

Lutheran Synod Quarterly



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Foreword

This issue of the Quarterly contains a sermon delivered at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary graduation on June 11, 2000. The sermon is based on Deuteronomy 32:39 with the theme *Jesus is the Divine Physician who Gives Life and Sends Men as Physicians of Souls*. This is the purpose of our seminary: to prepare physicians of the soul who provide the healing balm of the Gospel.

The Rev. Michael K. Smith has prepared an excellent exegesis of II Thessalonians 2:1-12. This is the important *sedes* of the biblical doctrine of the Antichrist. According to Scripture the Antichrist has been revealed in the Roman Papacy. The Rev. Smith is pastor of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Holland, Michigan, which is a mission congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

We are pleased to present an article written by the sainted Professor Milton H. Otto, who was dean of our seminary for many years. The article is entitled *The Office of Visitor in the ELS*. In this presentation he explains the duties and responsibilities of the visitor in our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This is one of the few resources which describe this important office in our synod.

Professor Adolph Harstad opens for us a wealth of biblical truth in his notes and commentary on Joshua 1:7-8 entitled *Success through Scripture*. Here he emphasizes the importance of God's Word in the life of the believer.

In this Quarterly there is a review of the book *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics, Volume IV* by Adolf Hoenecke. He was one of the foremost theologians of American Lutheranism and an early leader of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The reviewer of the book is Professor John A. Moldstad, Jr. of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

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Seminary Graduation Sermon on Deuteronomy 32:39

by Gaylin R. Schmeling

Prayer: O Jesus, Divine Physician of souls, You know the terrible condition of our hearts, and only You can provide the cure. Cause us to look nowhere else for healing than in Your blood and righteousness, the only medicine of souls, the medicine of immortality. Through Your Holy Spirit strengthen the men in our seminary to be physicians of the soul. Also open the hearts of more and more to this important work. Then they and the whole church will be reunited in the heavenly homeland above. Amen.

Text: *See now that I myself am He! There is no god beside me. I put to death and I bring to life. I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.* (Deuteronomy 32: 39)

Introduction: In 1967 I was a junior in high school. In that year, when many high school and college students were thinking about the Vietnam War and going to San Francisco with a flower in their hair, something fantastic happened in, of all places, apartheid South Africa. A South African surgeon, Christian Barnard, shocked the world. He cut into a man's chest and stopped his heart. Then he restored the man to life by replacing his heart with the heart of another. He had literally killed his patient in order to restore him to life.

In a similar way our gracious Lord says, "It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal." He is the **Divine Physician who Gives Life and Sends Men as Physicians of Souls.** This is the purpose of our seminary: to prepare physicians of the soul who provide the healing balm of the Gospel.

I. First we want to consider the Divine Physician who gives life. Because of our sin, each of us faces certain death. By nature we were all totally dead in trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1) As a dead person can do nothing to make himself alive, so we could do nothing to be spiritually alive. So terrible is that bondage that even now our sinful flesh craves to do those things which will only hurt us and those around us. (Romans 7:18-19)

We are to image the love of Christ, but we are often heartless and cold. We often know of an individual who needs help, but we ignore him because we don't want to be bothered. We are bitter and hold grudges against those who are one with us in the body of Christ. We promise to give our life to Jesus, yet we really live only to fulfill our every lust, craving, passion, and desire. We sit here piously in church—still our sinful flesh distracts us by the oddities of the preacher or our dislike of one in the assembly so that we are not fed with the Bread of Life which alone can save our immortal souls. We say as Israel of old, “Our souls loath this light bread.” (Numbers 21:5) What a wretched thing our sinful flesh is.

Because of our sin each of us faces everlasting death in hell. But just as a surgeon cures his patient by first wounding him in order to heal him, God wounds us through the Law in order to heal us through the Gospel. Christ uses the sharp knife of the Law to cut deep into our flesh so that we see our lost condition. We do not have merely a minor surface infection on our skin. By nature we were dead in the horrible disease of sin. We were dead on delivery, dead on the operating table.

Yet Jesus the Divine Physician gives life. He restores us to health and He heals our wounds. (Jeremiah 30:17) Like a surgeon He wounds through the Law, stopping our diseased and sinful hearts. He then transforms them through the Gospel of forgiveness. This wonderful medicine of the Gospel He prepared for us through His holy life, which the Father counts as the perfect life of all people, and through His holy death, where He washed all our sins away. In order to supply this perfect healing balm it

was necessary for Him to be infected with the cumulative sin-disease of us all, to be tormented by its terrible effects, and to suffer the eternally deadly consequences of it. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)

This life-giving medicine of the Gospel is brought to us through the means of grace where Jesus comes to us as the Good Samaritan pouring healing balm on the diseased flesh and binding up our wounds. This treasure of forgiveness is received by faith alone in the Savior which is worked, strengthened, and preserved through those same means of grace.

II. Now this Divine Physician who gives Life sends men as physicians—physicians of souls. For this reason our Norwegian and German forefathers spoke of their pastor as a *Seelsorger*, that is, one who cares for souls. This is the purpose of our seminary, to prepare physicians of souls. Their instruments are Law and Gospel. Their work is that of the Divine Physician to wound through the Law so that we daily die to sin, and then to give new life through the sweet balm of the Gospel.

What a glorious calling! The public ministry is a divine institution of God. (Ephesians 4:11; Titus 1:5-7) It is Christ through His Spirit who makes these men His servants, who function in His place. (II Corinthians 5:20) When the pastor or the Christian Day School teacher proclaims the Word, it is the very voice of Christ in our midst. (Luke 10:16) When the pastor baptizes and celebrates the Holy Supper, it is the hand of Christ which pours the life-giving water and offers Christ's body and blood. At the same time, because the authority of the Keys rests with the body of Christ, the church, and because God calls His servants through the church, the called servants perform all the functions of the public ministry in the name of the church. (II Corinthians 4:5)

You graduates are called by God as pastors or physicians of the soul to mirror or image the Divine Physician for the church.

You are to be examples for the flock of God. (I Peter 5:3) Pastors and all those in the public ministry will picture the life of Christ so that those around them see the love of Christ in them. They will be little Christs in their community. Concerning this Luther writes, “I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ.” (LW 31:367)

The pastor will nourish the congregation with the life-giving Word and the blessed Sacraments. To be sure, he has to use the strong medicine of the Law to point out sin and error. But his most important work is to present the sweet balm of the Gospel to bind up the wounded, those broken in sin and the burdens of life. He seeks the lost and gathers the church. He tends the faithful until the Lord calls them home and he comforts those who remain.

The Divine Physician calls our seminarians as physicians of the soul to use the mysteries of God, the means of grace, Word and Sacraments. (I Corinthians 4:1) These mysteries are the greatest treasure there is. Without Jesus life has no meaning and purpose and our end is destruction. Without Him there will always be something missing in our lives. There will be a craving within that will not be satisfied with wealth, wine, women, or song. “Only Jesus can the heartfelt longing still.” With Him as our Savior we have peace and purpose in this life and the blessed hope of the life to come.

This is the priceless treasure that those in the public ministry will dispense. They are stewards of the mysteries of God. There is no greater work than this. The most important earthly occupation will only benefit for this life. A doctor can only care for the body. He can only make the body well. But the called servant, the physician of souls, distributes the medicine for immortality, the antidote for death, that we may live forever in glory.

Those in the public ministry will preach and teach the Word, administer the Sacraments, forgive and not forgive sins,

and image Christ in the midst of His body, the church, so that the whole church and each member will be built up to better carry out our Lord’s great commission to proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Then more and more will come to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. (John 17:3; Ephesians 4:11)

You, my dear friends, are called by the Divine Physician to be physicians of souls, to be pastors. What an awesome responsibility! Seeing the great responsibilities of this office and our own unworthiness, you could easily start to second-guess your decision to enter this calling. Yet you need not fear, for the Divine Physician is with you all the way working all for your good, even turning evil into good in your life. (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20) Through Word and Sacrament He gives us the power to do all things through Him, the power to overcome and obtain the victory. The Divine Physician, who heals our wounds and restores to health, is sending you as physicians—physicians of souls.

*Let none hear you idly saying,
“There is nothing I can do,”
While the multitudes are dying,
And the Master calls for you.
Take the task He gives you gladly;
Let His work your pleasure be.
Answer quickly when He calleth,
“Here am I, send me, send me!”*

An Exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

by Michael K. Smith

Introduction

“So there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Should that be our sentiment as we consider yet another treatment of Scripture’s teaching regarding the Antichrist? In some ways, yes. God’s Word has not changed nor will it ever. Therefore, no great revelations will be discovered in the pages that follow. However, a cursory reading of this section of the Bible will not suffice, considering the times in which we live. What follows, therefore, is somewhat detailed. The purpose of such detail is an attempt to focus on a few nuances, a few insights, which may be gleaned from a familiar passage.

Context

Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians was probably written within a couple of months of his first. Since Silas and Timothy were still with him, it seems likely that Paul was still in Corinth on his second missionary journey when he wrote this letter. Thus the date of writing is in late AD 51 or early AD 52. Paul wrote his first letter to express joy over the faithfulness of the Thessalonians, especially in the midst of persecution (chapters 1-3), and to supply what was lacking in their faith (chapters 4-5). His second letter was penned also to encourage the Thessalonians in their faith.

While Paul addresses some of the same topics in his second letter as he did in his first (the Thessalonians’ faithfulness and the persecution they endured), he adds the encouragement that

their final victory was coming. When Jesus returns, the persecutors will be punished, while the faithful will gain eternal relief.

In the first chapter of this letter Paul praises the Thessalonians for their faithfulness (vv. 1-4), promises God’s relief is on its way (vv. 5-7), presents the coming punishment for those who persecute God’s people (vv. 8-10), and prays that the Thessalonians will glorify the name of Jesus according to God’s grace (vv. 11-12).

In the second chapter Paul expands on the subject of what will happen to the persecutors by describing the Antichrist. It appears as though some among the Thessalonians were concerned that they had missed out on Christ’s return. Apparently a rumor circulated among them to that effect. Some believed the message “The Day of the Lord has already come!” (2:2) was from Paul himself. Had they indeed been left behind? Were they to fret and worry that the object of their hope, their Lord, had come and not taken them to be with Him?

Paul addresses these concerns in chapter two in order to allay the fears and misguided notions of the Thessalonians. He assures them that, indeed, the Lord is going to return and they would be gathered with Him (along with all Christians – v.1; cf. also 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). This has not taken place as of yet, and they are not to believe reports to the contrary (v.2). Prior to the Lord’s coming the “man of sin” will be revealed (v.3), who will actually go so far as to proclaim he is God (v.4). Paul then reminds the Thessalonians in v.5 that he has already told them these things: “Do you not remember that when we were still with you we were speaking these things to you?” In asking that question, the expected answer was, “Yes, Paul, we do remember these things. We haven’t forgotten them.” One of the things Paul had already told them he reiterates in v.6, that they knew what was keeping the Antichrist in check. In verses 7-10 Paul gives more details concerning this lawless one. He closes this section by detailing some of the effects the Antichrist’s work has on people in verses 11-12. Following this section, Paul closes the chapter

with more encouragement to stand firm in the teachings they had received from him (vv. 13-17).

Verse 1: Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτόν, = “We are pleading with you, brothers, concerning the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him.”

Vocables

- Ἐρωτῶμεν – 1st per. pl. pres. act. indic. fr. ἐρωτάω; asking, beseeching, pleading, begging
- παρουσίας – fem. sg. gen.; arrival (of an important person), coming
- ἐπισυναγωγῆς – fem. sg. gen.; being gathered together, an assembling

Paul begins this section with an earnest plea (note the forward placement of Ἐρωτῶμεν for emphasis). This plea is not once made and then forgotten, but is ongoing because of the content of the plea (vv. 2-4); i.e., Paul feels that the seriousness of what he addresses warrants an ongoing plea. This plea relates to the foregoing (continuative use of δὲ), because Paul is expanding on how the Thessalonians’ persecutors would be punished.

Twenty-one times in 1 & 2 Thessalonians Paul refers to his readers as ἀδελφοί, (eight times in 2 Thessalonians). With the use of this term Paul implies a close family relationship, that relationship brought about by being fellow members of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:25). He speaks to them as a brother speaks to a brother, pleading with them because he cares for their spiritual welfare.

About what does Paul plead? He pleads with the Thessalonians concerning Christ’s return. παρουσία literally means “coming” or “arrival,” to which is usually attached the meaning of the *Lord’s* arrival (e.g., cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:19). παρουσία

refers to the arrival of an important person, and is properly used in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 for the coming of the Antichrist. Here Paul refers to what he had previously told the Thessalonians, the arrival τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. His arrival they eagerly awaited, since He was their Lord and Savior.

