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*The Last Long Pastorate A Journey of Grace*  
by F. Dean Lueking

(Reviewer: David Lau)

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# Genesis in the New Testament

David Lau

*[During the non-festival half of the church year a pastor may want to get away from pericopic systems once in a while and follow a different procedure. Some years ago I drew up a series of 15 sermons from New Testament texts that repeated and applied the truths of the first book of the Old Testament. The Scripture lessons for these Sundays were both from the book of Genesis, and the sermon texts were from various New Testament books.]*

## Genesis One

First Reading: Genesis 1: 1-13 Second Reading: Genesis 1: 14-28

Texts: Hebrews 11:3; 1 Corinthians 15: 39-41; Acts 17: 24-25

**By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.**

**All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.**

**God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.**

One of the biggest problems in our modern world is that the devil has succeeded in getting many people to believe that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are not really true. In the next few weeks and months we intend to establish without a doubt that the history recorded in Genesis was accepted by our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles. Our method for doing this will be to read selections from Genesis as our Sunday Scripture readings and then base our Sunday sermons on various New Testament texts that deal with the same subject matter. It will thus become clear that a person cannot tear Genesis 1-11 out of his Bible or explain it away as myth or poem or pious fiction without at the same time rejecting the word of our Lord Jesus and His apostles.

The Bible agrees with itself, for it is in its entirety the Word of God. What the Holy Spirit says in Genesis 1-11 He says in other places as well. God does not contradict Himself. The devil is trying to get people to believe that it is not necessary or important to believe that God created the world in six days. The devil wants us to doubt and reject the teaching of creation as a first step towards denying all of God's Word. In order to do this, Satan suggests to Christians that all that counts is that we believe in Jesus; it is not important, he says, that we accept the account of creation. After all, he says, what difference does it make whether God made the world in six days or whether it developed over millions of years; you can still believe in Jesus as your Savior. This is the devil's argument.

I'm not manufacturing this danger out of my own mind. There is strong evidence that Bible teachers and Bible students, especially the young, are being persuaded in our time that the theory of evolution, the theory that men developed from animals over millions of years, is an acceptable alternative for the Christian. In the last few years a survey was taken of the views of college and seminary students at some of the most conservative schools in our country. Only 29% of these students accepted the clear teaching of Genesis that "the world was created in six twenty-four hour days" and yet 88% of these same students stated their belief that "the Bible is the inspired Word of God." Let me quote a few of the comments made by these students so that you understand what is happening in their thinking. One college sophomore said: "I think of a literal garden and the literal trees that were there but am open to the idea of the creation story being symbolism." In other words, it may not really have happened as it is written. Another sophomore said: "I was brought up to believe that the creation story was real, but I would feel comfortable with a symbolic interpretation too." Many of these students enter college believing that creation happened as the Bible says, but in the course of their instruction their teachers direct them away from the literal truths of Genesis creation.

Therefore let us in our Sunday services for the next few months consider the teachings of Genesis in all seriousness and compare what Genesis says with the Bible says elsewhere, particularly with what the New Testament says. We believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and we want to know **WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT CREATION.**

The very first verse of Genesis says: "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**" When God first created all the heavens and the earth, "**the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.**" Then God in an orderly way proceeded to bring light into the darkness, to give form and shape to what had been formless and shapeless, to fill the void that was there at first. God did this in a period of six days, as Genesis tells us. They were

ordinary days made up of evening and morning, just as our days are today. There is absolutely no reason from Scripture to believe that these days were periods of millions of years. In fact, from Mt. Sinai God Himself spoke the Third Commandment about remembering the Sabbath Day, and in that connection God Himself said: **"In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them."** For this reason He directed His people to labor and do their work for six days before resting on the seventh day. Can there be any doubt that God was referring to six ordinary twenty-four hour days?

People say there was not enough time in those six days to do everything God had to do. How much time does God need? He could have created everything in an instant, if He had chosen to do so. For it is written: **"He spoke, and it was done."** He said: **"Let there be light,"** and **"there was light."**

Our text from Hebrews says that **"the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."** God's method was simple. He created all things out of nothing by His almighty Word. This is what Genesis says. This is what Hebrews says. In the beginning there was nothing but God. He alone is eternal, **"from everlasting to everlasting,"** as the Psalm says. He had no raw materials to work with. He brought things into being out of nothing, simply by saying the word.

Can we prove this scientifically? Of course not. **"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."** What happens is that the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts through the Holy Scriptures, first convicting us of our sin and then directing us to Jesus as our Savior from sin. By teaching us the good news of Jesus Christ, that Jesus died for our sins and rose again to give us life, the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts, faith in Jesus as our Savior. Through the same Word by which the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus as our Savior, He causes us to trust all of Jesus' words in the Bible. Among the words of Jesus are these: **"The Scriptures cannot be broken."** And again Jesus said to His enemies: **"You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures."** And again He said: **"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?"**

Is it not clear that our Lord Jesus accepted the Genesis account of creation? He Himself referred to Genesis chapter one when He said: **"Have you not read?"** Surely we should be willing to believe what our Lord Jesus accepted. We should believe it because God said it, or God's Spirit wrote it down through the prophets of old. Of course we cannot prove it, but neither can the evolutionist or denier of Genesis one prove his theories. We should remember what God said to Job when Job was getting a bit impatient. **"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"** Who are we to disagree with God's own record? He was there, and we were not. What we need is faith, faith in Jesus, faith in the Scriptures, faith in Genesis one, not questions, not doubts. Those who trust in God's account of creation are not going to be greatly shaken by the views of the so-called experts and all of their alleged evidence for evolution. Do you know that many of the evolutionists themselves are beginning to realize their arguments are flimsy? How sad that Bible students at Christian colleges are beginning to accept what some of the renowned evolutionists of our time are beginning to question!

