated historically elsewhere. Otherwise Scripture would become a mockery. But one *must indeed* take in an allegorical sense what is elsewhere stated historically" (LW 10:4, emphasis mine).

[11] John Julian, ed., *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), 1122.

hymnology of the 4th century was fashioned in regular metric verse. Ambrose himself is credited for introducing and popularizing this "new" style of hymn writing. The nineteen other hymns known to be by Ambrose are written in classical metered poetry.[12] While this cannot completely rule out the Ambrosian authorship, one may question the probability that only one hymn of twenty is written in a decidedly different style from the rest.

Second, a number of other attributions are given in the manuscript evidence, such as *Hymnus quem S. Hilarius primus composuit* (8th or 9th cent. MS). Hilary of Poitiers, ca. A.D. 300–c.368, died before the baptism of St. Augustine, but like Ambrose, his known hymns, though fewer, are also written in classical meters.[13] If, however, St. Hilary had been the author, it would still have been feasible for the hymn to be sung for the baptism of St. Augustine, and at least the pious sentiment of the legend might live on, though in a modified form. Other less likely attributions are *Hymnus S. Sisebuti* (11th century breviary; Sisebutus, a Benedictine abbot, died 1082), and *Hymnus S. Abundii* (12th century breviary; Abundius, Bp. of Como, N. Italy, died 469).[14]

A third thread in the manuscript evidence gives the attribution, *Ymnus sancti Viceti epis[copi] diebus dominicis ad matutinis* (10th or 11th cent. MS). From other manuscripts of this type it is evident that the "*V*" in "*Viceti*" is a corrupted "*N*" and refers to a certain Nicetus or Nicetius (also Nicetas and Niceta). But there are four by this name that could be meant: Nicetus of Vienna (c. 379), of Trier (527–566), of Aquilleia (died 485), and of Remesiana (ca. 340–414). By the middle of the 16th century this tradition was so strongly asserted that in the *Psalterium Davidicum ad usum ecclesie Sarisburiennis* (1555) a rubric for the *Te Deum* says, *"Canticum beati Niceti,"* with a note stating that the traditional account respecting St. Augustine's baptism is untrue.[15] While this was written after Luther's death, one can assume that the notion had been around for a while and could account for Luther's skepticism over the Ambrosian authorship.

By the end of the 19th century Dom G. Morin put forward Nicetas of Remesiana for the honor of authorship. The present writer (of Slavic descent) is partial to this theory and ventures that he received the assignment because of it. Saint Nicetas (ca. 335–414) was Bishop

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[12] F. A. March, *Latin Hymns, with English Notes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875), 21–44.

[13] Ibid., 1–5.

[14] Julian, 1122–1123.

[15] Ibid., 1122.

of Remesiana, modern day Bela Palanka in southeast Serbia, then the Roman province of Dacia Mediterranea.[16] Some speculate that he was a Dacian Slav,[17] no doubt especially the proud citizens of modern day Bela Palanka, who, like many Slavic people to this day, hold a common belief that superior musical instincts are in their gene pool.[18]

Ethnic considerations aside, however, a case can be made for the Nicetas authorship of the *Te Deum.* Prof. Carl P. E. Springer briefly summarizes the case:

> In 1894 Dom Germain Morin proposed the idea that it was Nicetas, bishop of Remesiana…in the fourth century, who had composed the Te Deum. Nicetas was a popular name among Christians in the fourth century…but Nicetas of Remesiana… seemed the logical choice to Morin, because he was known to have concerned himself with the composition of psalms and hymns. Paulinus of Nola admired Nicetas's talent as a hymn writer, wanted him to visit the church of St. Felix [near Naples, Italy] "with psalm-singing and hymns," and imagined Nicetas teaching the sailors on board the ship that would carry him over the Adriatic to sing hymns in chorus.[19]

Morin's discovery was something of a sensation, at least among the noble army of scholars and the goodly fellowship of the philologists of the 19th century. At long last the mystery of the *Te Deum's* authorship seemed to be solved. One of the more enthusiastic supporters of Morin's findings was the English Scholar Andrew Ewbank Burns, whose chapter on the *Te Deum* exudes with near British giddiness (oxymoron?) over the research.[20]

Slavic nationalism satisfied, one would like nothing more than to conclude this section with the Nicetas authorship and leave it at that. Nicetas of Remesiana leaves us with a 4th-century conclusion. Again, it possibly could have been sung at St. Augustine's baptism. We have no

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16 "Nicetas of Remesiana," accessed July 1, 2012, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicetas_of_Remesiana>.

17 Stefan Stanchu, *"The Romanian People—Continuer of the European Neolithic Civilization,"* accessed June 15, 2012, <http://www.bvau.ro/docs/doc_eng.htm>.

18 E.g., among the Czechs there is a proverb, "*Co Čech, to muzikant*" (trans.: If you are Czech, you are a musician.)

19 Carl P. E. Springer, "Reflections on Lutheran Worship, Classics, and the Te Deum," *Logia* V., no. 4 (1996): 34.

20 A. E. Burn, *An Introduction to the Creeds and the Te Deum* (London: Methuen, 1899), 257–259.

other known extant hymns of this Nicetas to argue against his writing in rhythmic prose. Living in the Dacian hinterland, he might have been more apt to hold on to the older style of chant even as those closer to Rome were moving toward the new metric poetry. However, as often happens in textual criticism, even the most salutary conclusions can be undone. Springer notes:

> In 1958, however, Ernst Kähler published a study of the Te Deum that essentially demolished the work of Burn, who, it turned out, had been a little overzealous in his quest to find verbal parallels between works we are certain that Nicetas of Remesiana wrote and the Te Deum. Kähler examined (and rejected) twenty-one such "parallels" and stated in his concluding remarks with characteristic emphasis: "From the texts at any rate it cannot be demonstrated that Nicetas of Remesiana had anything at all to do with the Te Deum." Furthermore: "It is no more possible to make the case that Nicetas of Remesiana was the author or editor of the Te Deum than it is for any of the other names that have been connected with the Te Deum." Kähler's caveat is still generally accepted and, indeed, there has been little substantive discussion of the authorship question since the late 1950s and early 1960s. In many of the hymnals in which the Te Deum is included today, Nicetas is listed as the author, but a question mark follows his name.[21]

While Springer agrees with the twentieth century undoing of Morin's work, much to the chagrin of Slavophiles the world over, he also finds a flaw in Kähler's critique of the Nicetas conjecture. Kähler fails to account for how so many manuscripts came to include the Nicetas attribution in the first place. The legend of Ambrose and Augustine makes sense since both of these figures play such important roles in the Church's hymnody (Ambrose) and theology (Augustine). Who better to ascribe such a universally known hymn than to them? For Springer, "It is far more difficult to explain the appearance of the name of Nicetas in the manuscript tradition. Although Nicetas of Remesiana was a contemporary of Ambrose and Augustine, he was not so famous.… He is supposed to have written hymns, but they do not survive, and his other works…were not all that influential."[22] Springer, therefore, brings his own speculations into the discussion:

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[21] Springer, 35.

[22] Ibid.

One possible explanation for the presence of the problematic word *Nicetas* in some of the manuscripts of the Te Deum, which Kähler did not consider, is that it may not refer to a man of that name, but is rather an infelicitous transliteration of the familiar Greek word νικητής, meaning "victor." The word in its original form would not, therefore, have designated the author of the poem, but rather its dedicatee, most likely in the dative case, τῷ νικητῇ ("to the victor"). The appearance of Nicetas as a proper name in the tenth-century manuscripts could, then, be the result of a translator's failure to understand that the word he saw before him was a common noun (as opposed to a person's name) in Greek. If the first part of the Te Deum originally existed in Greek, as some scholars have suggested (on the basis of its textual connection with the *Gloria*), this would make especially good sense [*viz* Klaus Gamber, "Das *Te Deum* und sein Autor," *Revue Benedictine* 74 (1964)]. We do have a number of manuscripts (some as early as the ninth or tenth centuries) that contain the first twelve verses in Greek.…

If the Te Deum was originally dedicated to a victor whose name was not explicitly mentioned, as suggested above, who is a more likely candidate than the Savior? Our Lord is often assigned this epithet in early Christian literature.… Christ is also portrayed as a victor in early Christian art…where he is shown with a crown on his head. Already in the New Testament, the verb νικᾶν is applied to Christ, as in John 16:33 ["In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome (νενίκηκα, 1st p. sing. perf. act. ind.) the world."].… Such a dedication would certainly help to clarify the appositional accusative in the first line. The word *Deum* in *Te Deum Laudamus* is not, according to such a reading, a reference to the Triune God, or to God the Father, but specifically to Christ, who is (perhaps polemically) declared to be God: "We praise you who are God." We know from a letter that Pliny wrote to Trajan (x. 96) that hymns were addressed "to Christ as God" in the early second century. It was this bold confession that caused problems for the early Christians, both with their Jewish neighbors and the Roman authorities.[23]

[23] Ibid., 35, 39.

We will probably never know with certainty who composed the great *Te Deum*, if indeed it even was the work of one hand. The attribution "anonymous" is somewhat unsatisfying. But as we begin to look at the text, it becomes evident that not only the form but also portions of text can be traced back before the 4th-century time of Ambrose and Augustine. If anything, in the quest for authorship of the *Te Deum*, the results seem to keep pushing the date backward rather than forward. Whatever the authorship, "that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:17; NKJV) can be found in the *Te Deum* in many ancient sources. Determining which came first—the chicken or the egg—finally becomes less important than the content. Perhaps Luther's words are still the best: "Whether [the Ambrosian/Augustinian legend] is true or not—and it does no harm whether one believes it or not—it is nevertheless a fine symbol or creed (whoever the author) composed in the form of a chant, not only for the purpose of confessing the true faith, but also for praising and thanking God."[24]

Sources and Textual Considerations

Part I

As noted, the *Te Deum* is found in a large number of manuscripts. The earliest known are a Vatican Psalter (Cod. Vatic. Alex. xi) of the seventh century or earlier (called the Milan Version) and the *Bangor Antiphonary*, dated 680–691 (called the Irish Version). A third form is from the *Bamberg Antiphonary*, copied from a manuscript written in 909 (called the Ordinary Version of the Hymn), but considered to be the most ancient tradition of the Latin text.[25] This is the form of the text used by Luther in his prose translation of the *Te Deum*.[26] While unable to access the actual text of the *Te Deum* from the Bamberg Hymnary, from which Luther would have translated directly if not from memory, the *Weimar Ausgabe* editors on Luther's strophic *Te Deum* hymn, *Herr Gott dich loben wir* (WA 35:250) include a Latin text of the *Te Deum*, which appears consistent with the key variations between the "Ordinary Version" and the "Milan" and "Irish" versions.

[24] Luther, LW 34:202.

[25] Julian, 1120–1121ff.

[26] According to Dr. Christopher Boyd Brown, professor of Church History at Boston University, Luther would have had access to the *Breviarium Bambergense* of 1501 and used the Bamberg Hymnary for his prose translation of the *Te Deum*. Cf. <http://www.zvdd.de/dms/load/met/?PPN=urn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Abvb%3A12-bsb00007682-3> for the Breviary online.

Before looking at some of this, there is also a fourth form of the text called the Greek Version, consisting of an original Greek text of the *Te Deum* transliterated into Latin letters (Latin transliteration: *Se theon enumen se kyrion exomologumen,* reconstructed Greek text: Σὲ θεὸν αἰνοῦμεν σὲ κύριον ἐξομολογοῦμεν) preserved in four manuscripts.[27] The text, however, drops off after the tenth verse, "the holy Church throughout all the world does acknowledge You."[28] The rest is missing, making one wonder if this beginning section existed at one time as an original independent form.[29]

Much can be gleaned from these manuscript threads. While a thorough analysis of the text of the *Te Deum* does not fall under the purview of an historical essay, a number of textual matters are of historical interest. First, the arrangement of the *Te Deum* is basically in three parts (Cf. Table 1). The existence of the truncated Greek version leads one to the possibility that the hymn as we know it is the product of a development. The first part would then represent the oldest formulation, from vss. 1–10, with vss. 11–13 probably being added later as a Trinitarian doxology, which "the holy Church throughout all the world acknowledges (*confitetur*)." If this Trinitarian doxology was added later, this could give more weight to the original text being a hymn to Christ, the Victor, with *Te Deum Laudamus* having the sense, "You, Christ, we praise as God." In that case, "the Father everlasting" of vs. 2 would have to be understood in the sense of Isaiah 9:6, "And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, *Everlasting Father*, Prince of Peace" (NKJV). If this is the understanding, it in no way nullifies the Trinitarian and creedal flavor of the hymn associated with it. But it does

[27] Julian, 1120–21, 1126.

[28] Some manuscripts include a transliteration of the appositional phrase following "The holy Church throughout all the world does acknowledge You," namely, "The Father of an infinite majesty; Your adorable true and only Son; [also the Holy Spirit, the Comforter]." But the problems with these verses make their authenticity doubtful: The transliteration of "infinite" is *emmeso,* which in Greek would probably be ἐν μέσῳ (cf. Arndt–Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], 254), giving no sense to "majesty" (the transliterator probably slipped back into Latin and inadvertently Hellenized the familiar Latin text which has *immensae* for "infinite"). The word for "true" is mutilated; "Son" is given in an abbreviated form; "only" gives a transliteration of *monogeni,* from μονογενῆ (only-begotten) from usage of a later tradition. *Unicum,* as in "only Son" is probably the older and original reading drawn from the same language in the Apostles' Creed. *Unigenitum,* found in the Irish Version probably made its way into the text later. And the Holy Spirit is left out completely.

[29] The *Te Deum* parody noted in the prologue above also ends in the same place, at least marking a division in the hymn.

bring out more emphatically what is at stake for the Christian Church in her unique confession of God, where Christ, the God-Man is the center, as Luther brings out so well in various contexts. For example, commenting on John 2:21 ("[Jesus] was speaking of the temple of His body"), he writes,

> For His body was the true temple where God would henceforth be and reside…that is, to the humanity of Christ, assumed from the Virgin Mary. This same body was God's temple, His castle and palace, His royal hall. This must be carefully noted. Until now God had restricted His presence to the temple in Jerusalem.… But today, in the New Testament, God has established another temple for His residence: the precious humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. There, and nowhere else, God wants to be found.… Thus *all our hearts and eyes should be directed toward Christ, whom alone we adore*, who sits at the right hand of God in heaven, as we confess in our Christian Creed.… And whoever wants to serve, find, and surely meet God, must come to Christ, the true spiritual temple, fall down before Him, *worship Him, and believe in Him*.[30]

Further on in these sermons, he adds, "Hence we cannot fail to find God in the Person of Christ. On the other hand, we can never find a God for our comfort and salvation outside Christ."[31] In a Christmas sermon of 1527, Luther wrote,

> Reason and will would ascend and seek above, but if you will have joy, bend yourself down to this place. There you will find that boy given for you Who is your Creator, lying in a manger.… Take Him away and you face the Majesty which terrifies. *I know of no God but this One in the manger*. Do not let yourself be turned away from this humanity. What wonderful words! He is not only a man and a servant, but that person lying in the manger is both man and God essentially, not separated one from the other, but as born of a virgin. If you separate them, the joy is gone. O You boy, lying in the manger, You are truly the God who has created me, and You will not be wrathful with

[30] Luther, LW 22:248–249 (emphasis mine).
[31] Luther, LW 24:99.