But Paul does not plead with them only concerning Christ’s second coming. He also pleads concerning ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτόν. Since the definite article is absent from ἐπισυναγωγῆς, Paul stresses the quality of this gathering together, that it will be a blessed and wonderful gathering (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). Note also the passive implication of this term, that the believers will *be* gathered together by God as a gracious act. The Thessalonians can take comfort again in the fact that they will be visibly with Jesus Himself at His return.

Verse 2: εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς μηδὲ θροεῖσθαι, = “in order that you might not immediately be shaken from your sound thinking nor disturbed”

Vocables

- ταχέως – adv.; quickly; Louw-Nida: pertaining to a very short extent of time
- σαλευθῆναι – aor. pass. inf. fr. σαλεύω; be distressed, upset, shaken (lit. - totter like a reed)
- νοῦς – m. sg. gen.; mind, understanding, sound thinking
- θροεῖσθαι – pres. pass. inf. fr. θροέω; be disturbed, alarmed, startled; Louw-Nida: be in a state of fear associated with surprise

Paul begins the content of his plea with a negative purpose clause (εἰς τὸ μὴ). Bolstered by the aorist tense of σαλευθῆναι, this means there is something Paul does not want them to do! He tells them not to “lose [their] heads” (NET). Something they had heard was causing the Thessalonians to be so deeply distressed that they were in danger of being jolted off the

foundation of their faith. This message is the agent behind the passive of σαλευθῆναι.

Note the forward position of ταχέως. Would the Thessalonians be misled so soon after Paul had been with them? Paul had asked a similar question of the Galatians (Gal. 1:6). Was their faith so weak, their knowledge of spiritual matters so limited, that they would believe one of the first false teachings with which they were confronted?

The sphere of such “shaking” Paul gives with νοῶς. This term focuses on one’s cognition, or intellectual reasoning, apart from any emotional attachment. Paul simply makes an appeal to the Thessalonians’ common sense: “Does what you are hearing make *sense*...really?” If the Thessalonians would keep in mind what they had been taught by Paul when he was with them and through his first letter to them, they would not give any credence to false teaching.

Paul also does not want the Thessalonians θροεῖσθαι. Note the present tense. The Thessalonians could be shaken by a false teaching on any one given occasion, but could not continue to be disturbed by the same (thus also the passive voice). The emotions, therefore, are not immune from the effects of false teaching. When one’s beliefs are shaken, one’s emotions will also be affected. To have the basis of one’s faith attacked, especially unexpectedly, leads one to be disturbed.

μήτε διὰ πνεύματος μήτε διὰ λόγου μήτε δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι’ ἡμῶν, ὡς ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου· = “neither by a spirit, neither by a spoken message nor by a letter allegedly from us, saying, ‘The Day of the Lord has come!’”

Vocables

λόγου – m. sg. gen; word, message (esp. spoken)

ἐνέστηκεν – perf. act. fr. ἐνίστημι; has come, has arrived

How might the Thessalonians be shaken or disturbed (v. 2a)? Paul gives the means by which such a disturbance might occur. The μήτε...μήτε...μήτε delineate two means (thus the translation “neither...neither...nor”). The Thessalonians might be shaken by a πνεύματος, a spirit. Without the definite article this spirit is “some kind of” spirit. This term probably refers to a message that someone had supposedly received through divine means. The Thessalonians might be shaken by a message that had been supposedly spoken or written by Paul himself. Both λόγου and ἐπιστολῆς are also indefinite; the “some kind of” demonstrates their lack of credibility. Had Paul been the author of such a message, it would not simply be “some kind of” message! The ὡς defines the potential means of shaking the Thessalonians’ faith as “allegedly” from Paul. In no way had it come from him.

The false message that had the potential to shake the Thessalonians’ faith was very straightforward: ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου. The perfect tense of ἐνέστηκεν denotes the fact that the day of the Lord’s return has arrived and no longer has to be awaited. ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου is a term with which the Thessalonians were already familiar, since Paul had used this same term in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. They knew that the day of Christ’s return was the Last Day.

Amplified Paraphrase of vv. 1-2: Relating to what I just wrote you, dear fellow Christians, that those who are persecuting you will be punished, and that you will glorify God’s name through your perseverance, I am making a plea with you. Don’t allow your faith to be shaken by false messages concerning your Lord’s return at the end of the world! When Jesus comes we will all be with Him by God’s grace. There are no messages from God through me or someone else stating that Jesus has already returned. You have not missed out on anything!

Verse 3: μή τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατήσῃ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον, = “Do not let anyone deceive you in any way.”

Vocables

ἐξαπατήσῃ – 3rd per. sg. aor. subj. fr. ἐξαπατάω; deceive completely, entice, delude; Louw-Nida: to cause someone to have misleading or erroneous views concerning the truth

κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον – in line with no direction or manner; thus, “in any way”

This sentence summarizes what Paul just stated concerning the means by which the Thessalonians might be shaken in their faith. The prohibition is a strong one: “Do not even *begin* to...” If such false and misleading information reaches their ears, no matter from whom it comes (τις means it is definitely not from Paul), they are to refuse to listen. It also does not matter how this information comes; there are no acceptable means through which the Thessalonians should allow themselves to be deceived.

ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, = “Because unless the falling away comes first and the revelation of the man of sin, the son of destruction,”

Vocables

ἔλθῃ – 3rd per. sg. aor. subj. fr. ἔρχομαι; comes
ἀποστασία - fem. sg. nom.; falling away, desertion, rebellion

ἀνομίας – fem. sg. gen.; lawlessness, wickedness, iniquity

ἀπωλείας – fem. sg. gen.; destruction, ruin

An ellipsis occurs between ὅτι and ἐὰν. It is understood that the false message from v.2 should be placed there in

the future (negative) tense: “Because *the Day of the Lord will not come* unless...” ἐὰν μὴ introduces a future more vivid condition. In other words, “If the Day of the Lord has not come (which it has not), then certainly the falling away must come first (before the Day will come).”

The ἀποστασία...καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας is the first of nine identifying marks of the coming Antichrist which Paul lists (through v.11). The term ἀποστασία is best taken to connote a desertion, especially that of being unfaithful to God (cf. 2 Chronicles 29:19; Acts 21:21). What will be deserted will be the truth of salvation (cf. vss. 10-12). The ἀποστασία will not entail open rebellion as much as it will involve slowly sliding from the truth to the lie, since it simply ἔλθῃ. By implication the Thessalonians are to watch so that they are not apathetically taken into this deadly tide and swept into unfaithfulness.

Whereas the apostasy “comes,” the “man of sin” will be revealed. The agent behind this ἀποκαλυφθῇ is God Himself (cf. v.8). He will not allow the Antichrist to remain hidden indefinitely, but will definitely (aorist tense) make it quite clear who this evil one is by uncovering him for all to see. The definite article preceding ἄνθρωπος and its singular person also makes it clear that there is only one specific person Paul has in mind. This man is characterized by ἀνομίας. Everything he does and is about is lawlessness! He holds himself immune from any injunction of God and lives by his own rules. The appositional phrase ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας also describes this man. Paul employs a Hebraism here, calling him a “son of” destruction. What he stresses is the close connection this man has with what occurs; namely, destruction. Should ἀπωλείας be taken in the transitive sense (this man causes the destruction to take place), or in the intransitive sense (this man is doomed to destruction)? A case for either could probably be made. It is perhaps best to take this term in the intransitive sense, because this man will eventually be sent to eternal damnation. Yes, he will cause destruction in many senses of the term,

but not the ultimate destruction which God alone renders (Matthew 10:28). It is interesting to note that Jesus used this same phrase to describe Judas in John 17:12, who was also sent to “where he belonged” (Acts 1:25).

Textual Variant – ἀνομίας (text) or ἁμαρτίας

ἁμαρτίας is a synonym of ἀνομίας with a different shade of meaning (to act contrary to God’s will or law). This reading is probably preferable. Only the Alexandrian witnesses serve as primary support for ἀνομίας. Furthermore, Paul makes use of ἁμαρτίας only once throughout 1 or 2 Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:16). In the immediate context, he employs ἀνομι – in this verse, and also in vv. 7 and 8. It would be more likely for a scribe to change from ἁμαρτίας to ἀνομίας in order to fit the context.

The First Mark of the Antichrist

As stated above, this verse explains the first of nine defining marks of the Antichrist. Accompanying his revelation would come the apostasy, the general falling away from the true faith. That is, the Antichrist will not be revealed until the general apostasy occurs. In Paul’s time, of course, the general apostasy had not taken place. Since it has now become clear to those who search their Scriptures well that the office of the papacy is the Antichrist (see the marks that follow), it is also clear that the general apostasy is well underway.

Verse 4: ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, = “the one who opposes by exalting himself over every person that is called God or worshipped”

Vocables

ἀντικείμενος – m. sg. pres. nom. ptc. fr. ἀντίκειμαι;

opposes, stands against, takes place of
 ὑπεραιρόμενος – m. sg. pres. mid. nom. ptc. fr.
 ὑπεραίρω; exalts himself, proudly sets himself
 up as; Louw-Nida: to become puffed up with
 pride, with the probable implication of being dis-
 paraging toward others
 λεγόμενον – m. sg. pres. pass. acc. ptc. fr. λέγω; one
 that is called; Louw-Nida: speaking of a person
 by attributing a title to him
 σέβασμα – n. sg. acc.; object of worship or veneration;
 TDNT: everything to which σέβασμα is paid
 (because it is under the protection of God)

Paul continues to describe the “man of sin” by stating the second distinguishing mark of the Antichrist: he is a direct and active opponent of God. The two participles joined by the conjunction form a unit. Together they describe how the Antichrist opposes; namely, by exalting himself. Both participles are in the present tense, meaning that his opposition and self-exaltation are ongoing. Both participles are also attributive participles, describing key characteristics of the man of sin. Apart from these characteristics one would not recognize his true identity. One of his primary concerns is exalting himself in direct opposition to God.

The object of his opposition is God or God’s representatives (πάντα λεγόμενον θεόν). No one is excluded here – πάντα includes everyone who is deserving of σέβασμα. This term does not necessarily mean worship reserved only for God (as προσκυνέω usually does). Members of one’s family, government officials, religious leaders would all be subjugated under the exaltation of this man. Since the Christian is bound to honor such people (cf. the Fourth Commandment), he who opposes them opposes God.

ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός, = “so that he sits down in the temple

of God, proclaiming himself to be God”

Vocables

ναὸν – m. sg. acc.; temple, sanctuary

καθίσαι – aor. act. inf. fr. καθίζω; sits down, takes a position

ἀποδεικνύντα – m. sg. pres. act. acc. ptc. fr.

ἀποδείκνυμι; proclaiming, claiming to be

Paul now states the result of the Antichrist opposing and exalting himself. That this result is the actual one and no other is stressed by the aorist tense of καθίσαι. There is no other result which occurs when the action already described in v.3a takes place! Note also how Paul places αὐτὸν forward for emphasis. (αὐτὸν is the subject of the infinitive clause.)

The “man of sin” actually takes his un-rightful place in the ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ. This temple is no ordinary temple. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul states that through faith the hearts of Christians are God’s temple. What the Antichrist will do, therefore, is to try to supplant God from His rightful dwelling place. He will demand the reverence and respect due only to God and His representatives. He wants to take God’s place. He will also take his place in God’s temple by holding a position in the church (Apology VII, 4).

It is no surprise, therefore, that the “man of sin” actually appropriates God’s title. The reflexive pronoun ἑαυτὸν stresses that no one gives this title to him; rather, he takes it himself. By this self-aggrandizement does he claim he is the only God? Or does he claim to be equal to God in authority? The latter is preferable.

Amplified Paraphrase of vv. 3-4: Concerning the false messages I just mentioned: don’t listen to them at all! You see, there are certain things that must take place before the Lord will return. He will not come back until there is a

great falling away and the man of sin is revealed. This man of sin is also known as the son of destruction. Let me tell you more about him: one of his primary features is that he likes to exalt himself and oppose God. He even goes so far as to take God’s place in His temple, and claims to have God’s own authority.