One of the basic tenets of evolution is that the human being is nothing but an advanced animal that has evolved from the animal world over a long period of time. Genesis, however, simply tells us that God created human beings, male and female, on the sixth day of history, the same day on which He created the beasts of the earth. Moreover, Genesis tells us that God created human beings in His own image, that is, like Himself in holiness and righteousness and spiritual knowledge. Human beings and animals are therefore different from each other; they have always been different and always will be different.

In his first letter to the Corinthians the apostle Paul enlarges on this point. He says: **"All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds."** If a person falls for evolution, he is rejecting not only Genesis; he's rejecting Paul's teaching as well, and also the teaching of Jesus.

There is so much more that could be said, so much more that God has said about creation. But let us close with the apostle Paul's clear words in his speech to the pagans of ancient Athens. **"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things."**

May we always affirm the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as our Creator and Preserver, as Genesis teaches it, as the New Testament teaches it, as the whole Bible teaches it. Amen!

## Genesis Two

First Reading: Genesis 2: 4-17 Second Reading: Genesis 2: 18-25

Texts: 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49; 1 Timothy 2: 12-13; Matthew 19: 4-6

**And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and**

as is the heavenly Man, so also those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

I don't suppose there are many people in our country who have never heard of Adam and Eve. For this story of the first man and the first woman and the Garden of Eden and the tree and the serpent and eating the forbidden fruit is a part of our heritage not easily forgotten. Comedians make jokes about it, movie makers allude to it, and Sunday School teachers keep on presenting it year after year.

But, sad to say, even though the story of Adam and Eve is widely known, it is not generally accepted as a historical account. If you consult the standard encyclopedias about the origin of the human race, you will not read that God created one man and one woman, and that all human beings have descended from that original couple. Oh, no, rather you will see illustrations of how the human being as he is today has had a long development or evolution from the animal world over a period of many thousands of years. If Adam and Eve are mentioned at all in this connection, it is only as an example of how some religious people explain the origin of the human race, not as a historical fact. In other words, the story of Adam and Eve is put on the same level as Santa Claus and the Easter bunny, as the fairy tales of England or the ancient myths of the Greeks and the Romans. If we ask, "Did Adam and Eve ever actually exist on this earth? Was there ever an actual place on this earth called the Garden of Eden?" the answer of most scholars would be that those persons and that place existed and exist today only in people's imaginations.

This morning we want to consider whether it is possible for us Christians to go along with the current tendency to accept Adam and Eve as being merely folklore characters without any historical existence. We want to consider **WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT ADAM AND EVE**. God talks to us today through the Holy Scriptures. What does He say? Does the Bible present the account of Adam and Eve as a parable or myth, or as a historical fact.?

Before we take a look at how our three New Testament texts present Adam and Eve, let me refer you to the list of Jesus' ancestors in Luke chapter three. In this list we find David, king of Israel, presented as the son of Jesse, who in turn was the grandson of Boaz, the man who married Ruth. No one doubts that David was a man who actually lived in history; he is accepted as such in books of ancient history. In this same list we have Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, all of them well-known figures from Israelite history. Finally we have on this list "**Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.**" You see, Jesus' human ancestry is traced all the way back to Adam, who was a direct creation of God Himself. Does not this list in itself prove to us that God wants us to accept the story of Adam and Eve as a historical account? If David really existed as a human being, if Abraham really existed as a human being, then also Adam really existed as a human being, for all of these persons are on this same list, including our Lord Jesus Himself.

Therefore we state the following as a historical fact, not as a fairy tale: **GOD MADE ADAM FROM DUST AND THEN BREATHED LIFE INTO HIM**. This is the true, factual origin of the first human being. God said: "**Let Us make man in Our image.**" And then "**the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.**"

In his first letter to the Corinthians the apostle Paul refers to this when he says: "**The first man was of the earth, made of dust.**" Again: "**As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust.**" That is, we are of dust, as Adam was of dust, and to dust shall we return. Again Paul says: "**We have borne the image of the man of dust.**" Notice then that the apostle Paul, who claimed that every word of his teaching came from the Holy Spirit, declared himself in agreement with Genesis, chapter two, that "**the first man, Adam, was made of dust.**" What more evidence do we need?

If we don't want to believe that Adam and Eve ever existed, or that God created him from a clod of dirt, well, then, let's come out into the open and say we don't believe the Bible or the words of Jesus and His apostles. Let's not attempt the foolish compromise of saying we are Christians and that we believe in Jesus and that He died for our sins, but, of course, we do not believe this primitive, old-fashioned idea that there ever existed such persons as Adam and Eve. I suppose it's theoretically possible, by the grace of God, for someone who denies the existence of Adam and Eve, to still maintain that Jesus lived and died and rose again as his Savior, and to trust in Jesus for that salvation. But generally what happens is that those who begin their downward plunge from faith by denying the existence of Adam and Eve go on to deny other historical facts related in the Bible until they deny also Jesus' resurrection of the dead. By that time it is clear that they have lost their Christian faith altogether.

If there was no first Adam, can there be a second Adam? If we don't believe the Bible's testimony about the first man who was of the earth, why should we believe what the Bible says about the second Man, Jesus, the Lord from heaven, the heavenly Man, as Paul calls Him in this text? God breathed into the first Adam the breath of life, and he became a living being. The second Adam will give life to all the buried and corrupt bodies of those who believe in Him on the day of resurrection, and then **"we shall bear the image of the heavenly Man,"** Jesus Christ, even as **"we have borne the image of the man of dust."**

But let us go on to state a second proposition, again not as a fairy tale, but as a historical fact: GOD MADE ADAM FIRST, AND THEN EVE TO BE HIS HELPER. After forming Adam from the dust of the earth, God said: **"It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."** God then formed the woman from one of Adam's ribs while he slept. He brought this woman to Adam, and Adam said: **"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."**