> me because You come to me in this loving way—a more loving way cannot be imagined.[32]

Luther's most famous words on the matter, since they are incorporated into the Formula of Concord as part of the Lutheran confession, come from his *Great Confession Concerning the Holy Supper*, where he takes on the inevitable conclusion of Zwingli's denial of Christ's bodily presence in the sacramental elements:

> Here you must take your stand and say that wherever Christ is according to his deity, he is there as a natural divine person and is also naturally and personally there, as his conception in his mother's womb proves conclusively.… Wherever this person is, it is the single, indivisible person, and if you can say, "Here is God," then you must also say, "Christ the man is present too." And if you could show me one place where God is and not the man, then the person is already divided and I could at once say truthfully, "Here is God who is not man and has never become man." But no God like that for me!… he would remain a poor Christ for me if he were present only at one single place as a divine and human person, and if at all other places he would have to be nothing more than a mere isolated God and a divine person without the humanity. No, comrade, wherever you put God down for me, you must also put the humanity down for me. They simply will not let themselves be separated and divided from each other. He has become one person and never separates the assumed humanity from himself.[33]

Luther's commentary on the *Te Deum* as a Creed, therefore, also sets forth this Christological emphasis. In fact, the order in which he discusses the articles of the Creed seems to indicate an understanding of the *Te Deum* as a hymn to Christ, as he takes up the second article first:

> I have perceived and noted in all histories of all of Christendom that all those who have correctly had and kept the chief article of Jesus Christ have remained safe and secure in the right Christian faith. Although they may have sinned or erred in other matters, they have nevertheless been preserved at the last.

[32] Norman Nagel, *The Seven-Headed Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 48 (emphasis mine).

[33] T. G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press, 1959), 607–608.

> For whoever stands correctly and firmly in the belief that Jesus Christ is true God and man, that he died and has risen again for us, such a person has all other articles added to him and they firmly stand by him.[34]

For Luther the most threatening errors are the Christological ones. "Thus the devil has work to do and attacks Christ in three lines of battle. One will not let him be God (like the Arians), another will not let him be man (like the Manichaeans), and the third [who are the latest, greatest saints of the papacy] will not let him do what he has done."[35] Only after a thorough discussion of the person and work of Christ, including a five-page rant against Rome as the third line of battle, does he then finally take up the first part of the Creed where St. Athanasius distinguishes the three persons in the one God. As if to say: The Trisagion of the *Te Deum* cannot be meaningfully discussed without first understanding Christ to whom the hymn is addressed.

As was noted, it is commonly held that one probable source of the *Te Deum* is the *Gloria in Excelsis* or Angelic Hymn (*hymnus angelicus*), which gets its name from the opening lines from Luke 2:14. (Cf. *The Lutheran Hymnal* [TLH] pp. 17–19; *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* [ELH] pp. 64–66). From references to it in ancient writings, some date it as early as the second century, or even the first.[36] The earliest Greek manuscript of the *Gloria* is the famous *Codex Alexandrinus* of the fifth century, which corresponds with the English version we are accustomed to from *The Book of Common Prayer*, taken over in TLH pp. 17–19 and ELH pp. 64–66.

The connection with the *Te Deum* is both formal and specific. Formally, like the *Te Deum,* it is an example of rhythmic prose, which is consistent with an early date. It also follows a three-part structure, perhaps more like the Apostles' Creed or even like the first ten to thirteen verses of the *Te Deum*: A general hymn of praise to God the Father, God the Son, with a brief "second article," and the typical early creedal acknowledgment of God the Holy Spirit without comment.

Specifically, we find common language usage between the Latin renditions of the *Gloria* and the *Te Deum.* For example, the very first line of the Angelic Hymn, sung after the Luke 2:14 quotation, is *Laudamus te,* which matches the opening line of the *Te Deum*: *Te Deum Laudamus.*

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[34] Luther, LW 34:207.

[35] Luther, LW 34:209–210.

[36] "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," last modified September 16, 2012 <http://oce.catholic.com/index.php?title= Gloria_in_Excelsis_Deo>.

In the Irish Version of the *Te Deum* there is also found a *capitellum,* or opening *antiphon* to be sung just before and with the *Te Deum.* It is *laudate pueri Dominum laudate nomen Domini,* the Latin Vulgate's translation of Psalm 113:1, which follows the Septuagint, Αἰνεῖτε, παῖδες, κύριον, αἰνεῖτε τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου (Praise the Lord, O you sons, praise the name of the Lord). Such *capitella* were commonly assigned to other texts. This one is also assigned to another hymn, which immediately follows the *Gloria* in the Apostolic Constitutions, a manual of guidance for the clergy in matters of discipline, worship, and doctrine (ca. 375). This hymn itself contains Trinitarian language similar to the *Te Deum's* doxology following the first part (vss. 1–10), and, together with its *capitella* found in the Irish Version, may account for the insertion of "The Father of an infinite majesty; Your adorable true and only Son; also the Holy Spirit, the Comforter" (vss. 10–13) at the end of the first part. It might also suggest that the proposed 4th -century composition of the *Te Deum* lies in the second part (vss 14–21), the first part (vss 1–10) representing the oldest version, with a coda being added by the 4th century, the Trinitarian doxology, and followed by a confession of the incarnation, person, and work of Christ.

This might again give some credence to names like SS. Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and maybe even Nicetas of Remesiana, coming to be attached to the great hymn. As Burn points out in his enthusiasm for the Nicetas conjecture: "There seems to be no incongruity in the suggestion that [Nicetas] may have taken [the *Gloria*] as the model of his hymn. The Angel's Hymn of the New Testament, which led the author of the *Gloria* to his triumphant 'We praise Thee,' may have led Niceta to the thought of the Angel's Hymn of the Old Testament, the *Sanctus* of the Liturgy"[37] (vs. 3: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Your glory.") This, of course, could apply to the other 4th century possible authors as well.

There is, however, a difference between the word order of the *Te Deum Laudamus* and the *Laudamus te* of the Angelic Hymn, which is even more noticeable given the *capitellum, Laudate pueri Dominum laudate nomen Domini,* heading the *Te Deum* in the Irish Version. As a response to the psalm verse, one might expect the *Te Deum* to begin like the *Gloria* with *Laudamus te.* But instead, the word order of subject and verb is reversed. Springer takes note of this construction:

[37] Burn, 269.

> The most striking word in the entire Te Deum is probably the first in the Latin original: *Te* ("you"). One of the great virtues of the Latin language is its flexible word order. It is possible to take the most important word in a sentence, even though it is the object of the verb, as it is in the phrase *Te Deum Laudamus,* and to put it first—for emphasis. The emphasis in the Te Deum is on the one praised ("you") rather than the ones ("we") doing the praising. The first person plural ("we") is not expressed in a pronoun form at all, but is represented in the last syllable (*-mus*) in the verse, meaning that it is unemphatic. The contrast with much of contemporary Christian worship in this regard is striking. One has only to compare some typical first lines of a few popular hymns today: "I bless you," "I only want to love you," "I'll seek after you," "I have found," "I just want to praise," and so on.… Lutheran worship is not devoid of feeling or emotion, but such subjective experiences are not the point of worship.… Hymns should be objective, not subjective.[38]

For English speakers, the manipulating of word order feels unnatural and often unpoetic. To sing, "You as God, praise we" just doesn't roll off the tongue, and because it sounds odd, the emphasis on "You" is lost as the native English speaker rearranges the words in his mind by feeling "we" at the beginning anyway, giving it even more emphasis in its "unemphatic" position. In short, we are stuck with it: "We praise You, O God." But other languages, especially the highly inflected ones, are not nearly so dependent on word order for a feeling of correctness or beauty of speech (e.g. Greek, Czech!, etc.), which allow the listener to feel the emphasis without being distracted by the unusual order.

Another textual point of interest in the *Te Deum*, perhaps the most striking in terms of lending support for a pre-4th century date, is found in "*de mortalitate*" (On the Mortality), written by St. Cyprian of Carthage in A.D. 252 during a plague lasting from A.D. 250–270. He concludes his treatise with words of comfort to the dying:

> We should consider, dearly beloved brethren—we should ever and anon reflect that we have renounced the world, and are in the meantime living here as guests and strangers. Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, which snatches us hence, and sets us free from the snares of the world, and restores us to paradise and the kingdom.… There

38 Springer, 37.

> *the glorious company of the apostles*—there *the host of the rejoicing prophets*—there *the innumerable multitude of martyrs*, crowned for the victory of their struggle and passion—there the triumphant virgins, who subdued the lust of the flesh and of the body by the strength of their continency—there are merciful men rewarded.…[39]

There is an obvious similarity between this and verses 7–9 of the *Te Deum*: "The glorious company of the apostles praise You. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise You. The noble army of martyrs praise You."[40] The similarities are so close that it is difficult to imagine that there is no connection. The question becomes, which came first—the *Te Deum* or the text of St. Cyprian? It could be argued that at least the first part of the *Te Deum* already existed and was well known enough that St. Cyprian borrowed it, similar to the way we today sometimes end sermons with a hymn verse that captures the point we want to make in a succinct and memorable way. St. Cyprian's words are also more elaborate than the verse from the *Te Deum,* which include the additional group of "triumphant virgins," which would more arguably be St. Cyprian's elaboration on already existing material than the reverse. If the author of the *Te Deum* copied St. Cyprian, why would the good virgins be left out?

Other source material proposed to have influenced the text of the *Te Deum* include the so-called Gallican and Gothic Missals, the Gallican Sacramentary, and the Preface of the Liturgy of St. James, from which parallel terminology can be gleaned. The problem with these sources is that in them are found only common vocabulary used in other contexts. Because these manuscripts are not so ancient, it is impossible to make any strong arguments whether their non-extant originals had the same material or whether it was added over time.

Part II

The second part of the *Te Deum*, vss. 14–21, deals with the incarnation, person, and work of Christ. The outline of the Apostles' Creed

[39] Phillip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 5, accessed May 2012, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iv.v.vii.html#fna_iv.v.vii–p79.1>. (Latin text, emphasized portion: *Illic apostolorum gloriosus chorus; illic prophetarum exsultantium numerus; illic martyrum innumerabilis populus ob certaminis et passionis gloriam coronatus; triumphantes virgines, quae concupiscentiam carnis et corporis continentiae robore subegerunt; remunerati misericordes*; emphasis mine).

[40] Te gloriosus apostolorum chorus; te prophetarum laudabilis numerus; te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.

is followed closely in its reference to the nativity, passion, resurrection, session at God's Right Hand, and return for Judgment. Its composition could, therefore, be as early as the first part, except for its conspicuous absence in the so-called Greek Version. Even if it had been added later, perhaps as late as the 4th century, its division easily flows out of the first part and is considered by many to be part of the "original" *Te Deum.*

The most interesting textual variant is found in this section (vs. 16–17: When You took upon Yourself to deliver man, You humbled Yourself to be born of a virgin). The Ordinary Version reads: *Tu ad liberandum suscepisti* (2nd per. act. pf. of *suscipio*-to take upon) *hominem non horruisti virginis uterum.* The Irish Version reads the same, but with the addition of *mundum* after *liberandum*: *Tu ad liberandum mundum suscepisti hominem, etc.* While it is generally agreed that *mundum* made its way into this text by "an interpolation by an Irish copyist who was familiar with the idea of the phrase *Salvator mundi*,"[41] it does however show how the sentence was understood. The object of *liberandum* (fut. pass. ptc. gerundive of *libero,* "liberate") is *mundum* (acc. sg. of *mundus,* "the world"), and the object of *suscepisti* is *hominem* (acc. sg. of *homo,* "man"), the sense being, "When You, in order to liberate the *world*, had taken upon *man*, etc." The Milan Version has only: *Tu ad liberandum hominem non horruisti virginis uterum,* leaving out the verb *suscipio* altogether. Here *hominem* becomes the object of *liberandum* and the incarnation is only implied by the second half of the verse: "You did not abhor the virgin's womb." Finally, from an extant letter of Cyprian, bishop of Toulon (A.D. 476–546), to Maximus, Bishop of Geneva (ca. 512–541), older than the *Te Deum* manuscripts, he quotes the verse as *Tu ad liberandum suscepturus* (Masc. fut. act. ptc. of *suscipio*) *hominem non horruisti virginis uterum.* From this letter and some others it is assumed that *suscepturus* is the original word.[42] This has become the standard form and official Latin text of the *Te Deum* in use today. However, even this evidence is not necessarily compelling. Cyprian could have simply written *suscepturus* in its participial form by attraction from the participial form of *liberandum.*

Whichever reading is preferred the question still becomes how to understand it, since either way it does not lend itself readily to translation. But from what has been said here, it seems that Luther's translation captures all of the elements. As noted earlier, Luther was presumably looking at the text of the Ordinary Version of the *Te Deum*

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41 Burn, 276.

42 Ibid., 257–258.

in the Bamberg Hymnary (cf. footnote #24). His prose translation of this verse is "Du hast nicht geschewet der Jungfrawen leib, das du mensch würdest und uns erlösest,"[43] which LW renders as "Thou didst not shun the womb of the Virgin, *to become man* [*suscepisti hominem*] and *redeem us* [*ad liberandum eum* / here *nos* implied],"[44] taking the accusative *hominem* as the object of both verb forms, the first as the accusative noun and the second as a pronoun derived from it. Luther's strophic version of the *Te Deum* on this verse does not include this "*becoming man* in order to redeem *him*" aspect of the prose text, leaving it implied by the virgin birth: "Der Jungfraw leib nicht hast verschmecht, Du hast dem tod zerstört sein macht,"[45] which LW renders as "Thou didst not spurn the virgin's womb: to save mankind from sin and doom."[46] This was the usual understanding of the text. In Roman Catholic England, a Sarum Primer[47] of 1504 has: "Thou (when thou shouldest take upon our nature to delyver man) dydest not abhorre a virgynes wombe."[48]

Only later did this sense become blurred, beginning with the last Primer of Henry VIII (1546), which was probably the first to introduce the ambiguous rendering: "When thou *tookest upon thee* to deliver man."[49] This came to be the accepted translation in the *Book of Common Prayer* and taken, rather uncritically, into usage in Lutheran hymnals in English in America. The sense of this translation is: "When you (Christ) *undertook* (decided, resolved) to deliver man," leaving the verb *suscipio,* in whichever form, objectless, "man" being the object of *liberandum* only.

While this can be justified grammatically, though leaving out the stronger incarnational possibility, the verse following it in the English is even more problematic. The Prayer Book from the time of Henry VIII through the 1662 authoritative version follows the Latin, "*non horruisti virginis uterum*": "thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb."[50] But in the later American edition, *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Protestant

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43 Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Band 50* (Weimar: Weimarer Ausgabe, 1883–1929), 266.

44 Luther, LW 34:206.

45 Luther, WA 35:459.

46 Luther, LW 53:174.

47 The Sarum Primer is a collection of prayers, including the *Te Deum,* written in English from the 13th century on.

48 "The Te Deum," Catholic Encyclopedia, accessed May 2012 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/ 14468c.htm>.

49 Ibid.

50 *The Book of Common Prayer (1662)*, as printed by John Baskerville between 1760 and 1762. Seventh leaf under "The Order for Morning Prayer," accessed August 2012, <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/ 1662/mp.pdf>.

Episcopal Church in the USA (1789), we find: "Thou didst humble thyself to be born of a Virgin,"[51] for *"non horruisti virginis uterum."* The 1662 edition is still the official text of world-wide Anglicanism, but this later translation is the one used in the USA by both Episcopalians and American Lutherans.