The Second Mark of the Antichrist

That the Antichrist is a direct opponent of God is his second distinguishing mark. Luther states, “He [Paul] speaks therefore of one who rules in the church and not of the kings of nations, and he calls that man ‘an adversary of Christ’ because he will devise doctrines which conflict with the Gospel and will arrogate to himself divine authority” (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 39 [Tappert]). The Council of Trent’s declaration that one who believes man is justified by faith alone apart from any works is anathema is the clearest manner in which the Antichrist “devise[s] doctrines which conflict with the Gospel.” This declaration has never been retracted. Other doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church and her head are definitely opposed to God: eternal salvation dependent on subjection to papal authority (Boniface VIII’s *Unam Sanctam* bull), church tradition being placed on the same level as Scripture, the infallibility of the pope, etc. As errors obfuscating the Gospel, Luther lists idolatry in the Mass, confusion of what constitutes true repentance, the enumeration of sins, satisfactions for sins (which lead to indulgences), the invocation of the saints, etc. (Treatise, 42-48). Of all the marks of the Antichrist, this points to the papacy most clearly.

Verse 5: Οὐ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ἔτι ὢν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ταῦτα ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, = “Do you not remember that while I was still with you I kept speaking these things to you?”

Vocables

μνημονεύετε – 2nd per. pl. pres. act. fr. μνημονεύω;
remember

ὧν – m. sg. pres. act. ptc. fr. εἰμί; while I was

ἔλεγον – 1st per. sg. impf. act. fr. λέγω; I was speaking,
I kept speaking or telling

The things Paul had been writing to the Thessalonians were not altogether new. The term μνημονεύετε is used not necessarily with the implication that the Thessalonians had forgotten what Paul taught them. Hereby Paul gently reminds them that he had already told them these things. He had taught these things ὑμῖν, implying a face-to-face encounter. Note also Paul's persistence in teaching: while he was with the Thessalonians, he *kept* telling them (over and over). Again, Paul is not chiding his fellow believers, but rather using this reminder as an encouragement.

Verse 6: καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε, = “And you certainly know the thing which is now holding (him) back”

Vocables

κατέχον – n. sg. pres. act. ptc. fr. κατέχω; hold back,
hold down

οἴδατε – 2nd per. pl. perf. act. fr. εἶδω; you know thor-
oughly

With the use of an exegetical καὶ Paul indicates that he is going to focus on a previous idea. What he focuses on is the thought in v. 5: that the Thessalonians certainly remembered what Paul had taught them concerning this subject of “the man of sin” when he was with them. Even though they remembered what Paul had told them, he wanted them to understand it in more detail and to concentrate particularly on what follows.

This topic was one Paul covered when he was with the Thessalonians; thus he tells them οἴδατε. This word connotes a

thorough knowledge, not just a passing knowledge, not a mere “knowing about.” Paul had not just mentioned the Lord's teaching regarding this Antichrist as a footnote, and moved on to other more “important” teachings. Rather, they had been instructed well by Paul concerning this entire matter of the Antichrist's coming. For them it was a matter of common knowledge. (The specific knowledge which was common to them will be seen in the following.)

The specific aspect in this verse concerning what he taught them (and thus what they know) about the Antichrist Paul expands on with the substantival participle, τὸ κατέχον: “the thing which is holding (him) back.” Since this is a substantival participle, Paul wants his readers to forget for the moment everything else they know about this “thing” which is holding back the Antichrist and focus on its “holding back” characteristic. Right now, he says (present tense, intensified with the use of νῦν), this “thing” is holding back the Antichrist. κατέχω literally means “to prevent someone from doing something by restraining or hindering” (Louw-Nida). This “thing” (neuter participle) is effectively holding the Antichrist at bay, not allowing him to do as he pleases. This “thing,” therefore, is controlling the Antichrist, keeping him in check. (It is understood that the recipient of the action of this “thing” is the Antichrist, when one uses as the antecedent what Paul stated in vv. 3-4, and what he will state in the second portion of this verse. Thus the “him” is supplied.)

What is the “thing” which is holding back the Antichrist? This is the subject of much debate and disagreement among the commentators. It is not a person, since Paul uses the neuter gender. Thus it must be a powerful entity, one which would have the supernatural power to perform such a daunting task continually. It is therefore best taken as God's Word and, especially as it applies specifically to the Thessalonians, the believers' love for that Word (cf. Kuske's *People's Bible* commentary). This is the most plausible explanation, especially after reading some of the far-fetched ideas, such as the Roman government! They had al-

ready seen the power of God’s Word in action as it changed their lifeless hearts to hearts filled with eternal life (1 Thess. 1:4-7; 2:13). There was no reason for them to doubt that this same Word which was at work in them could restrain the Antichrist.

εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ, = “in order that he may be revealed at his own set time”

Vocables

ἀποκαλυφθῆναι – aor. pass. inf. fr. ἀποκαλύπτω; be revealed, unveiled
καιρῷ – m. sg. dat.; set time

After telling them again that God’s Word was holding back the Antichrist, Paul with a purpose clause gives the reason why the Word was holding the Antichrist back: εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι. The preposition εἰς with the neuter article τὸ simply introduces this infinitive purpose clause. The revealing of the Antichrist will definitely happen, emphasized by Paul’s use of the aorist tense of ἀποκαλύπτω. The agent behind the passive voice will become evident in v. 7. The root meaning of ἀποκαλύπτω is “to make something fully known, to reveal” (ἀπό = away from + καλύπτω = to cover, hide); thus, to unveil. A picture of this verb is that of a curtain being drawn to show what is concealed, thus revealing what is hidden. The Thessalonians could not *see* the Antichrist himself (αὐτὸν) at work (even though they could see the effects of his work – vv. 3-4), because he had not yet been revealed.

The Antichrist was not going to be revealed at just any time. Rather, Paul tells the Thessalonians that God had a definite time in mind for his revelation: ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ. καιρῷ refers to a specific time, a set time, much like that of an appointment. It is a time to which particular significance has been attached. The specific nature of this time is strengthened with the

definite article τῷ. It could therefore also be termed a “proper” time. Paul modifies that set time with ἑαυτοῦ, a reflexive pronoun meaning “his own, his very own.” This pronoun refers to the Antichrist’s time, since the pronoun αὐτὸν (referring to the Antichrist) is in close proximity. This set time, of course, is “his” only because it has been given him, or set *for* him, by God.

Amplified Paraphrase of vv. 5-6: Part of what I told you before I will emphasize again: you certainly know the identity of the thing which is keeping the Antichrist at bay. But I will tell you more details about this. God’s Word, which is working in you, which you love and hold dear, is keeping him in check. God’s Word is holding him back now so that, when the time comes, the time that God Himself has set, the Antichrist will be fully uncovered and known to all.

Verse 7: τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας, = “For this mysterious thing of this lawlessness is already working;”

Vocables

μυστήριον – neut. sg. nom.; mystery, secret, mysterious thing
ἐνεργεῖται – 3rd per. sg. pres. mid. fr. ἐνεργέω; is working, is active

With γὰρ Paul begins verse 7 with an exegetical conjunction (as he had done in v.6). Here Paul gives even more detail about the hidden thing which has not yet been revealed (which revelation will be described in v.8). τὸ μυστήριον is the subject of the clause. This is not just any “mystery” but a specific one, as he indicates with the neuter article τὸ. *This* mystery, therefore, refers to what he wrote in v.6. By describing the “thing” of v.6 with μυστήριον (not the “thing holding [him] back,” but the hidden-ness of the Antichrist), Paul emphasizes that its identity is

unknown to most people. The word also connotes that the revelation of this mystery has been made known to “an in-group or a restricted constituency” (Louw-Nida). The Thessalonians knew more about the mystery than non-believers, because God had revealed it to them through Paul. Again, this mystery would become known to all as described in v.8, at a particular time chosen by God (v.6).

This mystery is also described as τῆς ἀνομίας, literally, “of the lawlessness.” By employing this descriptive genitive, Paul describes the type of mystery of which he writes. It is not just any lawlessness, because of the definite article τῆς. Thus the phrase is literally translated “this mysterious thing of *this* lawlessness.” The specific lawlessness to which Paul refers has been described by him in vv. 3-4, in which he details what lawless things (all the things that are completely antithetical to God’s law) the Antichrist does. (Even if one does not prefer the variant reading of ἀμαρτίας to ἀνομίας in v. 3, the actions described by Paul in vv. 3-4 still constitute lawlessness.) Everything about this mysterious thing exudes lawlessness.

This mysterious thing of lawlessness ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται, Paul writes. It is not known to most people, but that does not mean it is not hard at work. ἤδη looks back to what Paul described in v. 6, where he emphasized that God had a specific time chosen for his revelation, and forward to v. 8, where Paul says that after the events of v. 7b take place the mysterious thing will be revealed. Both vv. 6 & 8 look to the future; thus Paul emphasizes that this mysterious thing of lawlessness is *already* at work, even as he penned the words to the Thessalonians. We also know from history that this was the case, since false teachings quickly arose in the fledgling Church. Paul already mentioned in 2:2 one incident of false teaching (the letter supposedly from Paul). He wrote to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:13) about false prophets who masquerade as apostles. St. John wrote in his letters concerning what we believe to be an early form of Gnosticism. The Antichrist was already hard at work!

The mysterious thing of lawlessness is not simply attempting to be active, because Paul describes his actions using ἐνεργεῖται. This word emphasizes an effectual working, one which produces tangible results. This effectual working Paul has already described in vv. 3-4, the effectual working of all the lawless deeds which emanate from the essence of the Antichrist.

μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται, = “only until the One now holding (him) back steps out of the way”

Vocables

κατέχων – m. sg. pres. act. ptc. fr. κατέχω; holding back, holding down
 μέσου – neut. sg. gen.; middle, midst, among
 γένηται – 3rd per. sg. aor. subj. fr. γίνομαι; moves, becomes

This mysterious thing of lawlessness will not remain hidden forever. Paul uses μόνον as an adversative adverb to stress this fact, bolstered in its adversative force with the conjunction ἕως. This mysterious thing is hidden now, but an event at a particular point in time is approaching when it will cease to be hidden.

In v. 6 Paul had written about the “thing” which was holding the Antichrist back (τὸ κατέχον), and here he switches to the masculine form of the article and participle: ὁ κατέχων – “the One holding back,” or “He who is holding back.” Thus Paul is no longer speaking about the Word as he did in v. 6. He now refers to a person. Paul especially wants to emphasize this person as seen by the manner in which he switches the position of ὁ κατέχων with the conjunction ἕως. That is, one would expect the conjunction to follow immediately the adverb μόνον. Emphasis is also placed on this participial phrase with the substantival participle. Again, it carries the force of emphasizing the key characteristic of “holding back.” That is the particular characteristic upon which Paul wants the Thessalonians to focus. The identity

of this person is best seen in Christ Jesus. Many possibilities have been proffered for the identity of this one who “holds back” the Antichrist, such as Christians themselves, the apostle Paul, an angelic power, the rule of law (1st use), and the Holy Spirit. Lenski seems to prefer to understand the neuter in v.6 and the masculine in v.7 as referring to a unit, someone (v.7) working with a specific power (v.6). Such an interpretation does not differ radically from understanding the ὁ κατέχων to be Jesus working through His Word, τὸ κατέχον of v. 6. Because Scripture teaches us that Jesus, since His ascension, rules all things (Matthew 22:44; Romans 14:9; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 2:8), it is proper to understand that Jesus is the one holding the Antichrist at bay (keeping him in check) through the means of His Word. He is doing this ἄρτι, Paul writes. Again, even as he writes the words to the Thessalonians the all-powerful Jesus carries out His work of holding back the mysterious thing of lawlessness (the Antichrist).

Recall that Paul has stated that Jesus (ὁ κατέχων) is holding back the mysterious thing of lawlessness μόνον...ἕως. Only until what? Only until the One holding (him) back ἐκ μέσου γένηται. ἐκ μέσου literally means “out of middle,” expressing the idea that the One holding the mysterious thing of lawlessness back is in his way, i.e., blocking his path. The subjunctive γένηται indicates an action in the future, an action that is pending. Literally this phrase is translated “steps/moves out of the way.” In order for this mysterious thing of lawlessness to be revealed (v.8), it is necessary for the One holding him back to step aside, to *stop* holding him back, so that everyone will see clearly what is the mystery. Wallace (p. 479) states that ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται is an indefinite temporal clause; that it expresses a future contingency from the perspective of the time of the main verb. According to this understanding, the mysterious thing of lawlessness is at work *now*, and since this is the case, at some time in the future the One holding him back will step out of his way (and it will be revealed – v.8). Thus, the time will come, says Paul, when the One holding the mysterious thing of lawlessness back will no longer

do so.

Amplified Paraphrase of v. 7: I told you about this mysterious thing, the mysterious thing characterized by lawlessness. I am going to give you more details about it. This thing, which is unknown to most, is hard at work (as you have seen from what I wrote and said earlier). But it will not always be working as it is now. When the time comes (v.6), Jesus, who is holding him back, who is keeping him in check, will step aside so that everyone will know what/who it/he is. The mystery will be no more!