Now the question is this: Did this really happen on the sixth day of human history, or is this account just an old legend or fairy tale or myth, like the Greek myths about the stars and their constellations? Well, what does the apostle Paul say when he refers to this? He says in his first letter to Timothy: **"Adam was formed first, then Eve."** Not only did Paul present this as a simple historical fact, but he dealt with the men and women of the churches he served on the basis of this historical fact. For it is written: **"I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence."** This was his practice, and it was based on the historical fact related in Genesis two: **"Adam was formed first, then Eve."** How could he dare to base his practice on God's creation of man first, and then woman, if it did not really happen that way? The apostle dared to base his practice on this, because he knew it really happened that way. It was God's design and intention from the beginning to form Adam first as the head and to form Eve secondly as his helping partner. Having the woman teach the man in church services, having the woman assert authority over the man in the church, is contrary to God's will as made evident in His original design. **"Man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man."** We know some people don't like to hear these things, but what God says is clear.

Finally we state as a historical fact, not as a fairy tale: GOD JOINED ADAM AND EVE IN THE FIRST MARRIAGE AS A MODEL FOR ALL FUTURE MARRIAGES. It was God who made the woman from man. It was God who brought her to the man. Genesis states at this point in the record: **"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."**

Now did this really happen, or not? Our Lord Jesus certainly accepted it. When some Pharisees asked Him a question about divorce, Jesus replied: **"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."**

Surely it is clear that our Lord Jesus accepted the Genesis record as a historical account of something that really happened. The first marriage is the model for all future marriages. Should we not rather believe Jesus than anyone else? Is not His word more precious to us than all the theories and expert opinions of scholars and scientists? Jesus is our Savior. He is the One we trust in as our Savior from sin, the One who died for us and rose again. We believe what He says when He invites us to come to Him for eternal life. Should we not then also believe what He says to us, and what His apostles say to us, about Adam and Eve? May God give us faith and confidence in all the words of our Lord. Amen!

## Genesis Three

First Reading: Genesis 3: 1-13 Second Reading: Genesis 3: 14-20

Texts: 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14; Romans 5: 12, 18-19

**But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**

**And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned -- Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**

One of the most important rules for reading and understanding the Bible is that the Bible interprets itself. If we have difficulty understanding a certain portion of the Bible, all we have to do is search the Bible for other references to the same event or teaching, to determine how the Bible itself explains the matter in question. This rule that the Bible interprets itself

is based on the truth that the entire Bible is the Word of God, and that our holy and perfect God does not and cannot contradict Himself.

In Genesis one the Bible says that God made man in His own image. What does this mean? Does it mean that man's physical appearance is like God's physical appearance? No, that cannot be because the Bible says that God is a spirit and has no physical body. What then does it mean? It means that man, in contrast to all the other creatures of God, was made with God-like holiness and righteousness and spiritual knowledge. How do we know this? The Bible itself explains the image of God in this way, specifically in the writings of the apostle Paul in the New Testament. The Bible interprets itself.

Genesis two further explains this holiness and righteousness of the first man, Adam, and his wife Eve. Everything God made was very good, and so these first two human beings were **"very good."** There were no flaws in them. They lived in a perfect home without any sense of shame or fear. They loved God and they loved each other. They were happy to show their gratitude to their Creator by obeying the one command He gave them: the command not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But when we get to Genesis, chapter three, the picture changes abruptly. We see Adam and Eve no longer as holy and righteous. No longer do they love God; no longer do they love each other. Sin has entered their world. Today we want to discuss **WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT THE SIN OF ADAM AND EVE**, that is, how the Bible interprets this event described in Genesis chapter three. The main question we need to ask is whether the story of the sin of Adam and Eve is presented as a parable or pious fiction or whether it really happened. You know there are some people who think that the whole story was made up by someone to explain why some people are afraid of snakes. But when we look at the rest of the Bible, it is obvious that that notion is far from the truth. No matter where we turn in the Scriptures, we find the same explanation: Adam and Eve were real human beings who lived on this earth at a certain time in history, and they actually did what Genesis three says they did.

Genesis three begins with a serpent having a conversation with Eve concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. With great cunning this serpent lied to Eve. He told her that she would not die if she ate the fruit of that tree, even though God had said that she would surely die if she ate fruit from that tree. **"God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** The woman fell for this lie. It seemed plausible to her. Thus **THE SERPENT CLEVERLY DECEIVED EVE, SO THAT SHE DISOBEYED GOD'S COMMAND.**

There is no indication anywhere in the Bible that this event did not really take place. Listen to the apostle's words to the Corinthians: **"I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."** It is stated as a simple fact: **"The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness."** Therefore the Christians in Corinth needed to be on their guard. If Eve, the holy woman created in God's own image, was deceived by the serpent's clever lies, they too could easily have their minds corrupted, so that they would lose their simple trust in Christ and single-minded devotion to Him and would believe the lies and clever advertising of false teachers.

Notice that Paul refers to **"the serpent"** in this connection. Yet he knew that Satan, the fallen angel, was the one who spoke through this serpent. For in another letter he writes: **"The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly,"** a clear reference to God's promise in Genesis three that the serpent or Satan will have his head bruised or crushed. And of course the book of Revelation also identifies **"the serpent of old"** as being none other than **"the great dragon, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world."** Jesus Himself referred to this when He called the devil a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. Surely one of the biggest lies of Satan in our day is that Genesis 1-11 is myth, or poetry, or legend, or anything other than straightforward history. People believe this lie today, just as Eve believed Satan's lie then. But in the Bible we have sufficient evidence to prove Satan's lie to be a lie.