This is quite a stretch from the Latin text. But worse, this rendering could technically be identified with the false view of the incarnation know as kenoticism, a doctrinal heresy that originated in the 19th century with German theologians like Thomasius, Frank, Gess, *et al.*, which held, in one way or another, that the incarnate Christ divested himself of certain divine attributes, such as omniscience and omnipotence, thus denying the full deity of Christ.[52] The incarnation itself is not part of the humiliation of Christ. Otherwise His exaltation would have to exclude His humanity, which ultimately overthrows the bodily resurrection of Christ and Christians.

In *Christian Dogmatics*, Franz Pieper, while refuting the heresy, recognizes, nonetheless, that less than precise expressions regarding the humiliation of Christ do not necessarily a heretic make. Referring to Johann Gerhard he gives an example of how one might put the best construction on the unfortunate construction in this verse of the *Te Deum:*

> The humiliation of Christ must not be identified with the Incarnation. True, also orthodox teachers have called the Incarnation a humiliation, in the sense of a gracious condescension (ἐπίδοσις) [Cp. Gerhard, *"De pers.,"* § 293]. It was indeed a wonderful condescension on the part of the majestic God to assume a human nature into His Person. But this cannot be called a humiliation in the proper sense, for then Christ would have had to lay aside His human nature in the state of exaltation. Strong rightly says: "We may dismiss as unworthy of serious notice the view that it [Christ's humiliation] consisted essentially in the union of the Logos with human nature; for this union with the human nature continues in the state of exaltation" (*Syst. Theol.,* p. 701). Lutheran dogmaticians, therefore, are right in saying that although the incarnation and the

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[51] *The First (1790) American Book of Common Prayer,* accessed August 2012, The Order for Daily Morning Prayer, page C, <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1789/1790/folio_mp.pdf>.

[52] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 292.

> humiliation coincide in time, they must be distinguished. The humiliation does not consist in Christ becoming a man, but in His becoming a lowly man. He assumed the μορφὴ δούλου though He possessed the μορφὴ θεοῦ.[53]

While one might speak kindly of Gerhard for such usage, one wonders if Pieper would have been so generous toward this wording of the American *Te Deum*, especially "since the Reformed and Catholic theologians deny the Scriptural teaching that the state of humiliation consists in the limited use of the communicated divine majesty, and the state of exaltation in its full use (both declare that the human nature is incapable of the divine majesty)…."[54] Here it would seem in order to consider a revision of the translation of this verse in future publications of the *Te Deum*, perhaps, "When You took upon man to deliver him (or us), You did not abhor the Virgin's womb," or even, "When You became incarnate to deliver man, etc."

There is one more textual item to take up in this second section of the *Te Deum*. It is found in verse 21, *"Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari"* (Make them to be *numbered* with Your saints in glory everlasting). All of the oldest manuscripts have *munerari* instead of *numerari*. This may be an instance of metathesis which is found in printed editions of the Breviary from the late 15th century onward, though it has been suggested that the change was willful from the influence of "the well-known words added by Gregory the Great to the Canon of the Mass, *in electorum tuorum iubeas grege numerari* [55] [cause us to be numbered in the flock Thou hast chosen]."[56] Whatever the reason, the change subtracts some of the richness of the verse because *"numerari"* (to be numbered—pres. pass. inf.) doesn't really add any content to the verse, whereas *"munerari"* (to be gifted—pres. pass. inf.) does. Again, in the Bamberg Hymnary Luther was working with, which still has the uncorrupted text, he translates in his prose version: "Hilff das wir sampt deinen heiligen mit der ewigen herrligkeit begabet [gifted] werden,"[57] rendered in LW as "Help, so that we *receive the gift* of eternal glory together with thy saints".[58] Also, his strophic version picks it up: "Mit

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 283 (cf. his entire section, II: The Doctrine of the States of Christ, 280–330).

[55] Burn, 277.

[56] Hugo Hoever, ed., *St. Joseph Daily Missal* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1950), 565.

[57] Luther, WA 50:266.

[58] Luther, LW 34:206 (emphasis mine).

den heiligen inn ewigem heil. Und segen, das dein *erbteil* (inheritance/gift) ist."[59] rendered in LW as "Let us in heaven have our dole [gift]: and with the holy [the saints] e'er be whole."[60] The ELH version, taken from the Lutheran Hymnal of Australia, is more poetic: "O let us share with all the blest: The everlasting, glorious *rest* [gift]."[61]

Part III

We now come to the third part of the *Te Deum* (vss. 22–29). In a way, this is the easiest part because it is more or less a collection of Psalm verses and one familiar petition (vs. 26 "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin") from the Collect for Grace found in the Gregorian Sacramentary, used in the Sarum Office of Prime,[62] and taken over into Matins in American Lutheran Hymnals from the Prayer Book.[63] Vss. 22–23 are from Psalm 28:9, "Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance; shepherd them also, and bear them up forever" (NKJV). Vss. 24–25 quote Psalm 145:2, "Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever" (NKJV). Vs. 27 quotes Psalm 122:3, "Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us!" (NKJV). Vs. 28 quotes Psalm 33:22, "Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, just as we hope in You" (NKJV). Vs. 29 quotes Psalm 31:1a, "In You, O LORD, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed" (NKJV).

The question becomes, why and how did these particular Psalm verses come to be attached to the *Te Deum*? Assuming the *Te Deum's* formulation was influenced by other sources already in use in the early church, it is possible to explain the particular Psalm verses used to conclude the great hymn as being associated with them. According to Burn, Psalm 28:9 (vss. 22–23 of the *Te Deum*) was the *capitellum* appointed for the *Te Deum* in the Gallican Church. Psalm 145:2 (vss. 24–25) was the *capitellum* for the *Gloria in Excelsis*. When the *Gloria* became part of the Ordinary of the mass, its *capitellum* was

[59] Luther, WA 35:459.

[60] Luther, LW 53:175.

[61] Dennis W. Marzolf, *The Lutheran Hymnary* (St. Louis: MorningStar Music Publishers, 1996), hymn no. 45.

[62] Massey Hamilton Shepherd, *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 17.

[63] The words from the Collect for Grace found in ELH p. 118 are "grant that this day we fall into no sin." It would be interesting to know if Luther had this verse, either from the *Sacramentary* or the *Te Deum* in mind in the morning prayer from his Small Catechism, "and I pray Thee to keep me this day also from sin and all evil.…" *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 557.

transferred to the *Te Deum*.[64] If "Day by day we magnify You" was at one time a *capitellum* of the *Te Deum*, before becoming incorporated into the third part of the received text, this might well explain its use in the daily office of Matins.

Vs. 26 of the *Te Deum* (already mentioned above) and Psalm 123:3 (vs. 27), together with Psalm 31:1a (vs. 29) were familiar prayers found after the *Gloria*.[65] Again the reliance of the *Te Deum* on the *Gloria* could result in passages in close connection with the *Gloria* to be drawn upon for the *Te Deum*.

The appearance of Psalm 33:22 (vs. 28) remains a mystery. Burn notes that there is evidence that it did not belong to the *Te Deum* per se because of an *Amen* preceding it in a number of manuscripts of the Irish Version. On the other hand, it is included twice during the Fraction in the Celtic Liturgy.[66] Perhaps the connection between the *Te Deum's* use of Isaiah 6 and the *Sanctus* used in connection with the Lord's Supper attracted its incorporation into the *Te Deum's* psalm list.

While accounting for the material of the final section is speculative, it does seem to point to the third part as a development over time, which has given rise to the text we have become accustomed to as the *Te Deum*. These additional verses certainly do not detract but enrich the whole as we know it. Attempts to remove this final section of the *Te Deum* hardly deserve much serious consideration. The *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW), *Lutheran Worship* (LW), and *Christian Worship* (CW) all present the *Te Deum* in their orders for Matins without the final section (vss. 22–29). LBW ends with "bring us with your saints to glory everlasting"[67] (vs 21). Notice how removing *numerari* does not change the meaning, though the thought of *munerari* is still lacking. CW follows LBW in this wording.[68] The CW editors for the most part tried to follow LBW's translation while fitting it into the familiar musical setting of TLH/ELH. One interesting difference is that LBW corrected vs. 16 with "you did not spurn the virgin's womb" while CW defaults to the Episcopal (kenoticistic?) version "you humbled yourself to be born of a virgin." Since CW was already drawing from LBW's more modern translation, one wonders why CW chose the more inexact wording of

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[64] Burn, 278.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., 279.

[67] Inter-Lutheran Commission of Worship, *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 139–141.

[68] Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod, *Christian Worship* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), 49.

this verse. LW ends its *Te Deum* with the traditional wording of vs. 21: "Make them to be numbered with your saints in glory everlasting."[69] LSB pressed the reset button, reverting to the TLH/ELH version, but putting vss. 22–29 in italics. In footnotes they say: "*You humbled Yourself to be born of a virgin:* original text, "You did not spurn the virgin's womb," and "The earliest versions of the Te Deum omit verses 8–9 [=Table 1, vss. 22–29]."[70] Since everyone reads the footnotes in their hymnal, the users of LSB will be assured that in the first instance the LSB editors knew better than to repeat an unfortunate translation but did it anyway. And in the second instance, while these last verses may not be original there is still value in singing the form of the *Te Deum* in use in the Church for hundreds of years before the Reformation.[71] After all, if the ancients did not sing these Psalm verses as part of the *Te Deum,* so what! They still sang them. Since they are no longer included in other regular usages in the Church, where better to sing them than in the "new" wing added to the house we call the *Te Deum.* Omitting these precious Psalm verses from the *Te Deum* today, for the sake of "liturgical purity," means, for all intents and purposes, omitting them for good from regular use.

Perhaps the idea of removing the final section had to do with complaints that come up about length and number of verses. Instead of changing the familiar text by removing the final section, it might be easier to change the number of numbers, calling vss. 1–13 the first stanza, 14–21 the second, and 22–29 the third. Then it becomes shorter than "Children of the Heavenly Father," which has four stanzas of which no one wants to omit even one. More likely, however, the deletion of the final section of the *Te Deum* was an attempt to be more liturgically correct. Fortunately, the melodies in LBW and LW are so difficult and

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69 Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 214–217.

70 Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 224–225.

71 There is a parallel here between the *Te Deum* and controversial *filioque* of the Nicene Creed. In a little online banter with some colleagues someone was lamenting the popular fad of preachers replacing the Ecumenical Creed from the Ordinary of the Divine Service with their own made-up "Creed of the Day." While this practice easily becomes sectarian even when the made-up creed is doctrinally correct, I could not help but play devil's advocate by responding: "I guess the Church of the East had a point when the Church and Change crowd of the West added the *filioque.*" The response I received was precious: "Yes…they had a point. But we…have inherited the Creed as it is. Ours is the heritage of the conservative reformation, after all; and it isn't given us to go around knocking out the filioque spoke added to the Nicean wheel which was added a thousand years ago. So yeah, we asterisk their point, and rejoice in their broad agreement that after all it didn't lead to the gross…subordinationism they thought it might."

convoluted for congregational singing that one cannot imagine them catching on. LSB's return to the familiar is a case in point.

Perhaps, however, the most compelling argument for retaining the traditional formulation, as we know it, is how the addition of the final section balances the great hymn in such a way as to make Christ its center. Springer makes a very astute observation in this regard.

> Central to Trinitarian debates in the early church was the correct understanding of the relationship of the Son to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. Some heretics (like Sabellius) insisted that the Son was the same as the Father and that God had not become man, but had simply adopted the form of a man. Arius, on the other hand, maintained that the Son was not equal in power with the Father because he was not coeternal. Many of the first orthodox hymns, especially those written by Ambrose, appear to have been reactions to Arius's false teaching. When the Te Deum was first sung, the expression "the eternal Son of the Father" probably received special emphasis. These were fighting words in the fourth century—and, indeed, they still are, or still should be.… In fact, the verse *Tu Patris sempiternus es filius* is the fifteenth in the Latin version, the exact center of the twenty-nine verses that make up the traditional Te Deum. The very structure of the piece says something about what those who sing it believe. Christ is the center of this hymn, just as he is the center of everything else, too.[72]

The editors of LW make the same observation of Luther's German strophic version of the *Te Deum,* "Herr Gott, dich loben wir" (cf. ELH 45. In the quote below ELH verse numbering equivalents will be given in brackets):

> The canticle consists of five stanzas, each with its own melodic pattern. The first stanza, having five verses and a concluding verse for both choirs, is the angelic song of praise, culminating in the *Ter Sanctus* [ELH 1–6, Luther's version calls ELH 5–6 as one verse, 5]. The second stanza, with six verses [ELH 7–12], adds praise of the Trinity by the apostles, prophets, martyrs, and all Christians. The third stanza, with five verses (plus an added verse in augmentation) [ELH 13–18, which does not augment the last line], is a confession of faith in Christ. The fourth

72 Springer, 36 (emphasis mine).

> stanza, with four verses [ELH 19–22], contains the prayer for salvation. The fifth stanza, again with five verses [ELH 23–26, Luther divides his last verse, ELH 26, into two verses by augmentation], returns to the melody of the first and contains petitions for the Christian life.… The third stanza forms, as it were, the heart of the whole, with its confession of Christ preceded by praise and followed by prayer. And *here again the verse on the incarnation forms the center of the whole*; for it is both preceded and followed by twelve complete verses.[73]

This is amazing symmetry, and one can only wonder if the ancients added the closing Psalm verses in order to place the divinity of Christ at the center, or rather, if the centrality of Christ drove them to the symmetry of the final form. That Luther would find himself doing exactly the same thing with his strophic version is almost uncanny.

Use of the *Te Deum* and Musical Considerations

The use of the *Te Deum* in the life of the Christian is as broad as one could imagine. Traditionally, it was regularly sung in Matins as it is found in most Lutheran hymnals today. In Ernst Walter Zeedon's study of the survival of medieval ceremonies in the Lutheran Reformation, he notes:

> Early Lutheranism was acquainted with the daily services as a matter of principle. Sundays were observed, as far as possible, with Matins and the chief service (the service with the Lord's Supper) in the morning…the weekday services, whose roots can be seen in the Catholic daily service, were generally carried by Latin school students in the cities having these; the services consisted of Matins and Vespers, and therefore were essentially liturgical.… In the country, where there were no advanced school students, if a preaching service could not take place on Wednesday and Friday, prayer hours were to be held at the minimum.… Luther reached with force "into the treasure of Catholic liturgy" and took from it what appeared useful for his purposes; that, where it seemed expedient, he critically, freely and easily transformed his models, but in part also remained very true to them.… One even gets the impression that, in the course of the territorial consolidation of its churches, Lutheranism—as if under the influence of the Interim [1548]

[73] Luther, LW 53:173.