The Third Mark of the Antichrist

This mark of the Antichrist was already quite evident as Paul wrote this second letter to the Thessalonian Christians: “For this mysterious thing of this lawlessness is already working.” In addition to the evidences of the spread of the Antichrist’s influence mentioned above, remember also that Paul had written to the Galatians expressing surprise that they were chasing after a false gospel (Gal. 1:6). Peter warned his readers about the false prophets that had come (2 Pet. 2:1). The point is clear: the false teaching associated with the Antichrist was present in Paul’s time. How much more so almost 2000 years later!

Verse 8: καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος = “And then the lawless one will be revealed”

Vocables

ἀποκαλυφθήσεται – 3rd per. sg. fut. pass. fr.
ἀποκαλύπτω; will be unveiled, revealed

ἄνομος – m. sg. nom.; lawless one, the one opposed to
God’s will (vv. 3-4)

Now comes the next step (καὶ τότε) in seeing the identity of the lawless one. After the καιρῶ of v. 6 has come, then the

lawless one will be revealed. What this man of sin had done in v. 4 was done in a veiled way. After the set time has come, however, the lawless one will be uncovered, all his inglorious splendor unmasked. As will be seen in the next part of the verse, Jesus is the agent behind the revelation.

The Fourth Mark of the Antichrist

After God allows the lawless one to work openly, his identity will be quite clear. As Lutherans, we have always confessed that this identity is known to us. The revelation of the Antichrist's identity to more and more people causes us to rejoice, not because of our superior biblical scholarship, but rather because the deception and delusion of the papacy will not have complete reign.

ὃν ὁ κύριος [Ἰησοῦς] ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ = “whom the Lord Jesus will invalidate by the breath of His mouth and (whom) He will put completely out of commission by the beautiful scene of His second coming”

Vocables

ἀνελεῖ – 3rd per. sg. fut. act. fr. ἀναιρέω; kill by violence, in battle, by execution, murder or assassination; give a death blow; invalidate, set aside (lit. - pick up or take away; therefore “kill” by extension)

καταργήσει – 3rd per. sg. fut. act. fr. καταργέω; do away with; denotes a non-physical destruction by means of a superior force coming in to replace the force previously in effect; put completely out of commission

παρουσίας – fem. sg. gen.; appearance, shining forth (used of divine appearance); reveal in full glory

(therefore, “beautiful scene” by extension)

With the relative tie-on pronoun ὃν Paul proceeds to make a very important point about this lawless one. After he has been revealed by Jesus, Jesus will proceed to ἀνελεῖ him. Usually this word indicates destruction or death. However, here it is best to render this term as “invalidate.” Why? This action by Christ Jesus is the fifth mark of the Antichrist. Since the Antichrist has been revealed (see above), and since he will continue to carry out his demonic work (see below), he has not been completely annihilated.

This is clear also from the weapon with which Jesus invalidates the lawless one: τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ. πνεύματι is best taken as its root meaning of “breath.” The phrase recalls Isaiah 11:4 (“slay the wicked with the breath of His lips”). Thus the weapon Jesus uses is His Word. Jesus' Word is what He uses to hold back the Antichrist (v. 6). Jesus' Word freed many from the power of the lawless one at the time of the Reformation, and it continues to free people today.

However, Jesus will not always practice such restraint! Paul adds another means by which Jesus will deal with the lawless one (καὶ). For the present, Jesus continues to invalidate the work of the lawless one by His omnipotent Word. But the time will come when Jesus καταργήσει the lawless one. After that time, the lawless one will have no power to practice deceit. He will have been conquered completely. This is what makes Jesus' second coming such a beautiful scene! Not only will it be beautiful because Jesus will be seen in all His divine glory, but the effects of His παρουσίας will be glorious also.

The Fifth and Sixth Marks of the Antichrist

How powerful is God's Word! This fifth mark of the Antichrist, that Jesus will “invalidate” him with His almighty Word, is reminiscent of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness by Satan him-

self. Again we rejoice that we have that same power at our disposal, the “one little word” which fells Satan and his co-worker, the Antichrist. We have nothing to fear from the Antichrist, because we know that Jesus wields the ultimate power over him through His Word. The Antichrist flaunts his might and some are vanquished. As we hold fast to Christ’s Word, as we continue to preach and teach the pure Gospel, we are protected during our days on earth as we await the final victory.

Jesus’ final victory over the Antichrist is the sixth distinguishing mark. When Jesus returns to judge the world, the end will come also for the Antichrist. No longer will the Antichrist have any influence over the chosen, because Jesus will crush him as he sends him to hell.

Verse 9: οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ παρουσία κατ’ ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ = “the one whose coming is according to the working of Satan”

Vocables

ἐνέργειαν – f. sg. acc.; working (of supernatural beings)

Σατανᾶ – m. sg. gen.; Satan (from Aramaic – the adversary of God and all who belong to Him)

Paul makes another important point concerning the lawless one with an additional relative tie-on pronoun. He had just featured the importance of the παρουσία of Jesus; now he juxtaposes the same term to describe the coming of the lawless one. Compared to the beautiful scene of the Lord’s coming, what an ugly scene is the coming of the lawless one! His coming is right in line with (κατ’) the working of another supernatural being: Satan himself. The ultimate adversary of God sends forth his lawless one with all boldness, because he knows he has nothing to lose. ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους = “in the sphere of every kind of miracle and sign and wonder

which are all a lie”

Vocables

δυνάμει – f. sg. dat.; miracle demonstrating raw power
σημείοις – neut. pl. dat.; signs; miracle indicating person is who he claims to be (lit. - a signal to a watcher)

τέρασιν – f. pl. dat.; wonders, unusual signs; miracles that make people *amazed*

ψεύδους – n. s. gen.; deceiving; having the quality of being a lie

With what does Satan arm his cohort? Paul describes the first part of the scope (ἐν) of his armament. πάσῃ is used in the comprehensive sense of “every *kind* of,” making the deceitful work of the lawless one as expansive as possible. The three terms Paul uses as the essence of the lawless one’s work are different aspects of miraculous works. All three lack the article; thus, the quality of each is stressed. δυνάμει is usually rendered as “power,” but here it is best to take it as “miracle.” The miracles, that is, that the lawless one performs, show clearly his power. σημείοις are miracles which the lawless one performs as he attempts to claim validity for his identity (cf. v. 4). Finally, τέρασιν are miracles that produce the result of amazing people.

These same three terms are used in Acts 2:22 and Hebrews 2:4 to describe the work of Christ Himself. In contradistinction to that proper application, since Jesus is indeed who He claimed to be, the miracles of the lawless one are ψεύδους. It is best to apply this descriptive genitive to all three terms, because the aim of each aspect of the lawless one’s miraculous works is to deceive.

The Seventh Mark of the Antichrist

How powerful is the Antichrist! His armament, his “bag

of tricks,” so to speak, is extensive. In fact, it comes from Satan himself. Recall how Pharaoh’s magicians were able to duplicate some of Moses’ miracles. Satan is deceptively mighty. According to what Paul states, the seventh mark of the Antichrist is that Satan gave him the ability to work such deceptive miracles. John details the same thing in Revelation 13:13 when he describes the beast of the earth performing “great miraculous signs so that he even makes fire come down from heaven to the earth in front of people.” According to *A Catholic Dictionary*, “Christ promised the continuance of miracles in his church and the Catholic Church has always and does now display them and always will” (p. 323). Appearances of the Virgin Mary, the requirement that three miracles must have taken place through the prayers of someone who is considered for sainthood, the transubstantiation of the elements in the mass, and the miracle of divine revelation to the pope are examples of “every kind of miracle and sign and wonder which are all a lie.”

Verse 10: καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις = “and in the sphere of every sort of self-righteous trickery to those being destroyed”

Vocables

ἀπάτῃ – f. sg. dat.; trickery, deceitfulness, deception
(esp. a thing or statement)

ἀδικίας – f. sg. dat.; evil, wickedness, unrighteousness;
self-righteousness

ἀπολλυμένοις – m. pl. dat. pres. pass. ptc. fr.
ἀπόλλυμι; those being destroyed

Thus far Paul had mentioned two facts concerning the παρουσία of the lawless one: that it is in line with the working of Satan and in the sphere of the false miracles (v. 9). He continues with one more fact, that his coming is in the sphere of πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας. Again, the lawless one’s trickery is not limited to a

specific type or instance, but rather quite expansive (πάσῃ). ἀδικίας here is best taken as “self-righteousness,” in view of what Paul will say in the second part of the verse and in v. 12 (see excursus below). How does the lawless one deceive or trick people? By telling them that they are able to be righteous before God by themselves, that they are to perform every sort of “good work” in order to gain salvation. Indeed, this is the deception not only of the papacy, but of every non-Christian religion.

The ones to whom the lawless one preaches his gospel of doom are correctly termed τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις. The present tense of the participle indicates that a repeated action is taking place; that is, throughout the history of the lawless one individual people are being destroyed. This is the primary characteristic which Paul wishes to stress here (substantival participle): the fact that these people are utterly lost. The agent behind the passive is, of course, the lawless one.

ἀνθ’ ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς = “because they did not accept the love of the truth with the result that they might be saved”

Vocables

ἀνθ’ – prep. gen.; in return for

ὧν – neut. gen. rel. pron.; which; therefore “because,” or
“in return for which”

ἐδέξαντο – 3rd per. pl. aor. mid. (dep.) fr. δέχομαι;
receive, accept (initiative rests with the giver)

σωθῆναι – aor. inf. pass. fr. σώζω; be saved from disaster

Why are those who accept the self-righteous trickery of the lawless one destroyed? The direct cause for their destruction is described as a lack of action: they wanted nothing to do with the offer of God’s love made in His Word of truth. The genitive τῆς ἀληθείας could be taken subjectively; thus, the love comes

from the truth. Or the genitive could be taken objectively; thus, those who accept God's love have no affection for His Word. The former is perhaps preferable. Paul has already stressed the power of God's Word, a power used to destroy evil (v. 8). It creates a strong contrast to describe this same Word as one that bestows love. The bottom line is that by not accepting the love of the truth those being destroyed display their unbelief. They reject God's true way of salvation, the true way as opposed to the way of self-righteousness.

Paul also stresses what happens as a result of (εἰς τὸ) accepting the love of the truth (which these people did not do!). The agent behind the passive voice of σωθῆναι is, naturally, God. The emphasis of this word is salvation or rescue from disaster. Those who accept the love of the truth certainly are rescued from disaster (aorist tense). Just as true is the fact that those who have turned their backs on God's salvation perish.

The Eighth Mark of the Antichrist

Salvation through Christ alone: this is the one teaching of Scripture in particular which Satan despises. Using false miracles to bolster his credibility, the Antichrist does whatever he can to dismantle this foundational teaching of the Bible. The eighth characterizing mark of the Antichrist is that he leads people to believe in themselves for their eternal salvation. They must, he says, be truly *self-righteous*. Thanks be to God that He used Martin Luther and the other reformers to bring the teaching of Christ's merits to the forefront. Pray also that we will continue in that vein for the sake of those who have not been destroyed yet by the Antichrist's teachings.

Amplified Paraphrase of vv. 8-10: After Jesus steps out of the way of the lawless one, everything about this one will be quite clear! Jesus will uncover him so that everyone knows his identity. But don't worry! Yes, Jesus will unveil him,

but He will also keep his power in check. Jesus will take away the complete power of this lawless one for a while. That is, not everyone will be under his power. Better yet, when Jesus returns at the end of the world, He will put this man of sin completely out of commission! Won't that be a beautiful scene! Beware, however, because the lawless one works in conjunction with God's primary adversary, Satan. Because of this, the lawless one will be able to do all sorts of supposed miracles. With these signs and wonders he will try to deceive many people. He will also spread the message of self-righteousness, telling people that they are in good standing with God all on their own. But those who believe that message will certainly be destroyed. Since they turn their backs on God and His way of rescue, they will suffer the consequences.

Verse 11: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει, = "And because of this, God keeps sending them error's working, with the result that they believe the lie"

Vocables

πλάνης – f. sg. gen.; delusion, deception, wandering away, error

God is not finished with those who reject His true way of salvation (those who do not receive the love of the truth). He πέμπει...ἐνέργειαν πλάνης. The present tense of πέμπει stresses the ongoing nature of God's dealings with these unbelievers. While they are still alive on this earth, that is, He will never stop doing this particular part of His work.

What does God send these rejecters? "Working of error" is a literal translation of ἐνέργειαν πλάνης. ἐνέργειαν stresses an effectual working, here (as in v. 9) especially a working of supernatural beings. Since God is the One sending this

working, this facet fits here also. *πλάνης* carries with it the meaning of losing one's way by being deceived (thus, error). What constitutes this error is best taken as the rejection of God's truth (v. 10). The genitive is subjective: the rejecters' unbelief continues its deadly work because God wills it. In short, in judgment God sends spiritual blindness to those who do not accept the love of His truth.