So far we have spoken only of Eve. What about Adam? The Bible teaches that **ADAM, ALTHOUGH NOT DECEIVED, ALSO DISOBEYED GOD'S COMMAND, AND THUS BROUGHT SIN AND DEATH INTO THE WORLD.** Genesis says that after Eve ate the forbidden fruit, **"she gave to her husband with her, and he ate."** Paul explains it like this. **"Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."** There is no doubt that Eve believed Satan's lie. But Adam knew it was a lie; he was not deceived, and yet he also ate the forbidden fruit and disobeyed God's clear command.

The consequences of this sin are clearly described in Genesis three. Adam and Eve became immediately ashamed of their nakedness and tried to cover themselves up. When the Lord God came to visit them, they were now afraid of Him and in their foolishness they tried to hide from Him. When Adam was confronted with the fact of his sin, he did not manfully accept the responsibility for his actions. He blamed Eve, and he blamed God for giving him such a wife as Eve. Eve's response was no better. She blamed the serpent, not herself, even though having been made in the image of God, she had had the power to resist his temptation.

The account in Genesis shows that God's threat was carried out. He had said they would surely die in the day they

ate of that fruit. They did die. They died spiritually. They became dead in sins. Their bodies also changed. They became mortal that is, subject to death and disease and sorrow of all kinds. God now had to say to them: "**Dust you are, and to dust you shall return.**" Nor could they now eat of the tree of life and live forever. This change came over not only Adam and Eve, but all of creation. The ground was now cursed; thorns and thistles began to abound. And death now for the first time entered the animal world. For we are told that God now clothed Adam and Eve with skins from animals.

But did it really happen? Or is it just a story, a fairy tale? The apostle Paul surely presents it as a fact in his letter to the Romans. For he says: "**Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.**" Those who believe the theory of evolution have no explanation for the fact that there is such beauty and order in this world of ours at the same time that there is so much evil. But God gives us the explanation. He created the world as very good, but Adam's disobedience brought sin and death into the world. In fact Paul says that when Adam sinned, this was really the sin of all human beings. In Adam's fall we all sinned. Paul says this is obvious from one simple fact of history. During the many years from Adam to Moses people died. They died, even though there was not yet any written law to condemn their actions. They died because they all sinned when Adam sinned. And so did we.

But Genesis three tells us more than Adam's sin and punishment. There is in Genesis 3:15 the first Gospel promise about the Woman's Seed who would bruise or crush the serpent's head while having His own heel bruised. The apostle Paul explains how this promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. "**As through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.**"

This is a tremendous passage in God's Word, worthy of our continuing study. It tells us that THE PROMISED WOMAN'S SEED, JESUS CHRIST, BROUGHT JUSTIFICATION AND LIFE INTO THE WORLD THROUGH HIS PERFECT OBEDIENCE. When Adam sinned, the result was sin, death, and condemnation for the whole human race. But when Jesus obeyed, obeyed even to the point of dying on the cross for all human sins, the result was justification and life for the whole human race. Yes, God now declares the whole world righteous in His sight, all sins totally forgiven, because of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, in whom we boast more blessings than our father Adam lost. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is proof that what we say is true: justification for all in Jesus Christ. "**For as by one man's disobedience that many (that is, all) were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience the many (that is, all) will be made righteous.**"

May the Holy Spirit through this Word give us faith to believe it and thus receive this eternal benefit for ourselves. Notice that Adam is compared with Christ in this passage. By trying to get us to believe there was no Adam, the devil is striving to get us to lose Christ. May God protect us from having our minds corrupted through his lies. Amen!

## The Personification of Hochma: Is Christ the Person?

Paul Naumann

### Introduction

In the course of an exegesis paper on Proverbs chapter two from a year ago we stated, among other things, that " how one defines the term ' wisdom (*Hochma*) will in large part determine one's interpretation of this section, the entire Book of Proverbs and indeed all of Scripture. I have long been convinced that the *terminus a quo* from which all discussion of the Biblical concept of wisdom must proceed is most simply stated in Proverbs 9:10: *'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.'*"

The discussion continued with an analogy: "One might imagine a treasure map with a whole list of instructions, the first of which is, ' Take ten paces north from the old oak tree.' It goes without saying that if that first step in the instructions should somehow be torn off or missing, one could never reach the desired destination. Indeed, the rest of the map no longer matters very much, except as an interesting artifact. One may wander about, digging here and there at random and trying in vain to recognize other landmarks, but one will never find the treasure if one doesn't know the starting point." I believe that it was at this point in the presentation of the paper that a discussion ensued, and someone suggested from the floor that perhaps *Hochma* in the Old Testament might be analogous to *Logos* in the New Testament; i.e., that *Hochma*, wisdom, might be used in Proverbs as a designation for the coming Christ.

Clearly, the proper relationship to God and understanding of His plan of salvation is the beginning of wisdom. Just as clear is the fact that wisdom is everywhere *predicated* of God in the OT. God is wise, and it is wisdom which invests his

mightiest works. By his wisdom God numbered the clouds (Job 38:37), founded the earth (Prov. 3:19), and made the world (Jer. 10:10). Christians will acknowledge that all true wisdom is a gift of God, and that the apprehension of salvation through faith in Christ is the ultimate apex of wisdom. No one will argue that supreme wisdom is to be *ascribed* to Christ. In this paper, however, we will survey the question of whether, in certain Old Testament passages, the word Wisdom may be used specifically as an appellation for Christ, analogous to the use of *Logos* in certain New Testament passages. The sections which concern us are all in Proverbs, and are reproduced here for your reference. Just reading through the passages one can see the striking way in which "wisdom" is personified, and one can also sense the compelling attraction of idea of substituting "Christ" for "wisdom":

Proverbs 1:20-33 Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; 21 At the head of the noisy *streets* she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings: 22 "How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, And fools hate knowledge? 23 "Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. 24 "Because I called, and you refused; I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention; 25 And you neglected all my counsel, And did not want my reproof; 26 I will even laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, 27 When your dread comes like a storm, And your calamity comes on like a whirlwind, When distress *and* anguish come on you. 28 "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they shall not find me, 29 Because they hated knowledge, And did not choose the fear of the LORD. 30 "They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. 31 "So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, And be satiated with their own devices. 32 "For the waywardness of the naive shall kill them, And the complacency of fools shall destroy them. 33 "But he who listens to me shall live securely, And shall be at ease from the dread of evil."