> on the one hand, as a reaction to fanaticism and Calvinism on the other hand—referred back to the liturgical tradition of the Middle Ages more rigorously and consciously than during the stormy and productive first years of the Reformation, in which liturgical form was left to the discretion of the individual liturgist (something which troubled Luther already in 1526 and caused him to think of the "offensive confusion" it brought in its wake [Cf. Luther's Preface to "The German Mass" in LW 53:61, WA 19:72 line 14f.]). Essentially the same principles applied for the form of Matins and Vespers as for the Mass. It kept its structure…was held in Latin on Sundays and on all or on designated weekdays in larger cities; an early sermon was commonly connected with it. Matins began with one to three Latin psalms, upon which followed, on Sundays and festivals, the antiphon for the Sunday or feast (*antiphona de dominica vel fest*), the reading of the Epistle in Latin or German, and the Te Deum…the Benedicamus…upon which the "priest" (parson) or deacon concluded with a collect. Finally came the sermon, marked specifically by bell tolls…[which] concluded with a short psalm, again in German, and a collect. On certain weekdays…the Litany was provided for…as a responsive prayer.[74]

Besides this usage, on Sundays when no one but the pastor wished to commune (which sometimes happened especially in smaller parishes), in order to avoid the appearance of the private mass where a priest communed himself in the absence of any other communicants, after the sermon, "the conclusion became a little more substantial in that, aside from the collect, they prayed either the Litany, or Simeon's canticle (Luke 2:29–32), or the Te Deum laudamus."[75]

In short, the *Te Deum* could be sung almost any time, not to mention other secular occasions, such as the coronation of a king or prince. Translating this broad usage into today's church, the *Te Deum* could be sung as it was in the past. If Matins is not available, it could be sung as the hymn after Luther's morning prayers in the Small Catechism, after which he gives the rubric: "After singing a hymn (possibly a hymn on the Ten Commandments) or whatever your devotion may suggest,

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[74] Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Faith and Act The Survival of Medieval Ceremonies in the Lutheran Reformation,* tr. Kevin G. Walker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 8–9, 18–19.

[75] Ibid., 26.

you should go to your work joyfully."[76] On Sundays there are various places where it would be appropriate. With its connection with the *Gloria* occasionally the *Te Deum* could be sung in place of the Angelic Hymn. With its connection with the *Sanctus* it could be substituted for it. In churches that offer weekly communion, in place of the same communion hymns all the time it could serve as a distribution hymn. It becomes more difficult trying to figure out when or where one couldn't sing this great hymn of the Church.

There is, however, another way to look at the usage of the *Te Deum*, namely, its musical use. There is practically only one plain-chant melody for the Latin *Te Deum* and it comes in two forms, the *tonus solemnis* (in which every verse begins with preparatory or intoning notes) and the *tonus simplex* (in which each verse begins abruptly). This melody is more or less the one Luther was familiar with. Because it was sung daily in matins, Luther could no doubt sing it from memory, just as many of us learned to do so in chapel at Bethany, though we sang it in English and the chant tones we learned were not from the *tonus solemnis*, but the chant tones assigned to the *Te Deum* in Matins from TLH or later from ELH. These tones are inferior to the traditional *tonus solemnis/simplex*, at least in terms of what Luther strove for in what could be called his theology of music for the Reformation. More on this later.

Another legend, this time about Luther, which probably does do harm if one believes it, is the one that alleges that Luther is the father of the polka mass, complete with concertina, licorice stick, tuba, and drums. This is a bit of an exaggeration, but Luther's musical considerations were far from the caricature of him writing "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," sitting in the pub with a lute slung over his shoulder, jamming on pop songs with a nine-fingered hurdy-gurdy player named Donny, inspired by the *spiritus fermenti*. The apocryphal remark attributed to Luther, "Why should the devil have all the best tunes,"[77] suggesting that Luther blended secular or profane melodies into his hymns and chants, is refuted by the Reformer's actual attitude, which is well documented. In the "Preface to Georg Rhau's Symphoniae iucundae" of 1538, Luther not only praises God's gift of music but clearly warns against its abuse:

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[76] Tappert, 352.

[77] Leaver notes that these words cannot be found "anywhere in his voluminous writings. Certainly, Luther was aware of such tunes, especially their form and style, but not to the extent that is frequently suggested by those who seek to justify their own use of secular styles and forms in contemporary worship." *Luther's Liturgical Music* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 11.

> I would certainly like to praise music with all my heart as the excellent gift of God which it is and to commend it to everyone…next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise.… But the subject is much too great for me briefly to describe all its benefits. And you, my young friend, let this noble, wholesome, and cheerful creation of God be commended to you. *By it you may escape shameful desires and bad company*. At the same time you may by this creation accustom yourself to recognize and praise the Creator. *Take special care to shun perverted minds who prostitute this lovely gift of nature* and of art with their erotic rantings; and be quite assured that none but the devil goads them on to defy their very nature which would and should praise God its Maker with this gift, so that these bastards purloin the gift of God and use it to worship the foe of God, the enemy of nature and of this lovely art.[78]

Luther's musical abilities were considerable. Among others, Robin Leaver has produced extensive evidence demonstrating the depth of Luther's musical knowledge and how he worked it into the music, which would carry the Gospel forward.[79] After making a thorough case for Luther's depth of musical understanding Leaver summarizes:

> Earlier twentieth-century writers on Luther's musicianship tended to classify him as an enthusiastic amateur, a dilettante who pursued music as a hobby. But more recent scholarship suggests that such discussions…are anachronistic, a reading back on later concerns into the period of the Renaissance-Reformation, resulting more in the nature of a caricature rather than a characterization.… Luther's musicianship was anything but superficial and is the essential starting-point for any discussion of his musical understanding of theology or of his liturgical use of music. Attempts to portray such concepts and activities from the perspective of Luther as a mere dabbler in musical matters are in danger of distorting the true significance of these principles and accomplishments.[80]

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[78] Luther, LW 53:321–324 (emphasis mine).

[79] Leaver, 3–63.

[80] Ibid., 61–62.

Leaver suggests that music permeated Luther's being so much that his well known "swan song" on his death bed was actually a song, not a recitation:

> Music was the constant accompaniment of Luther's life. He never ceased to wonder at its profound effects on him as a performer and listener, and he was certain that the finest music he had heard in this life would be surpassed in the life to come. Toward the end of his life (December 1538), after various motets had been sung, he observed: "If our Lord God has given us such noble gifts in the latrine of this life, what [music] will there be in eternal life where everything is perfect and joyful?" It is reported that the last thing he uttered before retiring to his bed for the last time was the words from Psalm 31:5: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O God of truth." According to Johannes Bugenhagen Luther repeated these words three times…. According to Justus Jonas and others Luther uttered the text in Latin: *"In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum, Redemisti me Domine DEVS veritatis."* These are among the words that Jesus uttered from the cross (Luke 23:46), but they were also words that Luther had sung almost every day for much of his life: the words of the short Respond following the Scripture reading at Compline. It is significant that Bugenhagen informs us that Luther repeated them three times, since the principal text occurs three times in the Compline Respond, which suggests that this was the last thing he sang this side of eternity.[81]

Perhaps the most impressive endorsement of Luther's musical prowess comes from Johann Walter, musician, composer, cantor in the chapel of Frederick the Wise, friend of Luther, and outspoken musical advocate for the Reformation. In a presumed preface for an anthology of chants for publication, Walter comments on Luther's abilities as a musician, and in the process reveals unique information concerning the genesis of Luther's *Deutsche Messe,* especially its monadic chant (the *Te Deum* is also such a chant):

> I know and bear true witness that the holy man of God, *Luther,* the Prophet and Apostle to the German *nation,* had a great love for *music* in *plainsong* and *polyphony [Choral and figural].*

[81] Ibid., 62.

Many precious hours have I sung with him, and have often seen how the dear man became so merry and joyful in spirit from singing, that he could hardly become tired and weary of singing and speaking so splendidly about *music*. For when he wished to establish the German Mass in Wittenberg about forty years ago, he wrote to the Elector of Saxony and Duke Johann, of praiseworthy memory, for his Electoral Grace to allow his old songmaster [Sangmeister], the honorable *Conrad* Rupsch and myself to go to Wittenberg in order to discuss with us the *choral notes* [*Choral Noten* = chant notation] and nature of the eight *tones*. And finally, he appointed the tone *[Choral Noten octavi Toni]* for the Epistle, and the sixth tone for the Gospel, saying: "Christ is a friendly Lord, and his sayings are gentle, therefore, we want to take the *Sextum Tonum* for the Gospel; and because St. Paul is a serious apostle, we want to appoint the *Octavum Tonum* for the Epistle." He wrote himself the notes for the Epistles, Gospels, and the Words of Institution of the true Body and Blood of Christ; these he sang to me, wishing to hear my opinion of them. He kept me three weeks in Wittenberg to write in an orderly fashion the choral notes for certain Gospels and Epistles, until the first German Mass was sung in the town church [Pfarrkirche]. Then I had to listen to this first German Mass, and take a copy of it with me to Torgau, and hand it over to his Electoral Grace, on orders from the *Doctor* himself. Since he ordered *Vespers,* as it is [sung] in many places, to be arranged with short, pure choral songs [=chants] for the students and youths, likewise he ordered that the poor students who go [begging] for bread should sing Latin songs, *Antiphons* and *Responsoria* before the doors. Therefore, those who cast out all Latin Christian songs from the churches are not to be praised, and are incorrect if they believe it is not evangelical or properly Lutheran when they sing or hear Latin *chants* [*Choral* Gesang] in church. On the other hand, it is also wrong to sing for the common people nothing but Latin songs, by which the common folk are not improved. Thus, the German, holy, pure, old, and Lutheran songs and psalms [lieder und Psalmen] are most useful for the general congregation [gemeinen hauffen], but the Latin is for the young to practice and for the learned.

And let it be seen, heard, and understood, how the Holy Spirit himself collaborates, both with these *authors* of Latin

> [songs] and with Herr Luther, who until now has written most of the German *chants* [deutschen Choral Gesänge] and set them to music. Therefore, it may be observed in the German *Sanctus* (Jesaja dem Propheten das geschah, etc.) and other places, how carefully he fitted all the notes so masterfully and so well to the text, according to the right *accent* and *concent*. And I also had the occasion to ask his Reverence how, or from what source, had he been taught or instructed. Then the dear man laughed at my innocence and said: "The poet Virgil taught me this, who is also able to apply his poetry and vocabulary so artfully to the story he is writing. So should *music* arrange all its *notes* and songs in accord with the text."[82]

All of this points to a Luther of considerable musical competence, capable of analyzing, critiquing, and composing music from a well-grounded knowledge of the theoretical principles of his time, which were not only complex, but evolving. While modern music (from late Baroque to the present) has more or less settled into two basic tonalities, major and minor, this was not the way tonality was heard and thought about during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In Luther's time, tonality was divided into eight tones or modes, sometimes referred to as church modes or psalm tones from their use in Gregorian chant. Walter referred to this above in his reference to the "nature of the eight *tones*" he discussed with Luther.

The eight tones (something like scales) came in four pairs. Tone I is called the Dorian mode, Tone II the Hypodorian; Tone III, the Phrygian, Tone IV, the Hypophrygian; Tone V the Lydian, Tone VI the Hypolydian; Tone VII the Mixolydian, Tone VIII, the Hypomixolydian. The difference between a mode and its "hypo" counterpart had to do with range and placement of the chanting tone. For example, in Tone I (Dorian) the range is basically from D to D^{8va} using only the white keys on the keyboard, while Tone II (Hypodorian) used the same notes in a lower range, basically from A to A^{8va}. In Tone III (Phrygian) the range is basically from E to E^{8va} using only the white keys, while Tone IV (Hypophrygian) used the same notes in a lower range, basically from B to B^{8va}, and so on.

To modern ears all of these modes are rather automatically heard as either major or minor, depending upon whether the third note of the scale is a major or minor third above the root. Therefore when we hear

82 Ibid., 331–332.

or sing Tones I, II, III, and IV, all of which have a minor third as the third step of the scale, we tend to hear "minor." And from our associations with music in minor keys, we tend to think of "sad," "melancholy," "grave," "dirge-like," etc. Tones V, VI, VII, and VIII, all of which have a major third as the third step of the scale, we tend to hear "major." And from our associations with music in major keys, we tend to think of "happy," "jovial," "lively," "upbeat," etc. This is, of course, an oversimplification of both the ancient and modern systems, but it is generally the way people express themselves.

This, however, is not how the ears of the Medieval and Renaissance man heard them, and their associations with what they heard were quite different from ours. Yes, they heard the difference between major and minor thirds the way we do, but that single interval did not automatically make them either manic or depressive. They could distinguish some of the other intervals as well, all of which had significance as to how they would hear the words attached to these sounds. If this seems convoluted to the 21st-century listener, it gets even worse. While Luther was well schooled in the "old" eight-mode system, some of the modern composers of his day (e.g., Josquin des Prez, whom Luther admired most) began to explore the idea of expanding the eight-mode system into twelve. In particular the "new" Ionian and Aeolian modes (our modern major and natural minor scales) were being explored in composition by Josquin and others.[83] Luther wrote chorales in the new Ionian mode, perhaps from his admiration of Josquin's music, as well as affording the eight-mode system of the past its due honor.

The modes were thought to convey a specific emotional content with the capacity to convey a particular meaning. Therefore, care had to be taken to assign the right *Tonus* to the right text. Herman Finck, a 16th century German music theorist, gives an outline of these musical "vapors":

> Tone I (Dorian) "has the liveliest melody of all, arouses the somnolent, refreshes the sad and disturbed…the foremost musicians today use this tone the most".… Tone II (Hypodorian) "is diametrically opposed to the former [Tone I] … produces tears, makes morose…pitiable, heavy, serious, the most subdued

[83] Glareanus (1488–1563), a Swiss music theorist who also pressed toward the twelve mode system, criticizes Josquin for his poor mixing of the Ionian and Aeolian modes in an *Agnus Dei,* saying that Josquin often favored the unusual rather than the customary ordering of the modes. Maria Rika Maniates, *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530–1630* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1979), 154.

> of all." {Notice, the same tones depending on their range, not their modality, are heard as near opposites in their emotion.} Tone III (Phrygian) "…moves to choler and biliousness… loud words, hideous battles, and bold deeds suit it." …Tone IV (Hypophrygian) "represents the parasite [dependent], who caters to the passions of his master…to whom he brings gifts and sings words of praise." …Tone V (Lydian) "… corresponds with cheerfulness, friendliness, the gentler affects, since it pleases most of all…joyful, modest, the delight of the sorrowful, the restoring of the desperate, the solace of the afflicted…" For Luther Tone V was closely associated with the proclamation of the Gospel and the reception of the grace of forgiveness.… Tone VI (Hypolydian) is "contrary to the former [Tone V]…not infrequent in prayers [i.e., pious]." … Tone VII (Mixolydian) "shows itself with a stentorian voice and great shouts." … (Luke 1, Benedictus), the proclamation of God's "blessedness," is to be sung to Tone VII. Tone VIII (Hypomixolydian) "is not unlike an honest matron, who tries to soften and calm the wrath of her husband with agreeable discourse…studiously avoids offence… pacific."[84]

In his liturgical music Luther seems to be more conservative, following the older eight-mode tradition. One can see how much fun Luther must have had matching up the right mode (or mood) with a given text, creating a kind of marriage between them, by which the former supports the latter and the latter takes to itself the former. It is beyond the purview of this assignment to examine just how Luther and his fellow musicians did this, but they did, and with a vast amount of material.

The *Te Deum,* being part of this liturgical tradition will serve as an example. When Luther composed his German *Te Deum* he made

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[84] Leaver, 260–262. NOTE: Walter says that Luther chose Tone VI (Hypolydian) for the Gospel, while Luther clearly states in his Deutsche Messe that the priest "reads the Gospel in the Fifth Tone [Lydian]" (LW 53:74). The apparent contradiction is resolved in the fact that the two modes are almost identical. The principal difference between them is that while the notes for Tones V and VI are identical, the range is different. Luther does use Tone V for the Gospel, but specifically for the words of Christ the chanting tone dips down into the piously pleasant range of the Hypolydian Tone VI. From a musical point of view, Walter is likely thinking of the very words of Christ, which Luther did set to Tone VI, while Luther is referring to the Gospel text for any given Sunday, which normally would include both Tone V and its "Hypo" counterpart for the voice of Christ. Cf. Leaver, 182–183.

conscious musical decisions about its poetry and musical setting. The editors of LW note that a rimed version of the *Te Deum* in Low-German had already appeared several years before Luther's.