Because God spiritually blinds them, these unbelievers believe the deception of the lawless one. Note well the definite article before *ψεύδει*. This is not just any lie, but *the* lie, the well-known lie of self-righteousness (v. 10a). In their spiritual blindness the unbelievers have no way of seeing the truth. They actually think that *the* lie is the truth, the truth of God's Word. Such is the result of being deceived by the lawless one. Such is the result of God sending spiritual blindness.

The Ninth Mark of the Antichrist

When a person persists in actively resisting God and His truth, he is in grave danger. Just as God hardened Pharaoh's heart, so also God hardens those who believe the lie of the Antichrist. All the evidence of Scripture points the one who studies it to Christ alone. Those who continue to chase after the false teachings of the Antichrist are eventually blinded in their search for eternal life.

Verse 12: ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκῆσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, = "so that all those who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in the self-righteousness might be condemned"

Vocables

κριθῶσιν – 3rd per. pl. aor. pass. subj. fr. κρίνω; they may be judged, condemned; root meaning is separated off

εὐδοκῆσαντες – m. pl. nom. aor. ptc. fr. εὐδοκέω; the ones who took pleasure in, delighted in, found joy in

Paul now details the purpose of God sending spiritual blindness (error's working – v. 11a) to unbelievers. He describes these unbelievers with two substantive participles, stressing two of their key characteristics. οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ recalls v. 10, which described those who rejected God's true way of salvation (note the definite article with ἀληθείᾳ). εὐδοκῆσαντες is juxtaposed to this characteristic with ἀλλὰ. Not only did they reject God's truth, these unbelievers found their joy in their self-righteousness!

Excursus on τῇ ἀδικίᾳ

Why understand τῇ ἀδικίᾳ as "self-righteousness" and not "wickedness" (cf. NIV)?

1. The definite article indicates that a specific, well-known unrighteousness (lit.) is referred to. It is not a general "wickedness."
2. In v.10 the phrase ἀπάτη ἀδικίας is used as part of the sphere in which the lawless one comes. The lawless one's deceit would naturally focus on self-righteousness, because this is completely the opposite of God's righteousness (which is described in v. 10b).
3. Paul specifies a particular ψεύδει in v. 11, which is a parallel term to ἀδικίᾳ here. He has in mind one particular lie which the ones being destroyed believe.
4. The contrast between self-righteousness and God's righteousness, therefore, reaches a climax in v. 12 with the juxtaposition of ἀδικίᾳ to ἀληθείᾳ: "not believing the truth" is virtually equated with "taking pleasure in the unrighteousness." God's ultimate truth is that man is counted righteous be-

cause of Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11). Satan's ultimate lie is that man is (or can be) "righteous" on his own, that he has no need of Christ.

Why does God send spiritual blindness to those who reject Him? κριθῶσιν speaks of the final judgment to which v. 10 referred. The destruction of unbelievers consists in their condemnation, in God's cutting them off from Himself completely and finally. When such judgment has been carried out, there no longer is any hope of being rescued.

Amplified Paraphrase of vv. 11-12: Here is also what happens to those who do not accept the love of the truth: God blinds them spiritually. He makes it impossible for them to see the fact that they have been deceived and lost their way. They think they're on the correct path because they continue to believe the lie of the lawless one – that they are saved eternally by what they do. God spiritually blinds these unbelievers, the ones who did not believe what God plainly told them, the ones who instead found their delight in their own works, so that, in the end, they will be completely cut off from Him.

Summary

In some ways we are in a similar position as the Thessalonians to whom Paul wrote. That is, we have been taught about the Antichrist – his identity, his deceptive power, his ultimate defeat – for quite some time. We may even breeze through this section of Scripture without pause since we *know* who the Antichrist is. But during these last days let us especially take Paul's powerful pleading to heart. In the midst of "millennial madness" (cf. Paul Zager's paper from the 1998 GLPC [LSQ, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, p. 216 ff]), hold fast to God's Word of truth. Many will believe the lie of the Antichrist and land themselves in hell.

For the sake of all souls, keep preaching the entirety of God's Word, even unpopular parts such as Paul gives in 2 Thessalonians 2, where he shows that *Papam esse ipsum verum antichristum*. (Sm. Art. II, IV, 10.)

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The Office of Visitor in the ELS

by M. H. Otto

God is not a god of confusion and chaos. Nowhere else do we see that fact more clearly demonstrated than in His marvelous creation. There is a certain order involved in the way His creatures are made as well as in the way they function. Surely the way the various planets are synchronized, the way the seasons faithfully follow each other year after year, the way the plants of the earth regularly produce seed after their own kind – all impress upon us how orderly God has fashioned this world. And, as He has established an order that is to obtain for parents and children to live together in the physical realm, so He desires that there be order for people in the spiritual realm. We remember that He has His Apostle write, “Let everything be done decently and in order.” (I Corinthians 14:40)

Matters will never go well in our corporate religious life unless arrangements are made for proceeding in an orderly way. When everything is done in a manner that takes into account the needs and rights of the individual as well as the whole flock, that congregation is doing things “decently and in order.” The same thing applies to the larger grouping of Christians in a Synod. We in our Christian liberty have therefore agreed upon a certain definite order for our working and worshiping together in our local congregations and for our working together as a Synod.

It is no secret that our Lutheran forefathers at first had their misgivings about joining their congregations into Synods. Yet, under God and next to the spiritual legacy they left us, there is no one other thing for which we owe them as much as for the synodical structure they have left us. It was no easy task to set up an arrangement whereby the individual congregations could remain autonomous and under which there could at the same time be a certain amount of supervision from the outside over what was

done within those congregations. If one takes a brief look at our own synodical constitution, it will be clear that in the same we have an instrument that can bring untold blessings to all who join together in that common endeavor which we call Synod.

When we examine the Constitution of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod, we note what an ambitious program has been drawn up for those who make up the Synod. It really is an all-encompassing assignment for promoting, on the one hand, the welfare of the individual congregations and, on the other, the projects and programs which they have resolved to carry out together. At the same time it will be noted that the Synod is not a super-church, nor a clergy-oriented organization. Rather there are clearly defined directives for the clergy as well as safeguards for their well-being, too.

Our Evangelical Lutheran Synod Constitution lists the purposes and objectives of the Synod as follows: (Chapter IV, a-f)

- Watch over the purity and unity of doctrine;
- Instruct, criticize and warn against encroaching sects, errors, and sins and any un-Christian trends that have become manifest;
- Exercise supervision over the pastoral work of its clergy and over the conditions in the congregations;
- Seek to settle church controversies and offer counsel and opinions in ecclesiastical questions;
- Establish and manage worker-training institutions;
- Promote home and foreign missions;
- Promote the use and distribution of the Holy Scriptures as well as other devotional and worship literature;
- Establish and administer funds for the carrying out of educational, missionary, and other programs.

The question that arises is, how can a church body do all that without meddling in the individual congregation's internal affairs and without violating any congregation's sovereignty. It does

not do this by sending around an official who is to be overseer, investigator, and policeman. Through openly conducted elections at its conventions, it chooses, in addition to the usual officers, also men whose special task it is to put into operation the aforementioned aims and purposes of the Synod for the well-being of the congregations. These men are known as visitors, or counselors, not overlords or dictators.

The position of the visitor/counselor is really the same as that of the bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. The latter is the main tie between the pope and the clergy. So the visitor is the main link between the synodical administration and the local church, equally concerned with the needs, rights and welfare of the individual congregation and of the Synod. In that capacity his one aim is to serve the best interests of all: the Synod, the congregations, and their pastors and teachers. It is our task today to outline briefly what specific duties fall upon the visitor/counselor and how he can faithfully and efficiently discharge them.

I.

The duties incumbent upon the visitor are briefly outlined in the Synodical Handbook. (p. 32 and Section III)

The visitor has many opportunities to administer his office. He can speak of things relating to the same during visits to or by brother pastors. As the representative of the synodical president he certainly will make it a point to give a brief report on synodical affairs at circuit meetings and circuit conferences, and incite those attending to give home congregations and Synod their wholehearted support. There may also be occasion for correspondence with fellow pastors. Occasionally a visitor is involved in corresponding with members of a congregation who may have bypassed their own pastor with their concern. In addition, some visitors have a special annual meeting with representatives from the congregations within the circuit to discuss the overall work of

the Synod, which will usually involve giving special attention to the financial needs and obligations of the Synod.

Whatever the forum, the visitor will by virtue of his position seek to make his contribution a profitable one. He will seek to inspire and encourage lay members and pastors in their work in their home congregations. And since the interests of the Synod should also be close to his heart, he will seek to promote its work with like concern and enthusiasm. In carrying out this aspect of his work the visitor certainly will avoid giving the impression of siding with the Synod against a congregation or circuit, or what is equally unethical, to side with the circuit against the Synod. Most of the time he will find it necessary to speak up for the Synod, which he need not hesitate to do if he presents its case in an intelligent manner.

Now and then a visitor is called upon to provide counsel to pastors and congregations in unpleasant or complicated situations. In fact, that often is the only time some congregations give much thought to availing themselves of the services of a visitor. It may be a most difficult thing to do – to act calmly, dispassionately and intelligently when the situation in a congregation has become critical, when tempers have flared, threats have been made, and things have been said that are not easily forgotten. When such times come, a person needs the meekness of a Moses, the patience of a Job, and the wisdom of a Solomon. But he will succeed in smoothing the troubled waters only to the extent to which he can lead people to let the Scriptures they profess to follow be their guide. No matter what the problem has been, the people involved should get to see that they have a real concerned and dedicated friend in the visitor, that he does not come to take sides, or to dictate, but to assist in any and every way he can. It does not have to be pointed out that to be such an effective consecrated counselor and helper requires considerable discipline and attention to prayer.

The services of a visitor are very important in the area of vacancies and calls. Though your seminary tries its best to have

students note what course to follow when they receive a call, how they should deal with it, and what arrangements should be made when they leave their congregation for another call, they often appear to have forgotten all this when confronted with such situations. It then behooves a visitor repeatedly to remind his brethren how they should proceed at such times. If there is the proper communication between the president and the various synodical visitors, the local visitor should know when a call has been extended to a man in his circuit. He can then, as soon as the call has been received, with good conscience make a few suggestions to the pastor called. Yes, he should perhaps spell out how the pastor called ought to deliberate on the call and how he will present it to his congregation/s for arriving at a decision. Such advice can also be given older pastors, because they, too, may some times be tempted to take shortcuts – either quickly to return a call they do not care to think about, or hastily to accept one without due consideration for the congregation they have been serving.

The visitor can without apology constantly remind his fellow pastors to keep him informed of every move made in connection with a call. This is especially important when a pastor in the fear of God has decided to accept a call. He still has responsibilities in the parish he is still serving and cannot just pack up and leave the work after he has made his decision. Here it is mandatory that the pastor together with the visitor plan the phasing-out of his services and make arrangements for the necessary pastoral services during the vacancy that will ensue. Said pastor should be requested to consult with the visitor to arrange the subsequent call meetings. He will likewise consult with the visitor in the new circuit he is entering about the installation service in his new charge. It is taken for granted that if there has been a special problem in that congregation being vacated the visitor will do his utmost to achieve a solution before a new man comes. Of course, he, the visitor, consulting with the congregation/s will arrange for the installation of the next pastor. Then he can start all over again instructing another pastor about his obligations in the congregation,

the circuit, and the Synod.

II.

We now proceed to what is a very unique and important feature of a visitor/counselor's work – formal visitations in the congregations of the circuit. The guidelines suggest that this be done in each congregation “at least once every four years.” The Purpose of such visitations is briefly but well expressed in those same guidelines: 1) To promote harmony and unity within the congregation; 2) To increase yet more the congregation's understanding of and commitment to the task of rescuing blood-bought souls; 3) To increase the congregation's appreciation of its sister congregations and for the work they do together as a Synod. (See Article IV, Section A)

Normally the congregation should invite the visitor “in,” but the visitor may also take the initiative if he deems it wise that the congregation concerned ought to be visited at a given time. The visitor and pastor involved will agree on the time for and the details of such a meeting sufficiently in advance of the day set. Naturally there has to be some preparation made for such a visitation. The congregation will review its objectives and ascertain its particular problems and needs before the visitor arrives. And the visitor/counselor should determine what he hopes to accomplish with his visit. He should prepare an outline detailing what he intends to do. If he is aware that in the congregation to be visited circumstances prevail which he will have to deal with, he will bear that in mind and prepare also for that. He will pray for wisdom, tact, boldness, friendliness and plain good judgment for this special task.