NAS Proverbs 8:1-4 Does not wisdom call, And understanding lift up her voice? 2 On top of the heights beside the way, Where the paths meet, she takes her stand; 3 Beside the gates, at the opening to the city, At the entrance of the doors, she cries out: 4 "To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men.

NAS Proverbs 8:12-15 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge *and* discretion. 13 "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate. 14 "Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I am understanding, power is mine. 15 "By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice.

NAS Proverbs 8:22-24 "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. 23 "From everlasting I was established, From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. 24 "When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no springs abounding with water.

NAS Proverbs 9:1-6 Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; 2 She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table; 3 She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city: 4 "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, 5 "Come, eat of my food, And drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 "Forsake *your* folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding."

Before entering into a discussion of these passages, we should briefly survey the concept from which we are drawing our analogy - the usage of *Logos* in the New Testament.

### ***Logos***

All are familiar with the distinctive usage of the word *Logos* (λόγος) as a specific designation (almost amounting to a proper noun) for Christ in certain New Testament passages. The three passages in view are the following:

NAS John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

GNT John 1:1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

NAS John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

GNT John 1:14 Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

NAS Revelation 19:13 And *He* is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.

GNT Revelation 19:13 καὶ περιβεβλημένος ἱμάτιον βεβαμμένον αἵματι, καὶ κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ.

There is no discussion among us as to whether the word *Logos* in these passages was intended by the Apostle John, their author, to be a specific designation for Christ. They were. Interestingly, the personification of "the Word" finds at least



a partial Old Testament parallel in Isaiah 55:11:

KJV Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

כִּי אִם-עָשָׂה אֶת-אֲשֶׁר הִפְצַתִּי וְהִצְלִיחַ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּיו: WTT Isaiah55:11  
כִּי אִם-עָשָׂה אֶת-אֲשֶׁר הִפְצַתִּי וְהִצְלִיחַ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּיו:

The parallel is striking, though not strictly analogous. While the "word" here is given a sort of poetic independence, nothing in the Isaiah passage indicates a *Logos*-like identification with Christ. It does point up the fact, however, that the Apostle John was not working in a vacuum, and that Old Testament descriptive styles had their influence on the New Testament writers. One scholar comments on James 3:17 (*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy*) as follows: "It undoubtedly reflects the description of wisdom in Wisdom of Solomon 7:22-24, and the NT *logos* theme did not develop independently of the personification of wisdom in the wisdom literature of the OT and the Apocalypse. It was this aspect of wisdom which impressed itself upon emerging Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

I should add that another somewhat analogous case in the Old Testament springs to mind, and that is the term **יְהוָה מְלֵאךְ**. It strikes me as analogous, not because, like *Hochma*, it represents an abstract concept which has been personified, but rather because a strong case can be made that in *every single one* of its 67 occurrences, this phrase refers to the pre-incarnate Son of God.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Hochma* and *Hochmot*

But to return to the question: is *Hochma* similar to *Logos*? Like *Logos*, it is a very common word, and by far the majority of its occurrences do not concern us here. The noun and adjective occur over 100 times in various forms, while the verb **הָכִיחַ** 'to be wise, to act wisely' is also very frequent. For the purposes of our question we are only concerned with two forms of the noun: **הַכְּמָה** which occurs some 77 times. 46 of these are translated with σοφία by the LXX. Other translations include φρόνησις, *way of thinking, wisdom, outlook, ἐπιστήμη, knowledge, understanding, experience, σύνεσις, comprehension, understanding, intelligence*, and even the common τέχνη, *trade, skill, craft*.

A much rarer form of the Hebrew word 'wisdom' **הַכְּמוֹת**, which occurs only four times and which is interesting in its own right, as we shall see.

**הַכְּמָה** was a common noun expressing a wide range of meanings. It is posited both of God and of man, and occurred in many contexts, not always the specialized sense which occurs in 'wisdom literature' such as Proverbs. It was often used of simple craftsmanship, and could mean 'skill.' It could mean 'shrewdness.' According to Whybray, the word was "not always used with specific reference to God; yet at the same time men recognized in a general way that, like all other human qualities, it was a gift of God."<sup>3</sup>

#### *A New God?*

**הַכְּמוֹת**, according to certain scholars, was another quantity altogether, and that gets us to the heart of our question. This rare noun form for 'Wisdom' occurs in the following four places:

NAS Psalm 49:3 My mouth will speak wisdom; And the meditation of my heart *will be* understanding.

בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה BHS Psalm 49:4

NAS Proverbs 1:20 Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square;

בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה BHS Proverbs1:20

NAS Proverbs 9:1 Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars;

בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה BHS Proverbs 9:1;

NAS Proverbs 24:7 Wisdom is too high for a fool, He does not open his mouth in the gate.

בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי יְהוָה BHS Proverbs 24:7

W.F. Albright, perhaps the most renowned Near Eastern scholar of the last century, argues that this strange form is no accident. According to Albright, the origin of the figure of wisdom lies in the hypostatization of an attribute not of Yahweh but of the Canaanite high god *EL*. His view is that the unusual form **הַכְּמוֹת** is actually the name of a borrowed Canaanite goddess of Wisdom, who first got *her* existence from an attribute of *EL*.<sup>4</sup> A benchmark exposition of this view was delivered in a paper by Uppsala University Professor Helmer Ringgren in 1947, in which he indeed sees *Hochma* in Proverbs eight as the creation of an independent deity, "Wisdom."<sup>5</sup>

Other scholars, however, have pointed out the weakness of Albright's argument, based as it is on a very few (and very

obscure) Ugaritic texts from Ras Shamra. And Ralph Marcus of the University of Chicago has poked holes in Ringgren's thesis, concluding, "In the case of biblical Wisdom literature, we are dealing with the work of a particular group of thinkers, all of whom seem to have regarded the Torah as the embodiment of divine Wisdom and the pattern of human wisdom. Wisdom in late biblical literature is essentially and uniformly a poetic personification."<sup>6</sup>

### *Hypostasis and Hypostatization*

The term *hypostasis* is important. Hypostasis describes the state of something which acquires an *independent substantive existence*. "Hypostatization" is what happens, e.g., when an attribute of a deity spins off and takes on an independent existence of its own. Is that what occurs here in Proverbs eight and nine, where "Wisdom" is portrayed in the first person, speaking, exhorting, etc.? Whybray summarizes the two most common views among higher critical scholars. He says that most have seen in these passages "...no more than a vivid poetical personification of an attribute of Yahweh virtually uninfluenced by mythological elements." Some others like Albright, meanwhile, "...have maintained the opposite opinion that it is derived wholly or mainly from an originally independent goddess, one of whose attributes was wisdom, who under the influence of Yahwism lost her independent personality and was reduced to a subordinate status."<sup>7</sup>

Does the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs truly rise to the level of hypostatization? Or is it merely an extended poetic device, similar to allegory? There certainly are other examples in the Old Testament of extended and elaborate personifications, where it is clear that the figures are indeed allegorical and not to be regarded as real persons. One thinks of the example the two unchaste sisters, Jerusalem and Samaria, decried in Ezekiel 23. Other vivid personifications in the Old Testament include Psalm 85:10-13, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. 12 Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. 13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps."

However, none of these are as lively or elaborate as the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs chapters eight and nine.

Hypostatization, on the other hand, clearly has its dangers. Christians may be at little risk of finding a Canaanite goddess in the Bible word *Hochma*. However, the insidious trend of hypostasis (spin-off gods) threatened even the early Christian church in a couple of ways. One of them has been demonstrated by the modern scholar Abbé Lucien Dhalenne, a French Catholic-turned-Lutheran. According to Dhalenne, we have hypostatization to thank for the cult of Mary which gradually obtained purchase in the early Christian church. The more you think about his argument, the more it makes sense:

In a fifth century milieu, a culture steeped in goddess-worship was only too prone to the elevation of Mary to such a status: "Even at the decision of the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) to call Mary the mother of God (*theotokos*), the fathers of this council were far more interested in resisting the christological heresies, which were so dangerous at that time, than in glorifying Mary. On the one hand it was henceforth to be impossible to say that Christ had only what seemed to be a human body; for through the acceptance of this term (*theotokos*) He was designated as a true man with a real body born of a human mother. On the other hand it was henceforth to be impossible to say that He was not the divine *Logos*, the second person of the Trinity; from the very moment of His conception He was confessed to be the Word made flesh, and therefore true God. For the fathers this formulation actually expressed what it was intended to say: it preserved and emphasized the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ. Meanwhile it was not without danger for Christian people, especially in the land of the great Diana. Although it was self-evident for the theologians of this council, that the expression *theotokos* (mother of God) could not refer to the divine nature of Christ, this was not forthwith true of the circle of believers. Here the old vestiges of a religious paganism remained, though they may have been ever so slight; and soon the people who had become Christian found the image of the *Bona Dea* again, of the *Magna Mater* (=Cybele) of their fathers, but now "purified" and "sanctified" in the bosom of the Church itself. The actual origin of the adoration of Mary evidently lies in the popular cult of the many heathen female deities of the Mediterranean area."<sup>8</sup>

Almost as bad, this very section of Proverbs was abused by the proponents of Arianism. They did accept the identity of Christ with *Hochma*, and they used it to support the false doctrine that the Christ was inferior to the Father, holding that the Son was created in time by the Father. Delitzsch writes, "In the Christological controversy this word [Prov. 8:22, "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old,"] gained a dogmatic signification, for they proceeded generally on the identity of *sophia upostatike* (sapientia substantialis) with the hypostasis of the Son of God. The Arians use κύριος ἔκτισέν με as a proof of their doctrine of the *filii non genitus, sed factus*, i.e. of His existence before the world began indeed, but yet not from eternity, but originating in time."<sup>9</sup>

### **Lady Wisdom**

One obvious difficulty in identifying Christ with *Hochma* has no doubt already occurred to you: *Hochma* is a feminine noun. The poetical personification of wisdom in Proverbs is uniformly presented as a *woman*. This is awkward to say the least. *Logos* is of course masculine, as naturally is the *Mal' acHahweh*. That the image of Wisdom as a woman is a beautiful one cannot be denied. She entreats young men to listen to her and live. The virtuous woman Wisdom appears in contradistinction to Folly, who is also portrayed as an evil woman, or harlot ( Prov. 7:1-27, 9:13-18). She tempts foolish men to adultery and so lures them down to hell (7:27, 9:18).

This in turn raises another objection to the hypostasis theory: if Wisdom stands for Christ, who does Folly stand for? Satan? Consistency would seem to require it, yet it is difficult to fit "Satan" into all the passages where Folly is shown as acting. Come to that, why Satan to the exclusion of the world and our sinful flesh?

### **Application Rather than Interpretation?**

Wisdom is very precious. It is always spoken of in Proverbs as an object on whose possession or availability all human happiness depends. Which of course lends to the attraction of seeing Christ wherever this poetical personification of Wisdom is mentioned, because we do indeed believe that all happiness depends on our Savior. Indeed, a Christian can hardly avoid the immediate application to Christ of passages such as Prov. 8:32-36: "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favor from the Lord; But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death." But again the question arises: though this is an eminently appropriate (even unavoidable) *application*, was this the original and exclusive intent of the holy writer?