> But here as elsewhere Luther proved more original and creative than any of his predecessors. Instead of clinging slavishly to the expressions of the Latin text, he recast the substance of the original in the new mold of a rimed chant [i.e., chorale] for the people. Luther also recast the music. Doubtlessly the syllabic simplification of the florid Latin chant is Luther's own work, and the bold steps of the strongly Phrygian melody [Tone III] give almost more forceful expression to the archaic grandeur of the ancient canticle than the original plainchant melody.[85]

It should be noted that while Luther's translation does not "slavishly" cling to the Latin text, it is nevertheless slavishly faithful to its order and content, more so, indeed, than some of the English prose translations, as already noted. Also, His recast of the melody, while simplified, is still unmistakably THE *Te Deum.*

Since the *Te Deum* is considered a canticle, though not a purely biblical text like the others, it is therefore not surprising that Luther approached it in the same way as the other canticles. It would have been out of character for Luther to create an entirely new musical setting for it as he did with new hymns. He retained the traditional Tone III (Phrygian) assigned to the Latin text for its suitability to the text in whatever language, but also as a witness to its ancient connection with the Church of all ages.

How? By outlining the basic Latin chant tones, leaving out most of the passing tones and other decorative tones, the unique sound of the Phrygian mode becomes even more obvious to the common ear. What are those unique sounds? The sounds can be "seen" by the following schematic. From modern music, if one calls the notes of a major scale 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,1^{8va} (as in *do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do*) as a starting point, then the natural minor scale would be 1,2,b3,4,5,b6,b7,1^{8va}. What makes the minor scale sound minor is the b3 (b=flat, one half step lower than its major scale counterpart). Even if the b6 or b7 are raised again to 6 or 7, the b3 will continue to convince the listener of today that it is in a minor key.

A Phrygian scale according to this schematic would be 1,b2,b3,4,5,b6,b7,1^{8va}. The b3 is common to our modern minor scale,

[85] Luther, LW 53:172.

along with the b6 and b7, so that modern ears tend to hear this tonality as minor. But the b2 signals the Phrygian tonality, especially when that b2 cadences into 1 (b2↘1). This cadence is found numerous times in the *Te Deum*, and is easily heard, especially when sung without modern harmonization, which often tends to cloud the unique Phrygian sound with modern major-minor constructions.

To modern ears this Phrygian sound might be heard as "strange" or "odd." But to the ears of the middle ages and Renaissance it sounded strong, bold, and forceful, or as Finck put it, "choleric or bilious," one of the four humors of medieval physiology, thought to incite vehemence, fierceness, intensity, or defiance. For Luther, one might say, this Phrygian mode (Tone III) was the "spit in the devil's eye" tone.

This tells us something about how the *Te Deum* was understood. If this Phrygian usage is compared with the modern *Te Deum* chant, which American Lutherans are familiar with from TLH 35ff. or ELH 114 ff., it becomes even clearer. The TLH/ELH chant begins in our modern Major key (the "happy" tone), which corresponds to the old Lydian/Hypolydian modes (Tones V and VI) of the pious cheerfulness and joy of the Christian restored to grace. In the Major-Minor system, what else is there to set this noble confession of the Church? But the first line of the second part of the *Te Deum* (vs. 14: You are the King of glory, O Christ. You are the everlasting Son of the Father) is attached to this Major melody of the first part, so that it sounds like a coda describing "Your adorable true and only Son," of the doxology (vs. 12), which it is not. Rather it is supposed to introduce the second section. The musical problem in TLH/ELH is that the second part concerning the person and work of Christ is put into the parallel minor key (a "sad" tone), which corresponds to the old Hypodorian mode (Tone II) of tears and pity, heavy and subdued. But the opening words of the second part of the *Te Deum* do not suggest this at all, and are therefore left as a tag on the end of the first part, removing it musically from the theology of the second part, to which it belongs.

A bigger problem, however, is placing the Christological section of the *Te Deum* into the "sad" tone in the first place. It gives the work of Christ a decidedly "poor Jesus" tonal effect. And, with the inferior translation of "When You took upon Yourself to deliver man, You humbled yourself to be born of a virgin" (vs. 16), the minor key emphasizes the kenoticistic inference of the incarnation even more.

Luther's retention of the traditional Phrygian mode, along with a superior translation of the text, eliminates all of this. He uses one

Phrygian melody, more or less, throughout the first part. When He comes to the Trisagion of Isaiah 6, he also augments the note lengths for emphasis of these key words, as does the Latin chant, something also missing in the TLH/ELH chanted version. His use of the "spit in the devil's eye" mode does not detract from a "happy" (Major) rejoicing in the triune God. After all, spitting in the devil's eye is great fun, especially since there are not so many opportunities to do so.

For the second section on the incarnation and work of Christ, rather than switching to the parallel minor key as in TLH/ELH Luther continues in the traditional Phrygian Tone III, but with another Phrygian melody pitched a little lower than the first, again following the basic contour of the Latin chant. Each verse descends to the Phrygian tonic or root tone, which emphasizes the bold Phrygian sound even more. This continuation in the Phrygian mode with a lower melody serves two musical purposes. First, the incarnation is not heard in any kind of "poor Jesus" sense. It is quite the opposite. The defiant character of the mode better describes the King of glory, the everlasting Son of the Father, especially in His incarnation and salvific work, as the confident, even defiant, Good Shepherd foresees the Cross: "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17–18).

Second, the lowering of the melody creates a kind of musical "genuflect," reminiscent of the physical genuflect of the Church when she sings the words of the Sunday Creed, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary" (Nicene Creed). Luther mentions this practice approvingly in his Sermons on the Gospel of St. John. On John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh," he says:

> Although the Antichrist in Rome and the devil frightfully mutilated and perverted all that is divine in the church, God nevertheless miraculously preserved Holy Scripture…. Although the Gospel was obscured and the proper understanding of it was hidden, God still kept it for the salvation of His own. These words, too, "And the Word became flesh," were held in reverence. They were sung daily in every Mass in a slow tempo [augmentation] and were set to a special melody, different from that for the other words. And when the congregation came to the words "from the Virgin Mary, and was made

> man," everyone genuflected and removed his hat. It would still be proper and appropriate to kneel at the words "and was made man," to sing them with long notes as formerly.… [86]

It can be noticed that Luther's music for his strophic version of the *Te Deum* accentuates this musical genuflect even more than the traditional plain chant with the Latin text. With what he says about this parallel verse from the Creed, "and was made man," one can imagine Luther's pen falling naturally to the lower lines of the staff.

Luther's *Te Deum* music for the second section makes a division between Christ's return to judgment and the final petitions of vss. 20–21. He makes these two verses to be a sort of coda to the second article of the creed material, parallel to the doxological coda of the first part. As in the Creed he draws down the section by augmenting the note values for vs. 20 and making vs. 21 end with the most obvious Phrygian cadence (b3-b2-1), bringing closure to the section before proceeding to the Psalm verses of the third section.

The third section marks the prayers of the faithful. These petitions, while still definitely Phrygian, dip down even lower in range within the *Tonus*. It almost sounds Hypophrygian in places by reaching down into the lowest possible notes of Tone III. As the music theorists of the time taught, the Hypophrygian Tone IV brings out man's dependence on his Lord and Master, bringing forth praise and honor to Christ. And for a third time Luther employs augmentation on the final verse bringing the great hymn to a close.

This three-part musical structure of both the ancient Latin hymn and Luther's strophic German version is a near perfect marriage

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[86] Luther, LW 22:102–103. To further make the point, Luther includes in his discourse a classic sermon illustration: "The following tale is told about a coarse and brutal lout. While the words 'And was made man' were being sung in church, he remained standing, neither genuflecting nor removing his hat. He showed no reverence, but just stood there like a clod. All the others dropped to their knees when the Nicene Creed was prayed and chanted devoutly. Then the devil stepped up to him and hit him so hard it made his head spin. He cursed him gruesomely and said: 'May hell consume you, you boorish ass! If God had become an angel like me and the congregation sang: "God was made an angel," I would bend not only my knees but my whole body to the ground! Yes, I would crawl ten ells down into the ground. And you vile human creature, you stand there like a stick or a stone. You hear that God did not become an angel but a man like you, and you just stand there like a stick of wood!' Whether this story is true or not, it is nevertheless in accordance with the faith (Rom. 12:6). With this illustrative story the holy fathers wished to admonish the youth to revere the indescribably great miracle of the incarnation; they wanted us to open our eyes wide and ponder these words well." LW 22:105–106.

between text and tone. If the *Te Deum* is thought of as a hymn to Christ, the Victor, the first section in the high range of Tone III confesses and praises Christ in His eternal union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The second section, in the middle range confesses and praises Him in His descent from His heavenly throne to give His life for man, take it up again, and rule His Church from God's right hand until He returns on the Last Day. The third section, in the lowest range, puts man where he belongs, last and at the bottom, praying for mercy. Yet, the whole remains Phrygian-esque. The Trisagion "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:1), scorns the devil and all his works and all his ways. Christ never relinquishes His defiant tone against sin, death, and hell, even from the cross, which proves to be the very crushing blow to the Serpent's skull. Even the prayers of the Christian, while filled with pleas for mercy, salvation, blessing, and steadfastness, because they have put on Christ through baptism, are sung in the same "spit in the eye of the devil" confidence of their own certain victory in Him.

This modal mood sets the tone not only for the *Te Deum*. Other canticles and hymns set in the Phrygian modality brought to their texts this same defiant attitude. Of the biblical canticles Luther assigned the third mode to several: The Song of Deborah from Judges 5:2–31 (a real battle hymn), *Laudate nomen Domini* from Psalm 135 (similar to the *Te Deum* in many respects), Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish from Jonah 2:2–9 (compare Luther's *Aus tiefer Not* ["From Depths of Woe"] written in the same mode), and Habakkuk 3, another prayer of the same kind. Comparing the material in these canticles with the *Te Deum* shows why the same musical mode would be chosen for all of them. And the identification of these texts with the same *Tonus* draws the worshiper into the same emotional frame of mind.

These canticles are not sung by Lutherans today with the regularity of the past, but the hymns set to Tone III still are. "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" is perhaps the most well known. Of Luther's hymns, *Aus tiefer Not* is the one that stands out for its resoundingly Phrygian character. As noted, modern ears tend to hear the Phrygian mode as "minor" (parallel equivalent of the medieval Hypodorian, full of tears, morose, pitiable, and sad) and therefore think of the former as depressing, perhaps wondering why Good Friday is even called good, and the latter as mournful, perhaps wondering how the joy and bold confidence in the resurrection can be heard in such "funereal" tones. Lutheran pastors sometimes hear the complaint of their people, "Why are many Lutheran hymns so shrouded in sadness?" But in the minds

of those theological musicians who set them to these audibly distinguishable tones, and in the ears of those for whom they were set this way, it conjured up completely different emotions; the opposite really. After Luther's death, as the faithful carried his body in procession from Eisleben to Wittenberg, the Christians in Halle sang Luther's *Aus tiefer Not*[87] as a suitable tribute to the great reformer who spent a lifetime spitting in the devil's eye. While the people were naturally struck with grief over their great loss, the *bold*, *defiant* tones they sang reflected what the heart of faith really thinks about the words sung in this way.

It is even more telling how this Phrygian Tone was heard and felt by the Church of the day by alternate musical settings assigned to the text of *Aus tiefer Not.* The editors of LW note that the *Achtliederbuch* of 1524 prescribes the tune of "Salvation Unto Us Has Come," a Mixolydian melody (Tone VII), heard as the blasting shouts of a stentorian voice. And in the Strassburg hymnals since 1525 the C major melody (Ionian mode—one of the 4 new modes added to the traditional 8 tones) of *Herr, wie du willst* ("Lord, as Thou Wilt") was assigned. Perhaps the Strassburgers perceived this new "major" tonality as the wave of the future for carrying the boldness of the text originally set to the Phrygian of the "old school." Luther also looked forward musically, making use of the new tones being employed by modern composers, especially in his new hymns for the Reformation Church, *Ein feste Burg* being the classic example. The "major" melody of *Herr, wie du willst* used with the text of *Aus Tiefer Not* found in earlier American hymnals (e.g. Service Book and Hymnal, no. 372), which followed the "new age" path of the Strassburg hymnals, gives a musical setting in which moderns ears will hear at least some of the bold confidence, which was heard in the older Phrygian mode, which carried it in the past. American Lutheran hymnals since TLH have, however, reverted back to the Phrygian melody of Luther's original, as found in Walter's hymnal of 1524 (*Geistliche gesangk Buchleyn*), no doubt for its historical authenticity, but perhaps also in an attempt to revive the sounds of the past with an aim toward hearing the text with the same emotional connection of the mode used to carry it.[88]

One final chord must be struck regarding Luther's treatment of the *Te Deum.* It goes back to the first martyrs of the Reformation, the Augustinian brothers, Johann van den Esschen and Hendrick Vos, who were publicly burned at the stake in Brussels on July 1, 1523 for refusing to recant their belief in the "errors" of Luther. Luther received

[87] Leaver, 62.

[88] Cf. LW 53:222.

the news of the executions by at least two eyewitness accounts, which were published immediately after the gruesome deed. In one of those long and detailed accounts the eyewitness wrote that amidst the flames "they confessed the Creed and the Te Deum, and other things in turn to one another."[89] This event led Luther to write his very first hymn, *Ein Neues Lied wir heben an* ("A New Song Here Shall Be Begun"), in the same year.[90] In his hymn he includes this eyewitness testimony: "They built two roaring bonfires then, And brought the students hither. But all the watchers wondered when They saw them fail to wither. The lads fell in with joy instead, *Intoning songs and praises* [the Creed and the Te Deum, etc.]. The sophists turned a trifle red; Anent these novel phases When God flashed them his warning."[91] If ever there was any doubt as to how to set the *Te Deum*, the memory of an event like this would have to push one in the direction Luther took. It doesn't get any more Phrygian than this.

Conclusion

It is sometimes argued that contemporary Lutheranism has moved beyond the deeply worked out considerations of text and tune from bygone days. Others think that the theological discipline is as separate from the discipline of music as East is from West and that never the twain shall meet: Let the theologians theologize and leave the music to the musicians. Such suggestions, however, are unfortunate, and the result often ends in the surrender of the sacred to the profane, the profound to the superficial, and the pearls to the swine. Music needs a husband every bit as much as the bride of Christ needs her Bridegroom. The husband of music is the Word of Christ, which desires to be married to this beautiful creation of God. This means that for those who hold the preaching office in the Church and teach in her schools and parishes it is incumbent upon them to acquire a certain amount of knowledge of music. When it is absent from theological education, the consequences can be negative; something like a husband who works so hard that he neglects his wife. And the Church can suffer for it.

[89] Robert J. Christman, "A New Analysis of 'A New Song,' The Origin and Meaning of Luther's First Song," *Faith-Life* LXXXIV, no. 5 (September/October 2011): 15.

[90] Luther, LW 53:211–216 (emphasis mine). Note: Since this was a new song for the new age, Luther employs the new Ionian mode as he did for "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

[91] Christman, 22.