The visitor/counselor may begin his visitation with a private conversation with the pastor. I Timothy 4:12-16 has some good practical suggestions in the respect. It is taken for granted that the visitor will deal in a brotherly and evangelical way with his brother about the necessary attention to himself and the nature of

his continuing education. While the visitor will elicit from the congregation whether its pastor adorns his teaching with his life, this is not to be ignored in the personal visit with the pastor. The visitor will discuss the stewardship of the pastor's particular gifts; he will inquire into the latter's sermon preparation, what materials and sources are used, and whether admonition, counsel and encouragement are given.

If possible the visitor ought arrange to attend the regular Sunday service of the congregation he is visiting, so that he may see at first hand how it carries out this very important part of its work. Or, the visitor may take the pulpit with a special message for the occasion. If the pastor being visited does not preach for the visitation, he should be asked to submit a sermon or two. The visitor will check whether the sermons are textual, doctrinally sound, timely, properly divided in respect to Law and Gospel, the major points well developed, and the application clear. If necessary the visitor will make suggestions for improvement, doing so in a helpful evangelical manner.

While still in the pastor's study the visitor will also check on the library he finds there, and if he finds it deficient, suggest books he feels will help improve the situation. Next to reading Scripture and the Confessions, he will encourage the pastor to spend a lot of time with Luther, and other sound theologians, too. In a day when all sorts of non-Lutheran books are flooding the market, it is most important that the clergy of the Synod be helped to be discriminate in their acquisition of theological literature. Furthermore, since so many demands are made on the pastor's time today, there is great danger that study beyond the necessary sermon preparation will be neglected. Here the Visitor can be of real service to the brethren of his circuit, encouraging them to get worthwhile books and periodicals and then systematically to set aside time to study them faithfully.

The visitor will make it a point to check whether the church records are adequate and up to date. If they are not, the situation should be remedied without delay, since people who can serve as

resource persons for historical and pastoral information may not be around much longer. Also, it is most unpleasant when a new pastor takes over, after a sudden death or resignation, to discover that the records of official acts and the membership lists are woe-fully far from being current. In addition, it is mandatory that those records be stored in a safe and fireproof place.

The visitor will inquire whether there are any special problems or difficulties in the congregation. If there are some he will, if able, offer some suggestions towards solving the same and he may or may not take the same matter up with the congregation when he meets with it.

If the congregation has a Christian Day School, inquiry should be made into the performance of the teaching staff, the congregation's attitude towards the school, and also into the relationship of the pastor with the teacher. It is most unfortunate when friction develops between those who are supposed to be the leaders of and examples to the flock. If the situation warrants it, a conference with the teacher or principal may also be in order. Otherwise, it is the school superintendent's responsibility to visit the school and to evaluate the performance of the teaching staff. In this connection a pastor ought to get down on his knees and thank God if he has a co-worker in the teacher whom the members of the congregation respect and honor. In fact, if he is the kind of man he should be, he ought to take the lead in showing respect to the teacher, and he will with it discover that he himself is going to be blessed for it.

It is possible that a pastor or teacher, to get a little more of the green, or merely as a recreation, has a particular hobby which in itself could be quite proper, but whose cultivation of it could give the appearance of endangering his professional services and studies. One may, to add to his income in an emergency situation, engage in some sideline, which under normal circumstances would not seem proper for him to do. For example, some years ago a pastor in our Synod was a bookkeeper for a small oil company because his parish was not providing him with

an adequate living, and the Synod did not have any extra funds with which to help. His cash assets were exactly five dollars when he died. But normally, "They which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." (I Corinthians 9:14)

Considerable time could be spent on the possibility of becoming over zealous and legalistic in one's practice. Rather than to cover that topic only superficially we shall distribute copies of "Propositions of Unevangelical Practice," written by Dr. H. C. Schwan or under his auspices about 115 years ago. (CTM, May, 1945)

The visitor also has the opportunity to take note of the family life in the parsonage. (Cf. I Timothy 3:4,5) He will establish whether peace and harmony, kindness and love, are to be found there, whether the pastor's wife is pious and friendly, and zealous about the welfare of the congregation while staying within her bounds as the wife. If the visitor in this connection observes something that is not as it should be, he will when speaking of it make it a point to use the utmost tact and charity. It should be taken for granted that if he were to discover that an occupant of the parsonage had some affliction or heavy burden to bear, he certainly would apply the balm and comfort of the Gospel to the family.

The high point of the visitation should be the meeting with the congregation. For that, all should be invited to attend, women and young people as well. After a brief introduction the visitor will proceed to inform himself about the spiritual condition of the congregation through a series of questions. These should be positive in content and phrased in such a way that they could be answered with a simple Yes (or possibly No). From experience your essayist can tell you that in some congregations there may not be many responses to such questions. Nevertheless, the questions still serve a good purpose – they give the members the opportunity to speak up when various aspects of the work are taken up for discussion. If there are no answers forthcoming, the visitor can assume that the answer would be of a positive nature and

then take the occasion to make a few appropriate comments in the direction of approval and commendation.

The visitation should be set in as friendly an atmosphere as when friends and relatives speak about things in which all would be interested. After all, the members of a Christian congregation are a family, too; they are the children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. An example of such a visitation is the following outline, some of it gleaned from an essay of over 40 years ago: (CTM, January, 1931)

God's Word is the message of salvation. He therein shows us the way to heaven. That you might be placed on the way and preserved on it, the Office of the Ministry has been established in your midst. How is this office being administered in your midst? Is your Pastor a faithful servant of the Word, one who does not preach to you the wisdom of this world but solely the pure clear Word of God as recorded in the Scriptures? Does he in all his ministry make the Word of God the only guide and rule for your faith and life?

If the people establish that fact with their answers a few words of application can be made to the situation, such as, "That is the way it should be. Thank God for giving you such a pastor. You ought make an earnest effort to be diligent in hearing such preaching and teaching which he offers you for your instruction." If there is no answer, the visitor might say, "If you have such a pastor, and I assume you do, thank God for your good fortune," and then follow through in the same way as just suggested.

The questions should be asked whether the pastor preaches the Law to bring people to the knowledge of sin and what they deserve therefore, and whether he tells such as have been stricken by the Law about God's wondrous saving grace in Christ. Again, the visitor will comment along the lines suggested for the previous question, making some pointed remarks about the precious doctrine of Justification. Here he might quote the

answer to the Catechism-Explanation question. "Why should we ever firmly maintain the doctrine of Justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith?"

Similarly, questions should touch on the clarity and understandableness of the pastor's preaching, on the members' use of the Sacrament of the Altar, on the pastor's exhorting people to be frequent guests at the Lord's Table. Are children baptized as soon as reasonably possible? Does the pastor also warn against false prophets and false doctrine, and how is such preaching received? Does the pastor underscore the need for constant effort in sanctification, to forsake the world and to cleave more and more to Christ? Does the pastor himself strive to live as he preaches his hearers should? Is he faithful in the instruction of the young, especially with respect to those being prepared for confirmation? Is the instruction in the Christian Day School and/or Sunday School and Vacation Bible School adequate and properly supervised?

And so questions can follow concerning the support of the Day School if there is one, the care of the sick and shut-ins, family devotions, to participation in voters' meetings, the practice of church discipline, the care of the young people, the work of organizations within the congregation, the congregation's support of the pastor and teachers, remembering that the laborer is worthy of his reward, the reputation the congregation has in the community, its attitude towards the preaching of the Gospel elsewhere, and the support of the training of pastors and teachers for that work.

If such and other direct questions reveal any special problem, there should be an attempt made to advise and assist the congregation in meeting and solving the difficulty, and to emphasize that all be done patiently, evangelically and in accordance with the Word of God.

All along the visitor, as noted previously, will make appropriate application concerning the matters about which he asked and to which proper answers were given,

or which he in charity could assume would have been given, striving to edify, admonish, urge, entice and encourage the people before him — for theirs and the Kingdom's sake.

Another element in a visitor's presentation is his report to the congregation on the work of the Synod. Currently that would include reports on relations between our Synod and those in fellowship with it, on the status of relations with other Lutheran synods in this country and overseas generally, and on the work of the Synod. He would touch on the special doctrinal concerns of the times, reporting how the synodical administration and the Doctrinal Committee are reacting to the issues that separate us from other Lutherans as well as to trends and organizations that may be a threat from without. There certainly will be information given on the conditions at our college and seminary on such things as enrollment, teaching staff, and special events or developments at the same.

Likewise, and because it is another important part of the work undertaken by the Synod, there will be information given about the foreign mission field, especially on that which concerns our missionaries and their particular problems and successes. Lastly, one could hardly conceive of a representative of the Synod bypassing the opportunity to say something about the finances of the Synod which make possible the various activities just mentioned. The secret is to tie the finances in with the different kinds of work the congregations do through the Synod in such a way that people have their attention centered more on the work being done rather than only or mostly on the money that must be raised to do that work.

From all this it is evident that a visitation is a very thorough scrutiny of and inquiry into the spiritual health of a congregation. It gets to be a comprehensive examination aimed at just one thing: to ascertain the spiritual status of the congregation and to offer simple and direct suggestions where they may seem to be in order. Every aspect of a congregation's life and activity is ex-

plored, not only so that the visitor has something to report to the synodical president, but also in order that he may arouse and spur the congregation on to greater heights in understanding, faith, zeal, and service to God and men locally and elsewhere through its cooperation with sister congregations in the Synod. If the visitation has been thorough and also evangelical and friendly there is no question but that it gets to be a real blessing to the congregation that was privileged to be part of it. By the way, the visitor gets an education, too, and sometimes in ways he could never anticipate. If the visitor in conclusion expresses his satisfaction with what he has seen and heard in the congregation and encourages the members and the pastor to make good use of the gifts and opportunities God gave them for their work together, promising a written report soon, that will be a happy note on which to end the visit.

The visitor should consider it as sacred duty to make a formal report to the congregation soon after it has been visited. In the same he will express his satisfaction with what he found to be in order and to do so in warm and commendatory terms. If he has noted areas where changes and improvements should be made, he will make appropriate suggestions, again in a manner that is friendly and encouraging. Should a very serious situation have been brought to light, the visitor as he may already previously have done, again in this report should request a follow-up meeting in order to clear up the matter. By showing a genuine interest in the congregation's well-being, and by manifesting a warm and friendly attitude to the people, in every way indicating that his one concern is to be of service to them, he will have done more for the Kingdom of God than he can imagine. That is the purpose of such a letter — to enable the congregation to learn from an outsider how it measures up, where it can improve and how it may do so. If the visitor has done his part well, he may find that he is welcome to come again — just because of the benefits the congregation felt it received.

If such visitations are to serve their purpose to the fullest

degree, the visitor will submit to the synodical president a report on the congregations he has visited. In the same accountings he will report on the church and communion attendance, whether there were any divisions in the congregation, if any special difficulties were encountered, how much the church periodicals are read, how well the Synod is being supported, morally and financially, whether the children are being adequately trained in "The One Thing Needful," and so on. When preparing this report, the visitor will also remember to be charitable in his remarks with respect to what he has learned or been told in confidence. In brief, while representing the president in his work as a visitor, he will in carrying out his duties and in reporting on them show himself to be a real friend of the pastors and congregations in the circuit in which he serves. And if every circuit can have such conscientious visitors, the president and other servants of the Synod who are involved will have ample opportunity to know well what the condition of the Synod is.

In a way, the visitor might be regarded as an extension of the theological seminary, striving as he does to help especially the younger pastors to carry on a ministry upon which they can look back with some degree of satisfaction. On the other hand, the visitors can perhaps offer suggestions to the seminary with respect to some facet of ministerial training that could be introduced or improved. One thing is certain, that it is only by a whole-hearted working together that we can help fashion a ministry that meets the needs of our congregations today and for which we will have to make no apologies.

Much more could be said regarding the duties and responsibilities of the visitors. It is our hope that what has been said will provoke a discussion that will be of value to every participant in the conference. We would also like to hope that the entire program will stimulate everyone to try to do an even better job in his office as visitor in the future, doing so for the sake of the advancement of the Kingdom of God and for enhancing the welfare of the souls immediately involved in this noble effort. More such

conferences in the future should prove to be of immeasurable value for the benefits they could bring to the individuals, the congregations, the visitor, and the Synod.