I believe that in our interpretation of Scripture we must be wary of casually identifying our own (albeit pious and doctrinally correct) thoughts with the original intent of the holy writers. Confusion may result, not to mention loss of credibility for our proclamation of the Gospel. One thinks of Luther's time, when the allegorical method of Bible interpretation was accepted as normal, and preachers routinely embarked on flights of pure fancy, having drawn some wholly unwarranted allegorical meaning from their text.

Similarly for *Hochma* in Proverbs eight and elsewhere. One may draw the *application* that "Christ is our wisdom." In many ways such a statement is of course a correct and very beautiful description of the nature of our Savior. However, to say that the author of Proverbs *primarily* intended us to understand "Christ" where he wrote the word "wisdom" is, in my opinion, difficult to support.

### **Find Christ Everywhere!**

Let me say that I agree with the statement of Luther that "One cannot find Christ too often in the Old Testament." And I do think that these passages afford ample and beautiful opportunity to draw the application that Christ is all the wisdom we need, for time and eternity. Franz Delitzsch, while rejecting the "hypostasis" theory, voices his agreement in referring to Christ as the ' Incarnate Wis- dom' in remarks on Prov 8:36, remarks with which we could all agree: "Whoever misses Wisdom by taking some other way than that which leads to her, acts suicidally: all they who willfully hate (*Piel*) wisdom love death, for wisdom is the tree of life, 3:18; wisdom and life are one, 35a, as the Incarnate Wisdom saith, John 8:51, ' If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death.' In the Logos, Wisdom has her self-existence; in Him she has her personification, her justification, and her truth."<sup>10</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Blank, S. H. "Wisdom", *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* © 1962, vol 4; p. 860.

<sup>2</sup> Editor's note: for further study on this subject, see the *Journal of Theology*, 31/2:23-41, "Pre-Incarnation Appearances of the Second Person of the Trinity."

<sup>3</sup> Whybray, R. N. *Wisdom in Proverbs*, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> Albright, W.F. *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 283

<sup>5</sup> Ringgren, Helmer, "Word and Wisdom: Studies in the Hypostatization of Divine Qualities and Functions in the Ancient Near East," Lund, 1947.

<sup>6</sup> Marcus, Ralph, "On Biblical Hypostases of Wisdom," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol XXIII, p. 167.

<sup>7</sup> Whybray, 80.

<sup>8</sup> Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 55, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House) 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on Proverbs*, © 1872.

<sup>10</sup> Delitzsch, 185.

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## **The Third Use of the Law**

Paul F. Nolting

### **"FREEDOM" OR "LIBERTY"**

#### **The Word of Our Lord**

Our Lord said to the Jews that believed on Him: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Any truth frees or liberates to a certain extent, but our Lord wasn't speaking of philosophical or historical or judicial or medical truth. No, He was speaking of THE TRUTH, the central, all-important Truth in the history of mankind. That Truth is that God has had mercy upon fallen and helpless mankind, that God did remain faithful to His promise to send His Son as the Messiah, that the Son did solve the

human problem by entering the human race and fulfilling all demands of the law and by enduring the punishment prescribed by the law. This Truth, commonly called the gospel, frees or liberates.

This statement of our Lord that "the truth shall make you free" presupposes that man is not born free, but rather born enslaved, bound in invisible, chains. What is the nature of this invisible, escape-proof prison house into which we are born? We can learn to perceive the nature of our natural bondage by contrasting our first parents before and after the fall into sin. God created man in His own image. Thus man was a copy or an impress of God, not physically to be sure, but morally. Man reflected the eternal, immutable, moral will of God perfectly in his intellect, emotions and will. And he did that spontaneously, freely, unselfconsciously. Man was created to live in fellowship or communion with God. The relationship was one of complete and absolute trust, a Father-son relationship. Man was completely free, morally and spiritually, to love God and his fellow man. A marital conflict was impossible because love prevailed. As long as simple, wholehearted trust in God remained, nothing could mar the relationship between the Creator and His rational creatures. To put it otherwise and concisely: Man's whole life and being was theocentric, that is, his life revolved about God, his Creator.

Then came the fall into sin and with it a complete change in man and his relationship to God. Man was no longer theocentric, but anthropocentric or egocentric. That is, man's whole being and life began to revolve about himself. Fellowship with God was replaced by alienation, childlike trust by doubt and fear, love by evasiveness, self-justification, and accusations which amounted to blasphemy. This is the nature of man that is passed down from "sire to son," as we sing in one of our hymns (TLH 369:1).

The result is that man is by nature born into and lives in a spiritual prison house that has no visible bonds or bars, but that holds each victim hopelessly chained unless the victim is liberated by a higher spiritual power. By nature man is unable to love God, but can only fear, curse, and condemn God. By nature man cannot break the chains of self-love to love others freely and unselfishly.

"The truth shall make you free." The Good News of full and free and unconditional pardon from the Judge of all flesh liberates, frees internally and spiritually. In the moment faith is created in a human heart by the power of the Holy Spirit the individual is liberated. He is freed to love his God and his fellow man automatically, spontaneously, freely, unselfconsciously. What accounts for this liberation? This that faith immediately changes the status of the individual from a slave to a son, replaces doubt and anxiety with trust, and restores communion and fellowship with God.

Now such freedom is not static, but dynamic. It is not a hiatus, a pause, but movement, the movement of love towards God and man. Faith worketh by love! It cannot but so work! It needs no prompting nor instruction. It simply loves. What an amazing release of spiritual power that is!

Consider, for example, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-35). Or the liberated virgin Mary, who burst forth with the words of "The Magnificat." "My soul doth magnify the Lord" spontaneous, free flowing praise, released by the Spirit (Luke 1:46-55). Who could silence Zacharias after his tongue had been loosed? He could not but bless the Lord (Luke 1:64,68-79). Think of the jailer of Philippi cold, hardened, calloused, unfeeling, unmerciful, rough and tough. But the moment he was brought to faith, he was liberated from those years of callousness to human suffering. Without instruction or prompting he poured forth his love upon Paul and Silas. Thus the Truth frees people to love both God and one's neighbor.