The *Te Deum* as an example can show how this happens. When the ministers, teachers, and even organists and choir directors are unaware of the integrity of text and tune in such a great hymn of the Church as the *Te Deum*, they may be tempted to pass it by and let it fall into disuse. They may come to agree with their parishioners, students, or choir members when they complain that it is too long or too difficult. Our people need informed pep talks, both as to the text and the music that carries it, especially concerning these classic formulations of the Church's confession, which have stood the test of time. I still remember once introducing the *Credo* of Alexander Gretchaninov to the Bethany Lutheran Choir (Yes, we added the *filioque*). How they moaned and groaned about the poetic prose of the text of the Nicene Creed set to chant, with thick lumbering chords sung underneath *a cappella*, which were thought to be boring. It could have been put back in the drawer in favor of something more "fun." But what they needed was a blow-by-blow description of the confessing Church, persecuted for one phrase after another, and to be transported to that bonfire in Brussels, where the Creed and the *Te Deum* were sung amidst the flames at the time it was needed most. In the end, the choir sang it with conviction and passion, and it became one of their most beloved pieces. All that was needed was an awareness of the marriage of text and tune.

Luther's deep concern for the important role of music in the churches and schools led him to say, "Necessity demands that music be kept in the schools. A schoolmaster must know how to sing; otherwise I do not look at him. And before a youth is ordained into the ministry, he should practice music in school."[92] Accordingly, as Leaver notes, "From the late 1520s there was an intensification of the teaching of music in Wittenberg university.… All of the theoretical books…promoted singing, the continuation of older chant forms, the understanding of the ecclesiastical modes, and the development and promotion of polyphony—in many respects the exact opposite of what Karlstadt had proposed."[93]

As in Luther's time, so today, adding yet another discipline to a pastor or teacher preparing to serve the Church is no easy matter. In Luther's time the necessary funds for establishing a music professorship at the University were not forthcoming. The students had to study it

[92] Leaver, 39–40. [Chapter 2, End note 148. WA TR No. 6248 (uncertain date): "*Man muß musicam necessario in der schulen behalten. Ein schulmeister muß singen können, sonst sehe ich ihn nicht an. Et adolescens, antequam ad ministerum ordinetur, exerceat se, in schola.*" WLS No. 3092.]

[93] Leaver, 40.

externally through private lessons. But as then, so now, private lessons are still available, and today so much musical knowledge can be acquired by the click of a mouse.

The question is: Is it worthwhile? Is music really a part of the calling of a pastor of a church or a teacher in a school? If the Reformation model is any indication, it is safe to say yes, especially because of the help it can afford in bringing to life for the faithful the great hymns of the Reformation, including the great *Te Deum*. These are the hymns which still need to be sung and learned the most. From the not too distant past in confessional Lutheran circles in America we have a shining example of this zeal for Luther's liturgical music and hymns in the person of J. P. Koehler, who in 1900 was called to the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Wauwatosa to teach liturgics, music, and art history, in addition to his theological subjects. In this capacity it was Koehler's goal to integrate music more into the theological coursework of his students. Through singing, studying, and performing the old Lutheran hymns with the seminary choir he had established, he hoped to instill in the faithful a new love for the beauty of these hymns, which even then were slipping away. In his concerts with the choir he also lectured on the Lutheran chorales in a way that endeared the audience to them. From one of these concerts he gives a description of *Christ ist erstanden* ["Christ is Arisen"], upon which Luther's own *Christ lag in Todesbanden* ["Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands"] is based. It is not the *Te Deum*, nor is it set to the Phrygian Tone III. But it is clear that Koehler took pains in studying this chorale and discovered the musical process Luther went through with his *Te Deum* and all of his liturgical music and hymns.

> The music of the hymn "Christ is Arisen"…offers me an opportunity to illustrate a thought on our Lutheran congregational hymn. The melody is in the Dorian mode [Tone I, Finck: "the liveliest melody of all, arouses the somnolent, refreshes the sad and disturbed."] This is the ancient key of D. The old Greeks, or perhaps also the old Latins even before the Greeks, found in it something stern and warlike and for that reason named it after this tribe which distinguished itself because of its harsh, stern, martial nature.
>
> The hymn as you just sang it was originally arranged for a mixed choir [harmonized]. Years ago as I heard it for the first time, I was at once struck by the manly character of the *unison*

> passage, and I recommended this in the score to the A Capella Choir. This actually allows the true character of this hymn to assert itself. The Crusaders created this hymn. They sing of the Saviour's victory over sin, devil, and death. This is the sweet Gospel, which is to work as tenderly and gently as balsam. But on the lips of men who have accepted the Gospel it becomes a shout of victory and takes on the threatening tone of the trumpet challenging the enemy, for it constitutes the Christian's confession to battle valiantly, as a loyal liegeman, in the might of the Saviour and to maintain the victory.
>
> This is the distinctive character inherent particularly in the Lutheran chorale, and I would like to preserve this for our congregational singing….[94]

So it is likewise with the great *Te Deum Laudamus* of Christendom and particularly so of the Lutheran Church. God preserve to our church such a bold and confident confession and song of praise from the past and make it our own confession and song in the present, until it is sung around the throne of our Victor in the evermore glorious heavenly mode. LSQ

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[94] Michael Albrecht, "The Faith-Life Legacy of a Wauwatosa Theologian Prof. Joh. Ph. Koehler, Exegete, Historian and Musician" (PhD diss., Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 2008), 63 (emphasis mine).

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Table 1

(Part I)	**(Part I)**
1. Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur.	1. We praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord
2. Te aeternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur.	2. All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.
3. Tibi omnes angeli, Tibi caeli, et universae potestates.	3. To Thee all the angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein.
4. Tibi cherubim et seraphim incessabili voce proclamant:	4. To Thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry.
5. Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.	5. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!
6. Pleni sunt caeli et terra majestatis gloriae tuae.	6. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory.
7. Te gloriosus apostolorum chorus,	7. The glorious company of apostles praise Thee;
8. Te prophetarum laudabilis numerous,	8. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise Thee;
9. Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.	9. The noble army of martyrs praise Thee;
10. Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur ecclesia,	10. The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee;
(Trinitarian Doxology)	**(Trinitarian Doxology)**
11. Patrem immensae maiestatis,	11. The Father of an infinite majesty;
12. Venerandum tuum verum et unicum filium,	12. Thine adorable true and only Son;
13. Sanctum quoque paraclitum spiritum.	13. Also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

(Part II)
14. Tu rex gloriae, Christe.
15. Tu patris sempiternus es filius.
16. Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus (suscepisti) hominem, non horruisti virginis uterum.
17. Tu, devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti
credentibus regna caelorum.
18. Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria patris.
19. Judex crederis esse venturus.
20. Te ergo quaesumus, tuis famulis subveni,
quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.
21. Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari (munerari).

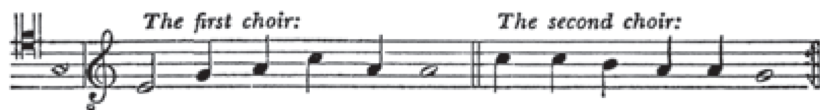
(Part II)
14. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
15. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
16. When Thou tookest upon thee to deliver man,
Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.*
17. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
18. Thou sittest at the hand of God in glory of the Father.
19. We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.
20. We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants,
whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.
21. Make them numbered (gifted) with thy saints in glory everlasting.

(Part III, Psalms, appended?)
22. Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic hereditati tuae.
23. Et rege eos et extolle illos usque in aeternum.
24. Per singulos dies benedicimus te;
25. Et laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum, et in saeculum saeculi.
26. Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire.
27. Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.
28. Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos,
quemadmodum speravimus in te.
29. In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in aeternum.

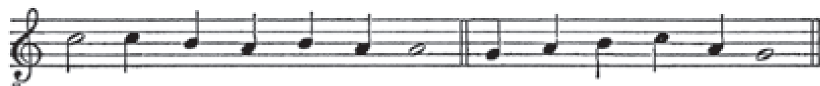
(Part III, Psalms, appended?)
22. O Lord, save Thy people
and bless Thine heritage.
23. Govern them and lift them up forever.
24. Day by day we magnify thee;
25. And worship thy name ever, world without end.
26. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
27. O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
28. O Lord, let Thy mercy be upon us,
as our trust is in Thee.
29. O Lord in Thee have I trusted;
let me never be confounded.

Luther's Strophic Te Deum Hymn

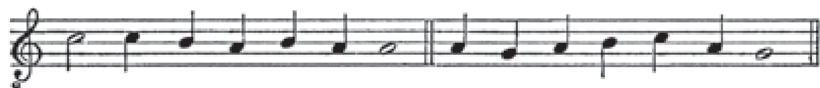
LW 53:174–175



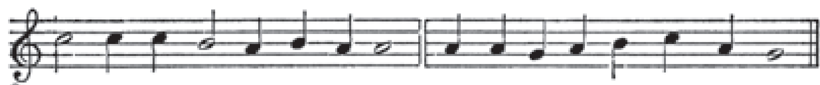
Lord God, thy praise we sing: Lord God, our thanks we bring.



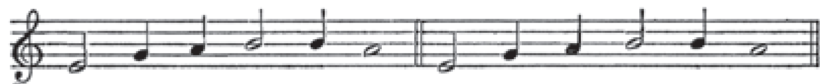
Fa - ther in e - ter - ni - ty: all the world wor-ships thee.



An - gels and all heav'n-ly host: of thy glo - ry loud - ly boast.

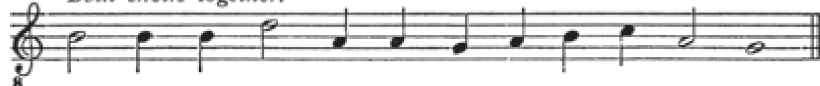


Both cher - u - bim and ser - a-phim: sing ev - er with loud voice this hymn:

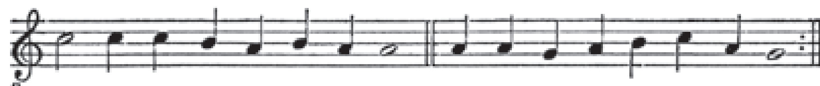


Ho - ly art thou, our God: ho - ly art thou, our God,

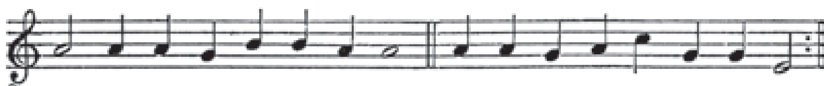
Both choirs together:



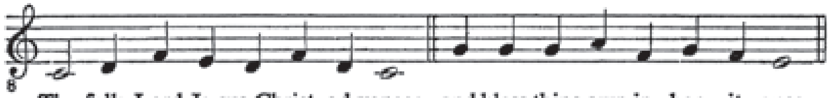
Ho - ly art thou, our God, the Lord of Sab - a - oth.

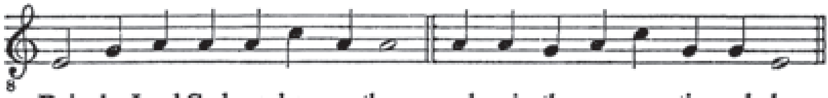


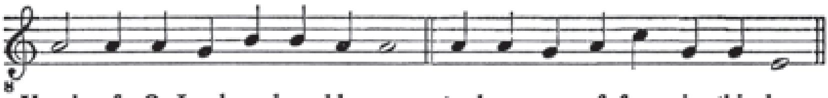
Thy god-like might and lord-ship go: wide o - ver heav'n and earth be-low.
The twelve a - pos - tles join in song: with the dear proph-ets' good-ly throng.
The mar-tyrs' no - ble ar - my raise: their voice to thee in hymns of praise.
All Chris-ten-dom with one ac - cord: ex -alt and praise their com-mon Lord.
Thee, God Fa-ther in heav-en's throne: and thine on - ly be - got - ten Son,
Al - so the Ho - ly Par - a - clete: we ev - er laud with prais-es meet.



O King of Glo - ry, thee we own: thou art the Fa-ther's on - ly Son.
Thou didst not spurn the vir-gin's womb: to save man-kind from sin and doom.
Thou on the might of death didst tread: and Chris-tians all to heav'n hast led.
Thou sit - test at thy Fa-ther's right: e - qual to him in pow'r and might.
To earth thou shalt re - turn a - gain: in maj - es - ty to judge all men.







Both choirs together:

Weller's Luther Guide for the Proper Study of Theology

Timothy R. Schmeling
Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church
Sebastian, Florida

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THE PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR

Not unlike other anthologies or compilations of Martin Luther (1483–1546),[1] *Dr. Martin Luther's Guide for the Proper Study of Theology* is largely a work of Luther. Still it is rightly also attributed to Hieronymus [Jerome] Weller von Molsdorf (1499–1572). He recorded the reformer's advice to him and expanded upon it. His additions are most evident by the strong emphasis on the study of the writings of Luther.

This text helped spur a whole series of Lutheran manuals or introductions to the study of sacred theology.[2] Such guides reached their climax in the *Methodus Studii Theologici* of Johann Gerhard and the *Isagoges Ad SS. Theologiam* of Abraham Calov.[3] Even though this guide is not as comprehensive as those of Gerhard or Calov, it is certainly a unique little text. Weller's introduction offers one of the few sources for Luther's thoughts on how to approach theological study.

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[1] For other examples, see Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, and Hero: Images of the Reformer 1520–1620* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

[2] Marcel Nieden, *Die Erfinden des Theologen: Wittenberger Anweisung zum Theologiestudium im Zeitalter von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

[3] Johann Gerhard, *Methodus Studii Theologici Publicis praelectionibus in Academia Jenensi Anno 1617 exposita* (Jena: Steinmann, 1620); Abraham Calov, *I. N. J. Isagoges Ad SS. Theologiam Libri Duo, De Natura Theologiae, Et Methodo Studii Theologici, Pie, Dextre, Ac Feliciter Tractandi, Cum examine Methodi Calixtinae* (Wittenberg: Hartmann, 1666).

This translation of *Dr. Martin Luther's Guide for the Proper Study of Theology* is based upon Georg Schick's German edition. This edition was published as Hieronymus Weller, ed., *Dr. Martin Luthers Anweisung zum rechten Studium der Theologie,* trans. Georg Schick, 2d ed. (St. Louis: Druckerei des Luth. Concordia-Verlags, 1881). Georg Schick was the rector of Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He issued this little work as a guide for German-speaking American Lutheran students of theology. The purpose of this present translation is to serve that same goal, only now for an English-speaking Lutheran audience.

The Preface of Georg Schick

Hieronymus Weller von Molsdorf was born on September 5, 1499 in Freiberg, Saxony. In the time when Luther began the Reformation, he came to Wittenberg. There he dedicated himself at first to the study of law and for a time led a frivolous life in a bad crowd. But soon he was so frightened in his conscious by the powerful preaching of Luther that he left the way of sin and determined to serve God alone. He then also gave up the study of law and chose instead the study of theology. Luther took him into his home, where he stayed for eight years. It is said that Luther loved him as a son. After he became a doctor of theology, he was called by Duke Heinrich (of Albertine Saxony) as professor of theology at Freiberg and later was also appointed inspector of schools. In these offices, he worked with great blessing for the spiritual formation (*Erbauung*) of the church of Christ until his blessed death on March 20, 1572 in the 73rd year of his life.

He was a learned, mild, and modest man. His great reputation brought him calls from Vienna, Copenhagen, Meißen, Leipzig, and Nuremberg, but he declined them all and wanted rather to bring his life to a peaceful conclusion in his minor position in Freiberg. He is said to have suffered much from spiritual afflictions (*Anfechtungen*) and was also not brought to preach, because he only preached once in Naumberg.