With Moses of old we pray, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." (Psalm 90:17)

Success through Scripture: Notes and Commentary on Joshua 1:7-8

by Adolph Harstad

v 7

רַק חֲזַק וְאַמִּץ מְאֹד לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּךְ
מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֶל־תִּסּוּר מִמֶּנּוּ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכַּיֵּל בְּכֹל
אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ

v 8

לֹא־יָמוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהִגִּיתָ בוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה
לְמַעַן תִּשְׁמָר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַכְּתוּב בּוֹ כִּי־אָז תִּצְלִיחַ אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ
וְאָז תִּשְׁכַּיֵּל

7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with the entire Torah which my servant Moses commanded you, not turning from it to the right or the left so that you may succeed wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Torah must never depart from your mouth; and you are to meditate on it day and night so that you will act faithfully in accordance with everything written in it, because then you will prosper and then you will succeed. (translation by the author)

Notes on Verse 7

only/רַק - The adverb רַק appears 108 times in the Old Testament as an adverb, always meaning “only.” (As an adjective it means “thin,” “slim” and is used only 3 times, each referring to the skinny cows in Pharaoh’s dream in Genesis 41). It is used here to

emphasize the command that follows by singling it out. NAB: “above all.”

be strong and ... courageous/ חֲזַק וְאַמִּץ - Joshua heard the same words in Deuteronomy 31:7, 23 and just a moment earlier in v. 6. These two verbs appear together in Joshua in 1:6, 7, 9, 18; 10:25. The 1:9 and 10:25 contexts show that the two words of this pair mean the opposite of “terrified,” “afraid,” “dismayed.” חֲזַק appears without אַמִּץ in 11:20; 17:13; 23:6. אַמִּץ does not appear elsewhere in Joshua. The LXX term here for אַמִּץ (*andridzomai*) is used also in 1 Corinthians 16:13. *Andridzomai*, whose root is the Greek word for “man,” means basically “to conduct oneself like a real *man*.” It is not a higher level of testosterone but the empowering word of the LORD that will make Joshua man enough for the task of conquering.

A common feature of Hebrew style is the use of two synonymous terms for a single emphasized idea. Although in English literature the term “hendiadys” (“one through two”) is usually reserved for a single idea expressed through two nouns joined by “and,” (“cups and gold” = “golden cups”) the term also suits this Hebrew construction involving two verbs. Verses 5-9 each contain such pairs of synonymous verbs:

abandon/forsake (v. 5)

be strong/be (very) courageous (vv. 6, 7, 9)

prosper/be successful (v. 8)

be terrified/be dismayed (v. 9)

It is not appropriate to search for significant differences in meaning between the verbs of each pair.

being careful to act/ לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת - Literally, “to keep to do.” The Hebrew here has two seemingly co-ordinate infinitives

construct. “The Semitic languages, in contrast to the Indo-European languages, commonly express logical subordination simply by grammatical co-ordination, i.e. parataxis.” (Roland J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax, an Outline*, #482, p. 80) Some translations connect these two infinitives more closely to the previous commands. TANAKH: “... resolute to observe carefully.”

the Torah/ התורה - The basic meaning of “Torah,” used some 221 times in the Old Testament (TWOT p. 403), is “teaching” or “instruction.” The noun is formed from the verb **הורה**, whose root meaning is “to throw” or “to cast.” In 18:6 the verb occurs in that literal sense. The derived meaning of the verb in Hiphil is “to point out,” “to teach,” “to instruct.” The noun **Moreh** (teacher) is from the same root. While Torah is commonly translated “law,” a study of Old Testament contexts reveals the inadequacy of that rendering in many passages. The reference here and in the next verse is to the entire teaching of Moses, the Pentateuch, with its law demands as well as its gospel promises. The TANAKH, the translation of the Jewish Publication Society, translates Torah as “Teaching” here in verses 7 and 8.

commanded you/ צִוָּךְ - Or “gave by authority.” TANAKH: “enjoined upon.” Since the Torah of Moses contains gospel promises as well as law demands, the translation “command” may give a wrong impression here. Besides “command,” **צוה** in the Old Testament carries other nuances such as “enjoin upon,” “exhort by authority,” “appoint,” “ordain,” “commission.”

not turning from it to the right or to the left – The whole phrase serves as an adverbial accusative of manner. (Williams #491, p. 81-82) Cf. 23:6. The expression concerning “not turning to the right or left” occurred in the Pentateuch in the book of Deuteronomy in 2:27 (in the physical sense of not deviating from the main road); 5:32; 17:11, 20; 28:14 (ES, 472). Joshua em-

plays the same expression in 23:6 as he echoes before Israel the LORD’s words here in 1:7.

succeed/ התקביל - The verb **שָׁכַל**, almost always used in Hiphil, can mean “act wisely” or “succeed.” The primary meaning is “to act wisely,” or “to be prudent so that a proposed goal may be attained.” Often it refers to the attainment of the goal itself, and thus has the effective meaning “to succeed, to prosper, to carry a thing through to completion.” It is not always easy to decide whether the translation “act wisely” or “succeed” best suits the context. See Isaiah 52:13 for a key messianic passage using this term. “My Servant will act wisely/succeed.” The verb occurs 61 times in the Old Testament and 2 times in Joshua 1:7, 8 (Even-Shoshan 1142-1143). There can be a big difference between what God and the world consider “succeeding,” as Jesus shows in Matthew 16:24-26, Luke 16:14.

Derived from this verb are the nouns *sekel* (“understanding, wisdom”) and *maskil* (“poem, song, psalm”), a term that appears in the titles of 13 psalms and in Psalm 47:8 (7 in Engl.).

Luther comments on this term of Joshua 1:7, attributing to it also the connotation of “happy”:

This means that you carry out wisely and joyfully everything you have undertaken. For this is the intention of the Hebrew word for “wise.” Thus it is written concerning David, who conducted himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul (1 Samuel 18:15, 30); and it is said to Joshua (Joshua 1:7): “That you may be wise,” that is, be happy and prosperous, and do no foolishness. This will happen if they keep the Law of God.” (LW v. 9, 272)

Wherever you go - Compare with v. 3.

Notes on Verse 8

This Book/ סֵפֶר ... הַזֶּה - The expression with the demonstrative adjective “this” indicates that the Torah of Moses is now in written form and that it is physically near Joshua as the LORD speaks to him here in about 1406 B.C. Critics claiming that only some oral traditions may have been extant at this time in history credit late redactors with gross anachronisms in contexts like this. Brotzman writes:

Both Sumerian and Egyptian were well-developed writing systems around 3100 to 3000 B.C. This antedates Moses ... by at least fifteen hundred years ... Moses was reared in Pharaoh’s court. It is therefore well within reasonable limits to suppose that Moses knew how to read and write not only his own native Hebrew (Canaanite) language but also Egyptian hieroglyphics.” (Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 32)

A discovery in 1998 of clay tablets in southern Egypt may push the history of writing closer to 3300 B.C. The tablets are from the tomb of King Scorpion I and are written in what seems to be an early form of hieroglyphics.

The material form of the written document of Moses is not evident from the term סֵפֶר. By Moses’ time writing was done on stone, clay, papyrus, and parchment. The word “book” may give a wrong impression. A scroll of papyrus or parchment may have been the form. Bound books (codices) did not appear until the first century A.D.

of the Torah/ הַתּוֹרָה - See notes on Torah under v. 7. We understand the phrase “of the Torah” to be an appositional genitive or an exegetical genitive; that is, “the Book” is one and the same as “the Torah.” An alternative view is that “the book” here

is only one portion of the whole Torah (“this book *from* the Torah”).

must never depart/ לֹא יִמוּט - Although the Hebrew could be translated with a simple future (“will not depart”), the force of the Qal imperfect of **מוּט** here is injunctive. The negative **לֹא** is used for *permanent* prohibition, thus, “must *never* depart.”

from your mouth/ מִפִּיךָ - The reference to “mouth” here may be to the public reading of the Torah and may therefore reveal something about Joshua’s God-given role in Israel. He is more than a general. In fact, the LORD gives no specific instructions here concerning the duties of a general. Spiritual duties relating to the word of YAHWEH take priority. See 8:34-35, where the word YAHWEH is in the mouth of Joshua as he publicly reads the Torah before all Israel at Mounts Gerezim and Ebal. See Deuteronomy 30:14 and Romans 10:6-10.

and you are to meditate on it/ וְהִגִּיתָ בוֹ - Again the force of the verb is injunctive, not simple future.

The basic meaning of the verb **הִגָּה** has to do with making a low sound, like a dove when it moans or a lion when it growls. (Isaiah 38:14; 31:4) A derived meaning is “to meditate.” See Psalm 1:2; 63:7 (v. 6 in Engl.); 77:13 (v. 12 in Engl.); 143:5; Isaiah 33:18. The basic and derived meanings merge in the Jewish practice of meditating on the Old Testament by reading aloud in a barely audible murmur. The verb appears 25 times in the Old Testament (ES 279).

day and night/ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה - Compare the “without ceasing/ continually” of 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

so that/ לְמַעַן - It is sometimes difficult to determine whether a

Hebrew clause expresses purpose or result. The two ideas may converge here. Joshua is to go to the Torah for the purpose of motivation and direction; and the result by the efficacy of the word is the very motivation and direction he seeks.

written/ **הִכְתוּב** - The Torah is clearly in written form at the time of Joshua. It is “Scripture” in the literal sense of the term.

then/ **אָז** - In addition to its temporal use, the Hebrew adverb **אָז** also has a logical or emphatic use. The same is true of our English adverb “then.” Here in 1:8 in both of its occurrences, **אָז** / “then” is used in its logical-emphatic sense. **אָז** appears in Joshua nine times: 1:8 (2 times); 8:30; 10:12; 10:33; 14:11; 20:6; 22:1; 22:31. (Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction To Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 667)

you will prosper/ **אֶתְדַרְכֶּךָ אֶתְצַלִּיחַ** - Literally, “cause your ways/undertakings to prosper.” The causative idea, however, should not be emphasized and is not always present in a Hiphil verb whose Qal is not transitive. Joshua is not a self-made man who brings about his own success. The LORD has the distinction of making him successful. Note the TANAKH rendering: “Only then will you prosper in your undertakings.”

The Hebrew word for “your ways” here in the Masoretic Text is vocalized as a plural noun but is without the usual *yod*. The form is thus unusual. Many manuscripts have the *yod*.

then you will prosper and then you will succeed/ **אֶתְדַרְכֶּךָ וְאָז תִּשְׁכִּיל אֶתְצַלִּיחַ** - Here again is a pair of synonymous expressions that intensify a single thought in a kind of hendiadys construction. For “succeed” see v. 7 note.

Commentary on Verses 7-8

The heart of the LORD’s encouragement in Joshua 1:2-9 involved turning the new leader Joshua to the Torah of Moses, the existing Scriptures of his day. This the LORD does in vv. 7-8.

Since Moses is dead and both Old Testament and New Testament ascribe authorship of the Pentateuch to him, the Five Books are in written form for Joshua and Israel. (Psalm 90 is also credited to Moses in its superscription and thus exists as Scripture at this time.) Even though Joshua may forget what the LORD here has just promised him directly, he can go to the Torah and find gospel promises for assurance again and again. (For contexts apart from the Pentateuch where “Torah” refers specifically to “Gospel,” see for example Isaiah 42:4 and Psalm 119:29.) He will also find in the Torah God’s Law commands, many of which direct the Israelites in their new life as they conquer and settle the land of their inheritance. (For example, see Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 19:1-14; 20; 27; 28.)

The words “being careful to act in accordance with the entire Torah” do not apply only to the *law commands* of the Torah. In this and other contexts where the whole Torah is the focus, exhortations that urge acting according to the Torah also refer to trusting its gospel promises, clinging to them for salvation and assurance, and guarding against losing them. For a similar New Testament appeal, see 2 Timothy 1:14. Neither does the word “command,” in the expression “which my servant commanded you,” apply only to the regulations of the law. (See the notes under “commanded” at v. 7.)

By the expression, “not turning from it to the right or to the left,” the LORD states for Joshua the *sola scriptura* principle. Human reason and human institutions are not to stand in judgment of Scripture and overrule it. What is true of all sixty-six canonical books is logically true of the first five that Joshua already holds. They alone are “God-breathed,” “truth,” and they

“cannot be broken.” (2 Timothy 3:16; John 17:17; John 10:35). Moses, their author, did not himself dream up their content, but was “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). They mean what they say even when relating the supernatural; they interpret themselves; they cannot be judged by other religious documents or human interpretations.

The interpretation of the book of Joshua itself is a test case in whether a reader follows the *sola scriptura* principle laid out here before the new leader of Israel. The account of Joshua is clear in relating the conquest of Jericho, Ai, Hazor, etc. and in telling of the supernatural happening at the river crossing and of the sun standing still. The unabashed view of the so-called “minimalists” is that the supernatural does not happen and the Bible cannot be trusted at all in telling of a conquest under Joshua unless archaeology can “prove” it.