The judgments of the great theologians who lived at that time testify concerning the high respect which he had in the church. (David) Chytraeus calls him an admirable man, the single Lutheran who has become much esteemed on account of his zeal for piety and on account of his purity of doctrine and life. Conrad Porta says that he was the most faithful student and follower of Luther. Lukas Osiander confesses that in his writings the spirit of Christ and Luther lives in the loveliest manner and that his writings are full of true and certain comfort. Nikolaus Selnecker writes of him, "He was a holy man, not merely a

scholar, but also a practical theologian, exercised through the cross of spiritual affliction and capable of comforting the souls of those afflicted in the heart and capable of quickening them through the life-giving Word of Christ."

Among Weller's writings there is a letter concerning the manner and way the study of theology is to be arranged. Therein he has written a guide that was given orally from Martin Luther. Since it can only be a blessing for the Germans studying in America if they know and follow the path to a capable theological formation which Luther has shown to his students, it is offered them here in this work in their native tongue so that it may be accessible to all. Would that God would grant according to His grace that indeed many make use of the presented advice in this book of the greatest theologians of the western church for themselves and become so properly capable of the service of the office which preaches reconciliation.

The notes under the text are by Johann Georg Joch, who has published this golden little book in 1727 at Wittenberg.[4]

The Translation of Dr. Martin Luther's Guide for the Proper Study of Theology

Concerning the arrangement of theological studies

Weller passes on Luther's guide for theological studies.

Grace and peace in Christ! It is right and conscientious of you that you asked me to give you a guide on how you should correctly arrange your theological studies. If one does not correctly arrange these studies immediately from the beginning, afterwards one will never be able to practice theology capably and with success for his entire life long as is evident in many theologians of our time. Since I love you, because of your gifts and good attributes, I want to impart to you the guide that I have obtained for the study of theology and preaching from my faithful teacher, the honorable blessed Dr. Luther.

[4] Johann Georg Joch, ed., *Martini Lutheri Methodus studii theologici* (Wittenberg, 1727). This translator was unable to obtain a copy of this text for review. Note also that Joch's annotations have not been included in this translation.

The Holy Scripture must be read with reverence and with devout prayer.

First, I admonish you again and again that you read the Holy Scriptures entirely differently than secular books; that you read them, namely, with reverence and with deep devotion, not as the words of men or angels, but as the words of the divine majesty, from which a single word should have more power with us than all the writings of wise and learned man together. This reading is accompanied with frequent prayers.

Which times one should use for the reading of the Scriptures.

In the morning when you wake up, set fire to your heart through the reading of the Psalms and the Gospels in prayer. Afterwards spend time in the morning with the reading of the Prophets and the Letters of Paul. Especially acquaint yourself thoroughly with the Letter to the Romans. Whatever remaining time that you have, use for the reading of the writings of Martin Luther and Melanchthon. Plan the afternoon for reading the books of the Old Testament, but above all strive through reading to impress Bible history upon yourself. In addition, include also knowledge of antiquity, i.e., church history. The knowledge of history is necessary for a theologian. One must not so read theological writings that one neglects the study of the sciences and the arts. The sciences and the liberal arts serve the theologian as an aid and an adornment.

The meditation must be directed by the inexhaustible depths of the divine Word.

If you come across an obscure passage in Scripture, do not trouble yourself so much with the examination of the sense of this passage. Rather pass over it until you come to an experienced theologian, whom you can ask for advice concerning it. Furthermore, continue with the reading of Holy Scripture as if you now began to read it for the first time and consider carefully the meaning of each single word and leave it to devout meditation. What will happen first is that you continually draw new instruction or comfort from it. Nothing is more injurious to a theologian than the folly that he understands well and has probed this or that passage of Scripture. The more the Holy Scriptures are read, the sweeter they become, and the richer the comfort they offer to the reader. They are as a well-seasoned plant, which strives to become so much the more fragrant, the more one rubs it. With a word, the Holy Scripture is the inexhaustible source of manifold doctrines and comforts that more

and more excites the thirst, the more one drinks out of it, as all afflicted hearts testify. But men, who are sure and drunk on their desires, think they have drawn out of it all the heavenly truths, when they have hardly tasted the Holy Scripture with their lips.

One obtains such an experience in the Holy Scripture through affliction (Anfechtung).

Whoever, as I have said, reads the Holy Scripture in this manner, does not trouble himself on account of the cross and affliction. Satan cannot harm the serious and desirous reading and hearing of God's Word. Therefore, it happens that God-fearing theologians must pass through many and manifold struggles on account of the study and love of the Word of God as I remind myself that I and many others have undergone. Since I began to hear at first the sermons and lectures of Dr. Luther, I felt immediately the poisonous bite of the devil, who sought to fill me with a bitter hatred towards Luther and his teaching, so that I thought several times of leaving his house, while previously I treasured it with complete happiness when I could enjoy the association of this great man. While temptations of all kinds will come upon the God-fearing theologian, for this reason, he draws the most powerful medicine and the richest comfort against temptations from Holy Scripture. The comfort is far greater than the sadness. The yoke of Christ is gentle for him.

What in particular is observed in meditation.

In addition, I also want to admonish you that you give attention by a thorough reading of a chapter of Holy Scripture, what are the most important passages in this chapter, and then take careful note of the sense and meaning of the words. This care makes a good theologian. "This made me a theologian," Martin Luther once said to me. I do not disapprove of collecting and learning from memory passages of the Scripture, but praise it and admonish all studying theology that they so dedicate themselves as much as possible to the many chief passages of Scripture, so that they are equipped if they want to comfort themselves or others.

Concerning the reading of the church fathers.

Since a student of theology must also read the church fathers, I want to add my judgment and my advice concerning them. Many are convinced that no one can become a solid learned theologian than he

who has carefully read the writings of the church fathers—the writings of Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and others. For this reason, they admonish the beginning theologian to often read the works of the same and to read them again, and would not permit that one begins with Luther (*in Disputationen Luther anführt*). They believe that the authority of the church fathers is greater than Luther's authority. Thus, all are accustomed to pass an opinion on what Luther did not completely recognize. I want to show what advice Dr. Luther has given me in this regard. When I turned my attention to theology the man of God admonished me to read several major writings of Augustine, namely his *Confessions*, in addition his books about *Christian Doctrine, City of God,* and the like. He also advised me several times to read the writings of Bernard on account of their excellent thoughts, which are abundantly present therein. In addition, he wanted me to read Ambrose for the sake of acquiring knowledge of antiquity. He warned me before the study of Origen and similar authors, because they have turned all the passages of Scripture into allegory. For this reason, it was his opinion that the reading of Origen and those similar to him would corrupt the study of theology. Regarding the style and interpretation of Jerome, he has never approved it. His style is bombastic and he took greater pains for the declamation of Scripture than the interpretation of Scripture. In addition, the writings of Basil the Great he did not praise very much, because he said (his words in order to help me), "They stink so very much like monkery." One should read Peter Lombard for his views, because this same one has collected the opinions of the fathers concerning the chief points of doctrine in his book. Still he preferred that young theologians should read him with caution. I remember that he often said, "None of the fathers has put forth the article of justification except Augustine alone and he put it forth moderately."

The reading of the writings of Luther is advised.

After the Holy Scriptures, read and read again the spiritually rich works of Dr. Luther with care and zeal. No one can be a more capable theologian, who is able to correctly examine the conscience and to comfort, than one who has read the writings of Luther for a long time, often, and has sat day and night in them. I know that there are people who prefer Melanchthon's writings more than Luther's writings. They say Melanchthon has systematized all parts of Christian doctrine. This Luther has not done. For this reason, they believe that the writings of Melanchthon are of greater use to the church than Luther's writings.

My opinion is this that the writings of Melanchthon are to be diligently read by those studying theology on account of their method, with which he was a wonderful master and on account of his style, which is classical, pure, endearing, fresh, and clear. But the works of Martin Luther should be diligently studied, according to my opinion, because of their rich explanation of Holy Scripture and excellent thoughts. He has interpreted the writings of the apostles and prophets with such great mastery and clarity as no other commentator could ever have done or will do. Only Luther understood the skill of reading and writing difficult things so clearly, plainly, and simply, that even children can understand his writings. He shares this praise with no other exegete. All the chief articles of the Christian faith he has dealt with comprehensively and clearly in his writings, sermons, and lectures. He alone has revealed the bitterest enemy of the church, the Antichrist, and has freed the conscious from snares of human opinion, strengthened the pious and the afflicted in every kind of temptation and deception, and called many back out from hell through his comfort, as it says in Psalm 30:4, 86:13. There is no temptation or deception for which he had not shown the medicine in Holy Scripture. He has taught men of all ages and levels as one who is said to serve God in his call. The worldly authority has adorned him with great honor. He has refuted not only the Papists, but also the Antinomians, the Enthusiasts, Sacramentarians, and the Anabaptists. In addition, he has battled with almost all the devils as his struggles and afflictions testify. I remember that he once said, "There is no temptation with which I have not been afflicted." These sufferings were lessons for him. They drove him with great care and attention to search the Scripture as the great crowds of theologians. Do not permit yourself through perverted opinions of sure, conceited, and imprudent "wisdom" to make errors, which say that Luther has thrown down his writings, not worked them out, and there are many hyperboles and paradoxes (i.e. exaggerations and strangeness) in them. I do not know what these discriminating critics call hyperboles and paradoxes in Luther's writings; except perhaps sweet words of comfort through which he was accustomed to console the hearts wounded by the fiery arrows of the devil. The following is the way, "If you also have encountered so many sins and defects than ten worlds could commit, you should not doubt, but regard it as certain that they are forgiven you by God, if you earnestly repent and believe on Christ; because the merits of Christ conquer all the sins of the world. You should not see your sin in you but in Christ." Or also, "Christ is the greatest sinner and at the same time the righteousness

and the eternal life." Likewise another time, "The more you think of yourself as a fabricated sinner, the more you will have Christ as a fabricated Savior." If one may call these words of Luther hyperboles and paradoxes, one may also call these passages of Paul such, "Where sin has become powerful, the grace of God has become still more powerful." Or "The law perpetuates only wrath." But confident people, unversed in spiritual battle, do not know what it costs to prop up with comfort a mind contested and a heart bewildered by spiritual darts. We see from a letter of Dr. Luther how he had once comforted the honorable man, Dr. Georg Spalatin, in a temptation, how much he strived to strengthen him. He had gathered together all the reasons for comfort and could still hardly lighten the hurt of this excellent man through them. If the Lord would once in this way "turn to hell" that cheeky critic, in order to serve the word of the Psalm to me (Psalm 9:18), then they will first realize and confess how necessary the "hyperbolic" comforts of Luther are.

Advice concerning the correct manner of preaching. First: concerning the preparation of the sermon.

You have my advice on the subject of the way and manner, how theological study ought to be arranged and I do not doubt that it will be well recognized by you and those like you. But you will recognize it better, once you have begun to preach. Since you once desired to assume the teaching office in the church, I still will set forth some of the virtues of a preacher. There are four main virtues of a preacher. The first virtue of a preacher is that he bring forth a fleshed out, carefully written out sermon, which "arose from the burning of the midnight oil" (welche "nach der Lampe riecht") as one is accustomed to say, and to guard oneself with all diligence that he not become accustomed to extemporized preaching, but that after careful thinking and full preparation, step into the pulpit. He must compose all of his sermons beforehand at home. Preparation produces all kinds of benefits. It brings clarity and order in thought, curbs frivolous invention, corrects and limits the ostentation of the sermon, and works that the preacher speaks considerately, prudently, and carefully, out of fear that he might utter a word in an incautious way, through which the glory of God is injured, the pious heart is offended, or the godless be strengthened in their certainty and insolence. Therefore, it is imperative that all preachers, out of superior piety and learnedness, write down their sermons in the most exact way.

Second: concerning the imploring of the help of the Holy Spirit for the preaching.

The next virtue of the preacher, and in fact the most important, is that he with the greatest fear and trembling, enter the pulpit, i.e., that he call on God that he might give him the Holy Spirit to rule his heart, mouth, and tongue and gives him such a mind, which seeks only of the honor of God and the spiritual formation (*Erbauung*) of the congregation (*Gemeinde*). If when Pericles climbed the speaking-platform he always implored God that no word may be uttered by him through which someone could be injured. How much more proper it is for a teacher of the church, when he climbs the pulpit, on the place where he will not merely have men but even angels and God as hearers, to call on the Holy Spirit, that he rule his mouth and tongue, so that no word be uttered by him, through which the honor of God could be injured or pious hearts be brought to err.

Third: concerning the keeping of vulgarity, oddity, and showing-off out of the sermon.

Third, he should take great efforts that he does not say such a thing by which the masses' ears are itched, which sounds unusual and compels applause, but that he deliver such things which are God-pleasing, useful, and necessary, and thereafter strive with all spiritual powers that he comfort and strengthen the frightened conscience, but frighten with divine threats the stone and iron hearts and humble the unrepentant.

Fourth: concerning the keeping of vanity, witty chafing, and slander out of the sermon.

Fourth, he should guard against, that it not appear, as if he with spirited and delicate sarcasm or taunts, which Paul calls *eutrapelia* (jokes) (Ephesians 5:4), want to tickle the ears of his hearers, that he also not use heavy slanders or bitter words. If the reproof must be sharp, he should still be without slander and bitterness and the whole of that sort, that one see that it has come out of a friendly and blessed heart. Some preachers are namely not merely all too impetuous, but also bitter, poisonous, and slanderous, when they reprove the people for their faults. Therefore, he should always add moderation to his censure, "Faithful brothers in Christ, dear friends, God knows that I do not rebuke you somewhat sharply and chastise your vice out of hate or disfavor, but out of genuine zeal and duty of my office." Although Luther was of a heavy

and fiery disposition and has chastised vice most sharply in his sermons, he always still refrained from slander and words that are too corrupt.

Fifth: concerning the prevention of just boredom during sermons that are all too long.

Fifth, he should always pay attention that he not preach longwinded sermons and overburden the hearers through the treatment of many points, so that they be filled with boredom of the Word. I remember that Dr. Luther had said to a theologian, who was accustomed to preaching two hours long, "You arouse boredom of the Word." In addition, Melanchthon had once made this remark, which was already spoken by a speaker at the table, "A speaker, both a secular and ecclesiastical one, must speak in a very captivating and lovely manner, in order to avoid the boredom of his hearers, if he speaks longer than a half an hour. None of the senses, he said, will tire faster than hearing." This is excellently spoken about by both Luther and Melanchthon. Just as those are counted as the most skilled musicians, who stop when the song is the most beautiful, in order to make a stronger desire for listening in their hearers, so too those are recognized as the best speakers, who know what is sufficient, i.e., who understand how to begin and stop. No one can do this better than he who observes method in speaking. One cannot say again how necessary method is for teaching. It causes the hearers always to take home something out of the sermon. Although it is of great praise for a preacher to set the subject of his speech in a proper clear light, and to make an impression on the hearts of his hearers, he also cannot still bring this about, if he does not properly apply himself to method as also is evident in the writings of Luther and the greatest speakers. There are still more directions that could be given concerning the virtues of a preacher, which you can hear from others in due course. Therefore, this short list pleases me. He lives well in the Lord who wants to give you his tongue and wisdom both for preaching and confessing Christ. Live well in the Lord. LSQ

Freiberg (Albertine Saxony), on September 13, 1561.
Hieronymus Weller, Doctor

1700th Anniversary of the Edict of Milan

Gaylin R. Schmeling
President, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
Mankato, Minnesota

LSQ Vol. 53, Nos. 2–3 (June–September 2013)

THIS YEAR IS THE 1700TH anniversary the Edict of Milan granting religious toleration for the Christian faith in the Roman Empire. In 312, Constantine (282–337),[1] who was proclaimed emperor by his troops, marched into Italy to remove Maxentius from his position of power in Rome. The two armies faced each other a few miles outside the city at the Milvian Bridge. The day before the battle, Constantine is said to have seen the sign of a cross in the sky and above it the words *in hoc signo vinces* (in this sign you will conquer).[2] Constantine pledged that if he won the battle he would become a Christian. The next day, October 28, his army won a complete victory. In February 313, the Edict of Milan was published, which gave the church freedom of worship. Now the church was able to worship the

[1] Constantine was the son and heir of the Roman co-emperor Constantius I Chlorus and Helena, a Christian woman who strongly influenced her son and was later given the title "Augusta" by him. His father was originally an Illyrian general in the Roman army, and Constantine was probably born in Naissus (Nis) in modern-day Serbia. He served with his father in Britain before arriving in Italy. He was a Christian much of his life, but was not baptized until his death in 337. His deathbed Baptism had more to do with an improper understanding of Baptism than a question of his Christianity. Many believed that Baptism only forgave the sins that were committed before one was baptized and not those after receiving the Sacrament. For more information concerning his life see David Potter, *Constantine the Emperor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[2] For other versions of this account, Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius: The Church History* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 1999), 340.

one true God, the Triune God, without fear or harassment. Churches and monasteries were built in many places. Mission work and evangelism increased so that the Gospel of salvation in the Savior Jesus Christ was heard in every part of the empire and beyond. What a blessing we have received in the Edict of Milan. It facilitated the spread of the Gospel throughout Europe so that our forefathers heard the message of salvation.

Constantine – First Christian Emperor

It is difficult for us fully to comprehend the impact that Constantine had on the church. Just a few years before, Christians had been hunted like animals. Now they were given freedom of religion and soon would have most favored status in the empire. It was no wonder that Christians were filled with appreciation for Constantine and his mother, Helena, who had long been a Christian and was a continual influence on her son. Sunday became an official day of rest for all in 321. Beautiful churches were built at government expense by Constantine and his mother. Among these were churches built on the sites of holy places in Palestine, such as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The basilica form of architecture, originating from public Roman buildings, was used in many of these churches. Christian clergy were shown great respect. They did not have to pay taxes and could travel at government expense. Constantine even built an entirely new capital, a Christian capital, Constantinople, which is modern-day Istanbul.

Before the time of Constantine Christian worship had been fairly simple. Christians met in private homes and slowly developed house churches like the one found at Dura-Europos dating from around 250. But after Constantine's conversion, Christian worship began to be influenced by imperial protocol. Incense, which was used as a sign of respect for the emperor, began appearing in Christian churches. Officiating ministers, who until then had worn everyday clothes, began dressing in more formal garments. A number of gestures indicating respect, which were normally made before the emperor, now became part of Christian worship. For example, the processional from the imperial court now began the worship service. Choirs took a much greater part in the service and the congregation came to have a less active role in the liturgy.[3]

Instead of being tried by fire the church was now tried by the favor of the emperor. The favor of the emperor made it socially acceptable to

[3] J. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. I (San Francisco: Harper, 1984), 125.

be a Christian. Thousands flocked to the church to curry the emperor's favor. If you wanted a good job or the right position you had to be a Christian. Thus the church was filled with many that had little interest or concern for the Christian faith or morals.

Many were enamored with Constantine but none more than Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339) in Palestine. He wrote the *Life of Constantine*, a work which is filled with exaggerated flattery for Constantine. If that were his only work he probably wouldn't be remembered. But he wrote another vitally important work; his *Ecclesiastical History* is the main source of the history of the church from the Acts of the apostles to the defeat of Licinius in 324. Without this book we would have little information about the early years of the church. He is known as the father of church history.

The Trinitarian Controversies or the Battle over the "I"

Constantine had hoped that Christianity would be a unifying factor for an empire that was coming apart at the seams. Yet this was not to be the case. A great controversy broke out concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. This was not the first struggle that developed concerning this doctrine but it was by far the most devastating.[4]

An elder at Alexandria in Egypt, Arius (260–336)[5] by name, taught that the Son was less than God the Father. He was like God but not God as the Father is God. The Father was without beginning while the Son had a beginning, the first and highest of created beings. With an excellent gift for propaganda, Arius composed hymns which were chanted in the streets of Alexandria and throughout the East re-enforcing his

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[4] In the Western Church there was a tendency to emphasize the oneness of the divine essence in the Trinity while in the East there was a greater emphasis on the threeness of the persons and at times an improper subordination of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The two main early heresies were dynamic and modalistic monarchianism. Dynamic monarchianism refers to an attempt to defend the "monarchy" or unity of God by claiming that the divinity that was in Christ was an impersonal power proceeding from God but was not God Himself. It is called "dynamic" by reason of the Greek term *dynamis*, which means "power." God was in Jesus as He was in Moses but only in a greater degree. Modalistic monarchianism did not deny the full divinity of Christ, but simply identified it with the Father. Because of that identification, which implied that the Father had suffered in Christ, this doctrine is sometimes called "Patripassianism." This form of the heresy assumed that Father, Son, and Spirit merely represented three different forms or modes of appearance of the one God; or to put it more bluntly, God, like an actor, would wear different masks. Early in the third century it found its greatest expositor in Sabellius from whom it also has taken the name Sabellianism.

[5] For a history of the life of Arius see Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).

major premise, "There was when the Son was not." Thus he rejected the true divinity of the Second Person.

The Council of Nicaea

When Constantine realized a new controversy was brewing, he called a universal church council, hoping to save the unity of the church which was to be the cement of the empire. The council met at Nicaea near Constantinople in 325. More than 300 bishops were in attendance. It was a sight to behold. Men who had been mutilated and who bore the marks of persecution in their flesh were now being brought together and housed in deluxe accommodations at government expense.

At the council Constantine introduced the term *homoousios,* which he probably received from his spiritual advisor, Hosius of Cordova. It meant that the Son was of the same substance as the Father or that He was God as the Father was God. The council expressed belief in "one Lord, Jesus Christ … very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, by whom all things were made." The council also rejected those who teach that "there was when he was not," or that the Son of God was created, or changeable, or of another substance than the Father. Anyone who believed these errors was anathematized (i.e., declared accursed). This is the origin of the Nicene Creed which is used in our communion liturgy.

Athanasius Against the World

Humanly speaking, the biblical doctrine of Nicaea would never have won the day had it not been for a young man who was also from Alexandria, Athanasius by name (c. 296-377).[6] He seems to have been a native Egyptian and not a Greek. This means he would have been dark-complected and small-framed. This would explain why this theological giant was mocked as the "black dwarf" by his opponents. He made a powerful defense of the *homoousios* at Nicaea. He knew that only a divine Christ could be Savior, therefore the Son had to be of one substance with the Father. Only the one who created all could restore humanity and overcome the sharpness of death. God became man so that we might become as God sharing in His divine glory.[7] In his important treatise *On The Incarnation*, he wrote, "He, the Mighty

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[6] For a history of the life of Athanasius see Michael E. Molloy, *Champion of Truth: The Life of Saint Athanasius* (New York: Alba House, 2003).

[7] *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi De*, trans. and ed. A Religious of CSMV (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co Ltd, 1975), 93.

… prepared … this body in the virgin … that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire."[8]

When the bishops returned home from Nicaea there was a concerted effort by the Arian party to overthrow the doctrine of Nicaea. They maintained that the Son was not *homoousios* or of one substance with the Father. Rather they said the Son was *homoiousios* or of like substance as the Father. Because there was merely a letter difference between the two Greek terms, scoffers mocked saying that the whole controversy was over one "i." Athanasius knew better. The *homoiousios* doctrine spoke of the Son as like but not of equal substance with the Father and therefore there was no divine Savior who could accomplish the redemption of men. The struggle continued on, and often it appeared that the whole world stood against Athanasius and Athanasius against the world (*Athanasius contra mundum et mundus contra Athansium*). Slowly, however, the Nicene doctrine prevailed.

The Cappadocians and the Council of Constantinople in 381

Three younger and influential theologians helped make Athanasius' victory complete. They were Basil of Caesarea (in Cappadocia [300-379]), his friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (330-395).[9] Since all were from Cappadocia, in modern-day Turkey, they came to be known as the three great Cappadocians.

Many in the East feared that the "same substance" terminology of Athanasius was destroying the distinction between the persons of the Godhead. The Cappadocians clearly defined the terms "person" and "essence" confirming that there was no confusion of the persons. There were three distinct persons in the one divine being or essence. Gregory of Nazianzus properly explained the distinction between the persons: the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten, and the Holy Spirit processing from the Father and the Son.[10] Nazianzus was also important in defining the two natures doctrine concerning our Lord's person with his vital axiom, "What was not assumed was not redeemed," which

[8] Ibid., 34.

[9] For a short and concise history of the Cappadocians see Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995).

[10] John A. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 290.

underscored the truth that the Savior had to be totally and completely God and totally and completely man in one person (*Quod Filius Dei non assumpsit, non redemit*).[11]

At the Council of Constantinople the doctrine of Nicaea was reaffirmed. The battle of Athanasius, who had died in the meantime after enduring five exiles, had not been in vain. This council condemned a heresy which rejected the deity of the Holy Spirit and added much of what our present Nicene Creed states concerning the Spirit.

Conclusion

Constantine and his mother, Helena, are considered to be great heroes of faith by much of Christianity, and through them the Lord has provided wonderful benefits for His church, blessings which we still enjoy today. Christianity was probably not the unifying factor for the empire that Constantine hoped it would be with the various theological controversies of the time. Yet the reinvigorated Christian empire in the West continued until 476[12] and in the East until 1453. The Edict of Milan gave the church freedom of religion, freedom to worship the one, true God, the Triune God, the Trinity in Person and the unity in substance of majesty coequal. Through the privileges granted by Constantine, mission work and evangelism increased so that the Gospel of salvation in the Savior Jesus Christ was heard in every part of the empire and beyond. What a blessing we have received in the Edict of Milan. It facilitated the spread of the Gospel throughout Europe and the Middle East so that our forefathers heard the message of salvation. May we, who are part of that great march of faith lifting high the cross, draw more and more to Christ Jesus and Him crucified; in this sign we will conquer. LSQ

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[11] Chemnitz said, "Moreover, the statement of Nazianzus is most significant, a statement which all antiquity accepted, namely, that that part of human nature 'which was not assumed by Christ was not healed' (τὸ ἀπρόσληπτον ἀθεράπευτον)" (Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J.A.O. Preus [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971], 60).

[12] Remember that the Western Empire was renewed with the crowning of Charlemagne in 800 and continued until 1806.

Book Review

LSQ Vol. 53, Nos. 2–3 (June–September 2013)

Book Review: When Christ Walked Among Us

James F. Pope. *When Christ Walked Among Us.* Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2012. 220 pages. $25.00.

When Christ Walked Among Us is one of two books available from Northwestern Publishing House that were written by Rev. James F. Pope. Pope declares in the preface that his purpose for writing this book is "telling the story of Jesus' earthly life and ministry from the inspired accounts of the four gospels" but also "to tell the story of a compassionate and intimate Jesus, whose whole life and ministry were dedicated to reaching out to people, like us, with his divine and unearned love." These goals, I believe, the author has accomplished very well.

Generally speaking, *When Christ Walked Among Us* is a delightful book to read. Pope's syntax and vocabulary are geared to casual reading. Although the author does not establish an intended target audience, *When Christ Walked Among Us* is easily understood even by younger readers. Because the text is based on the New International Version (1984 edition), *When Christ Walked Among Us* has a casual and natural flow and yet maintains the dignity of the holy and precious story that it tells. The full-color wrap-around cover is printed on heavy, glossy stock and is attractive both in its photography and graphics. The book contains two hundred and twenty pages of text, ten pages of subject index, as well as a table of contents, forward, preface and many useful maps, diagrams, and illustrations. The sizes and styles of the text's fonts make the book very appealing to the eyes.

Although it is of an "easy reading" nature, *When Christ Walked Among Us* carries the weight of Christian doctrine on every page. This is so because the book's text is so closely connected to the Gospel texts. Doctrinal questions that arise from reading the Gospel texts are carefully considered and answered by the author. The author makes specific commentary as necessary, yet doing so in a way that leaves the flow of the story line unimpeded. Although *When Christ Walked Among Us* is neither a paraphrase of the four Gospels nor a commentary on them, the book bears certain qualities of both. Particularly helpful are several "asides" that appear interspersed within the text through which the author gives interesting and perhaps critical secular information that lends itself to a proper understanding of what is happening in the story. Consider these examples: In the midst of the account of Jesus' baptism by John, Pope adds a highlighted paragraph explaining the meaning of the names "Messiah" and "Christ." In the narrative sub-titled *The Miracles at Jesus' Death*, the author explains the significance of the tearing of the Temple Curtain. Also significant is Pope's diligence to relate the incidents in Christ's life to the Old Testament prophecies made concerning Him.

Whereas a more traditional division of Christ's life yields "The Year of Inauguration," "The Year of Popularity," and "The Year of Opposition," Pope divides our Savior's life among eleven chapters, beginning with the annunciation of His birth and that of His forerunner, John the Baptist, and concluding with the ascension of our Lord into heaven. Of these, only the first chapter deals with Jesus' early life. The remaining ten chapters explore the three years of His earthly ministry by following Him on His preaching tours to the different areas of Palestine and also areas to the east of the Jordan River. The author has carefully included in his narrative most every Gospel account of the interactions that Jesus had with everyone He met: His interaction with the shepherds and Magi in His infancy, His interaction with Mary and Joseph and the teachers at the temple at age twelve, His interaction with His earthly family, His disciples, His hearers, His enemies, and of course His Father in heaven. Pope's attention to each detail makes *When Christ Walked Among Us* a very thorough telling of the Gospel's story. Each subtitled section of the text is annotated as to the Gospel text, or texts, from which it is taken, thus proving to be an excellent "harmony of the synoptic Gospels" resource as well. Although the author acknowledges that, due to the form in which the Gospels were first given to mankind, it is impossible to put an exact date stamp or an accurate chronological sequence on every account mentioned in them, Pope followed "a chronology developed by William F. Beck in his book *The Christ of the Gospels*," (from the preface, paragraph two) as he prepared his manuscript. Pope deals with any apparent anachronisms in this chronology by mentioning and explaining them as far as he can without "excessive" speculation.

When Christ Walked Among Us would prove a useful addition to many

libraries. For a preacher expounding on a Gospel text, or for a teacher relating Gospel accounts to students, the excellent detail of Pope's work, along with its Gospel harmonizing ability, the author's expression of the obvious emotions of the characters, and his addition of much parallel information concerning the customs and activities of the time when Jesus walked the earth, will help to make Gospel presentations more interesting and memorable. For any Christian who simply desires to "remain in the Word," *When Christ Walked Among Us* will provide a compact, organized, and understandable account of the events that won our salvation. For a Christian friend, wishing to share the Gospel's saving message with another, this book will prove to be an excellent evangelism tool. For a confirmation student needing to learn and understand the history of Christ's life, *When Christ Walked Among Us* would be excellent assigned reading. This is not to say that this book should ever replace the actual reading of the Holy Scriptures, for they are "the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16). Yet *When Christ Walked Among Us* will only serve to confirm and strengthen the holy faith that God's Means of Grace have brought us.

Available at Northwestern Publishing House, *When Christ Walked Among Us* would be an excellent purchase for personal use or as a fine gift for another.

– Nile B. Merseth

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