Since the Torah is the very word of the LORD by the hand of Moses, the LORD points Joshua to it alone for success at the heart of his encouragement. Joshua will find therein the divine truth concerning One coming to bless all people (Genesis 3:15; 12:3b et al.). He can continue to review the way through which sinners are declared righteous (Genesis 15:6), the role of the nation Israel (Exodus 19:5), and how he and the nation are to live faithfully (by gratefully following all the covenant laws).

To the “right” and “left” of Scripture lies the often desolate wasteland of unchecked human reason, opinion, doubtful interpretation, and heresy. Joshua’s conventional wisdom might tell him something far different from what he sees in the Torah. His gift of natural reason is at that point to bow before Scripture and provide a “ministerial” rather than “magisterial” role.

The Pentateuch itself explains the meaning of “not turning to the right or to the left” of the Torah in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 (13:1 in Hebrew). Those verses forbid *adding* to or *subtracting* from what God says. To add to Scripture by increasing demands or to subtract from Scripture by rejecting or ignoring part of it is like turning to the right or the left. The theologian who

claims as doctrine what is in reality an adiaphoron or a personal interpretation not plainly stated in Scripture is guilty of “turning.” The same is true of the negative critic who takes away from Scripture by denying parts of it. Deuteronomy 28:14 ties turning “to the right or left” to “following other gods.” Psalm 1, which echoes Joshua 1:7-8, implies that turning to the right or left is the same as being in the fellowship of the wicked, sinners, and mockers. The need in God’s kingdom is for balanced and unswerving spiritual leaders that turn in neither direction from Scripture. Compare Joshua 1:7 with 23:6, where Joshua makes the same injunction before the leaders of Israel, thus broadening its application. In Mark 7:1-13 Jesus shows how the Pharisees violated the injunction against turning either to the right or left of Scripture by adding or subtracting. Luther comments on the expression “not turning to the right or to the left;” he equates the “left” with outright evil acts and the “right” with self-concocted works.

We have more than enough to do, too much in fact, just to satisfy God’s commandments. He has given us such commandments so that if we understand them aright, we dare not be idle for a moment. We could well forget all other works. But when the evil spirit, who never rests, cannot lead us into evil works on the left, he fights on our right through self-devised works which seem good. (LW, v. 44, p. 46)

Besides the general directive to go to the authority of the Torah without deviation, the LORD’s words also instruct Joshua in the specifics of his reading.

The Torah is to be **in his mouth**. The word of YAHWEH will be in his mouth as he continually instructs others from the Scriptures of Moses. See 8:34-35, where the word YAHWEH is in the mouth of Joshua as he publicly reads the Torah before all Israel at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. (See Isaiah 59:21, where the prophet reflects v. 8 in the New Covenant promise that God’s people will never be without his word. See also Jeremiah 31:31-

34.)

Joshua's reading of the Torah is also to be a matter of **personal meditation**, like Mary's "treasuring up" and "pondering" (Luke 2:19), not just the activity of a professional doing his duty. (See notes above on this Hebrew verb for "meditate.") Luther thus encourages mulling over the Scriptures "like an animal that chews its cud." (from a 1519 letter) Unlike Eastern "meditation" which involves *emptying* the mind, Joshua's meditation is to consist of *filling* his mind with the rich and rewarding word of the LORD. His reading is to be **regular**, "day and night," so that the word might percolate through mind and heart. "Repetition is the mother of study." Luther encourages that at bedtime only a little portion of Scripture be the focus, "so that you may think it through and understand, and may find a remnant of it in your mind when you get up in the morning." (from the same 1519 letter)

His study is to be so **thorough** that he can act according to the whole Torah. **Finally, faith-based action in accordance with Scripture is to be in view as he reads rightly.** Luther therefore encourages Christians to pray a simple prayer such as this when studying Scripture: "Lord, help me to understand this correctly, but more importantly, help me to act on it."

The promise for Joshua attached to this kind of Bible reading is that he will "prosper" and "succeed" or "act wisely," as the verb שָׁכַל also means. It is not Joshua's study skills as such that will produce this result, but the LORD himself through his living and active word. The Torah hands him the LORD's promises and leads him to accept them; it motivates him for action; and it instructs him on how the LORD wants him to proceed. The LORD himself creates Joshua's success by his word. (See Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 3:5). Even Jesus could find no more powerful weapon for success against Satan than the words of the Torah, as his three-time quoting from the book of Deuteronomy shows. (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10 are quotations from Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, 6:13.) Joshua has before him those very

words that Jesus spoke from the Torah as he prepares for success in his battles. The active obedience of Jesus (later form of the name "Joshua") in regard to the use of Scripture is evident in all phases of his life. He was perfect in behalf of the whole world of sinners in his use of Scripture.

The author of Psalm 1 reflects Joshua 1:7-8 and applies to believers the promises about Bible reading made first to Joshua. We do not need to envy Joshua. When the believer of any era delights in the Torah/Teaching of the LORD and meditates on it, he is blessed; he is like a fruit-bearing tree; he prospers. The "prosperity" of the righteous consists in owning the very blessings his word promises and gives; and it displays itself in a fruitful life that reflects his gifts of grace.

The terms "prosper" and "succeed" of v. 8 obviously need to be understood according to God's definition of those words. "Failure" in the world's eyes may be "prosperity and success" in God's eyes, and *vice versa*. For Joshua, success will soon involve impressive military victories. Even that earthly "success" is a fruit of meditation on Scripture, as the LORD leads him to believe the Torah promises and thereby motivates him to follow its commands regarding the conquest of the land of promise.

For the promises of Jesus regarding the blessings of holding to his Word without deviation, see John 8:31-32. His Scriptures alone effect discipleship, reveal saving truth, and give freedom from sin. Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:15-17 are also similar in thought to Joshua 1:7-8. Paul directs Timothy to inspired Scripture alone for success. Nothing else can make one wise for salvation and equip for every good work. What was true for Joshua, early disciples and Timothy prevails today. Real success comes through Scripture alone.

The LORD's strong emphasis on the written Word draws our attention. Joshua is just now receiving word directly from the LORD. At times the LORD reveals his will to him by lot (14:2). On one occasion the LORD speaks to him through the special commander of the army of the LORD (5:14). Yet here the LORD

directs the confidence of Joshua to his written revelation, the Scriptures of his day. When the Torah is still fresh from the hands of Moses, God directs his new leader to it alone for absolute authority and success. "Scripture alone" is not just an idea hatched during the Reformation three thousand years after Moses. It is the LORD's principle set in place for the prosperity and success of his people as soon as the Bible began to appear.

Book Review: Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics, Volume IV

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics, Volume IV*, translated by Joel Fredrich, Paul Prange and Bill Tackmier. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999. 401 pages.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore
at 1-800-944-1722. Price: \$31.99

In 1909 the four German volumes of Hoenecke's *Dogmatik* were published. Prof. Adolf Hoenecke, whose dates are 1835-1908, served as the president of the Wisconsin Synod's seminary during its early years. Down through the decades his dogmatics text has served as an important touchstone for the teaching of systematic theology at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. In large part most of today's WELS pastors have become acquainted with Hoenecke through the *Dogmatics Notes* (affectionately "Dog Notes") of Prof. Joh. P. Meyer. Meyer, who also served as president of the seminary from 1937-1953, based his *Notes* primarily on the yeoman work of Hoenecke. Recently the WELS has undertaken the project of translating Hoenecke's four volumes into English, with the first offering appearing as the fourth volume which deals with the means of grace, church and ministry, and the last things.

Prof. August Pieper, a colleague for six years of Prof. A. Hoenecke, wrote of Hoenecke's significance in a lengthy article appearing in issues of the *Theologische Quartalschrift* of 1935 and 1936. We quote a portion of this essay: "Hoenecke never laid claim to first-class theological greatness. But he was a very

thorough theologian of a relatively old-fashioned cut. His training was on the high level of German scholarship. His most outstanding intellectual characteristic was an uncommon acumen and clarity. For that reason gifted students found him interesting, yes, gripping, and to the less gifted ones he proved to be persuasive and fruitful. Thoroughly at home in Scripture, in Luther, and in Lutheran dogmatics, he showed himself combat-ready in any debate that became necessary for him. He was also sure of his ground and careful in his argumentation” (WLQ, Spr. 1991, p. 143).

Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics sets forth the doctrines of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions in a “thesis and antithesis” format. Strengths of *Volume IV* are the abundant references to Scripture used to prove every dogmatic point, buttressed with ample quotations from Luther and the Lutheran dogmaticians. At the same time the reader is not left guessing as to where and how errors have crept into the church over the years. Frequent citations from the heterodox, such as contained in the Council of Trent, are provided for a handy comparison.

ELS readers especially will be interested in two items expounded in this volume. We are referring to Hoenecke’s remarks concerning the moment of the real presence in the Lord’s Supper and to his presentation on the doctrine of the ministry.

Pertaining to the moment of the real presence in the Lord’s Supper, Hoenecke stresses that “apart from the use, the essence is not there.” He then goes on to say, “In the moment of the eating and drinking, bread and wine are the bearers of Christ’s body and blood for those who are partaking” (pp. 136 & 137). Once again he says, “Christ’s body and blood are under the bread and wine in the moment of the partaking of the bread and wine.” He appears to be limiting the real presence to the time of the reception. In 1997 our ELS passed a resolution stating, “While one may hold a private opinion as to when the real presence begins, yet we reject the dogmatic assertion that in a valid celebration of the Lord’s Supper it must be maintained that the body and blood

are immediately present after the Words of Institution have been spoken by the pastor *or the dogmatic assertion that it must be maintained that the body and blood are present only in the reception.*” (1997 Synod Report, p. 78. Emphasis Added.) In light of our recent Lord’s Supper discussion, it is noteworthy that Prof. Joel Fredrich includes this welcomed observation in the Forward: “Occasionally one discovers that a conclusion is not based on a compelling argument (e.g., his argument that the real presence in the Lord’s Supper cannot begin until the moment of reception)” (p. xii).

One is very happy to see that Prof. Hoenecke clearly attributes the power for bringing about the real presence to the words of institution. “This is brought about by the consecration that takes place with the words of institution” (p. 137). He also points Lutherans to our confession (FC VII), where “it explains that the words of institution make Christ’s body and blood present...” (p. 137).

Before leaving the subject of the Lord’s Supper, this reviewer would like to draw attention to an excellent hymn verse from the Middle Ages which Hoenecke uses to show how the early church understood the fact that even unworthy communicants receive the very body and blood of Christ, albeit to their judgment. The hymn verse is a stanza from Thomas Aquinas’ *Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem*. The translation is given as follows (p. 143):

Godly men and godless eat it,
But the way in which they treat it
Brings upon them bliss or bane.
Death the godless are receiving,
Life is there for the believing-
Equal food, unequal gain!

As to his discussion on the ministry, Hoenecke rightfully and forcefully takes issue with the Hoefling view that the public

ministry is “only an activity freely proceeding from the Christian spirit” and not divinely instituted as such (pp. 188 & 189). He states that it “cannot depend on human institution or mere spiritual drive. It must exist by divine right (*de jure divino*).” On the other hand, romanizing Lutherans are taken to task when the ministerial office is alleged to exist not only for “the impartation of God’s grace *through* the means of grace, but is also *in itself* a means of grace” (p. 191).

It is commonly acknowledged in the Wisconsin Synod (see “Doctrinal Statements of the WELS,” NPH, 1997) that Prof. Hoenecke in 1892 derived the call of a Christian day school teacher from the call of the pastor. His very first thesis on the ministry could well be understood to establish such a view: “The teaching office (Lehramt), by which we here mean the pastors, the estate composed of the servants of the Word, is divinely instituted.” So that the reader does not conclude that the scriptural position on the ministry is to dogmatize the pastorate (Pfarramt) as the only form of the public ministry as opposed to any and all other forms of the public ministry, the translator has inserted a footnote directing attention to the WELS official statement on the ministry cited above (1997).

We certainly commend Northwestern Publishing House for making Hoenecke available in the English. Students of Lutheran theology will welcome the trek through the pages of his *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*. The devout attention to *sola Scriptura* as the only source and norm of all doctrine, which has as its crowning jewel the justification of sinners set forth in Word and Sacrament, surely is the mark of solid, confessional Lutheranism.

We close this review with another accolade from August Pieper: “In his temperament, Hoenecke was neither a conqueror, nor a leader of assault troops, not a fiery champion, but simply an unrelenting defender of the Lutheran fortress against every attacker. Otherwise, he was altogether a man who sought peace in the church and the calm edification of his fellow Christians in the

genuine gospel” (*The Wauwatosa Theology III*, p. 379).