## **Epistle to the Galatians**

The Epistle to the Galatians has been called the "Magna Charta" of Christian liberty. Although the word "liberty" occurs only four times in the epistle, the entire letter is a development of the concept of liberty from the law of Moses.

After Paul had done the spadework in the Galatian cities, some false prophets followed after him, bringing "another gospel, which is not another" (1:6-7). These men suggested that the way to salvation was through Moses to Christ. They wanted all to be bound by the law of Moses, to which faith in Christ was to be added. Their formula would be: under the law + faith in Jesus Christ = salvation, or Moses + Christ = salvation,

In refuting these people Paul referred to an incident which occurred fourteen years after his conversion. He had gone up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus, a Greek, along with him. While there, Paul quite naturally conferred with the leaders of the church of Jerusalem. You recall that Paul had circumcised Timothy, but not Titus. On that occasion in Jerusalem some "false brethren" had been brought in "who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (2:4). How did Paul react to this attempt to compel him to circumcise Titus, thus making Judaism the door through which the Gentiles must come into the Christian Church? Paul reports: "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (2:5). The opposite of liberty is subjection or bondage. There is no compromise. The Old Testament believer was under bondage to the law altogether, no exceptions. The New Testament believer is free from the law altogether, without exception. He is free from the demands, threats, curses, controls of the law, the whole law, which was known and spoken of and recognized as one integrated whole. The law can make no positive contribution to reestablishing fellowship with God, since "a man is not

justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." So also in sanctification or the Christian life the law makes no positive contribution, but only a negative one in relation to the flesh.

In chapter five Paul begins exhortations in regard to the life of the believer. He exhorts: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." So completely and irreconcilably opposite are liberty and bondage that yielding to but one demand of the law, circumcision, would make a person a debtor to the whole law and a loser of Christ.

In verse 13 Paul calls for the proper use of liberty in sanctification: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Liberty is never to degenerate into license. Liberty is to be active by love which serves, and then Paul continues: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." On the surface this may seem confusing as though after insisting that we are completely free from the law, Paul turns around and reimposes the law. What Paul is doing is distinguishing the permanent in the law of Moses from the temporary. He distinguished the moral law from the ceremonial and civil law of Moses. There is in the law of Moses a concise verbalization of God's eternal, immutable will which governs man's relations to God and his fellow man in a word, love. This eternal, immutable moral will of God anteceded the law of Moses, formed the basis of that law, and succeeds it. It is identical in content, yet opposite as regards its relation to a child of God. The concepts of constraint, coercion, compulsion cannot be removed from the law of Moses, which applies only to the flesh. In contrast the law of God or the law of Christ is an expression of the free, liberated new life of faith, which works by love. Faith works by love, which is the fulfilling of the law. Note carefully that faith does not work through the law to produce love. That would be a violation of liberty. Paul was writing to Christians, whose new man was in constant tension with the flesh. He uses the words of the law as the holy will of God, but in a sense totally different than the preaching of the law.

## **Epistle to the Romans**

St. Paul made his most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in his letter to the Romans. He treats in order the law, the gospel, then the new life of the child of God. Chapters six through eight bring us a thorough discussion of sanctification, the life in the Spirit.

Chapter six presents the Christian as free from sin. Paul expresses this liberty in a radical manner. He speaks of the child of God as being dead to sin. Remember that sin is spoken of as a personified power at work within the individual. But sin has no power or influence or control over a corpse. Sin cannot suggest an evil thought to a brain that is no longer functioning but is disintegrating. Sin cannot force a blasphemous word or just one more juicy bit of gossip through lips that have been sealed in death. Sin cannot cause an organ of the body to respond to its promptings by committing some evil act. A corpse is immune to the most furious assault of sin.

After presenting the glorious grace of forgiveness in Christ in contrast to the ruin brought into this world by Adam (chapter five), Paul opens this chapter with a question: "What shall we then say? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" As long as God has provided such an unlimited supply of grace, should we make profuse use of that grace by multiplying our sins? Paul answers with a swift "God forbid," followed by a rhetorical question: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Through the creation of new life in us, we are dead to sin. Farther on in his presentation Paul uses his first imperative in his letter: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (5:11). Notice that this is a kind of death that is actually life!

Moving on, Paul reexpresses the matter by using the paradoxical concepts of freedom and slavery. He writes: "Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness . . . For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness" (5:18, 20). We have here a paradox: freedom is slavery, slavery is freedom, just as death is life. When the Spirit created new life in us and so freed us from sin, He didn't leave us in a vacuum. He simultaneously enslaved us to righteousness. So freedom from sin is one side of the coin, slavery to righteousness the other side. Or we can put it this way: Freedom from sin manifests itself in the life of a Christian by slavery unto righteousness, which slavery is most willingly and eagerly embraced as the "yoke" of our Lord.

Chapter seven pictures the child of God as free from the law. Paul used the illustration of marriage. When a woman's husband dies, "she is free from the law" (7:3), which binds her to her husband. Applying this to the Christian Paul says that freedom from the law does not result in living lawlessly, but in being married to Christ. So again, liberty from the law does not breed license, for that same freedom makes the love, that the law demands, immanent in the faith-life of the Christian.

Chapter eight pictures this new life of freedom from sin and slavery to righteousness, of freedom from the law and marriage unto Christ, as a life in and of and by the Spirit. "For the law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (8:2). "The wages of sin is death" (6:23). Those few words hang over all mankind. No one escapes, as the daily death notices in all newspapers testify. Yet there is an escape from the dread power

of sin, from the tyranny of the law which condemns and sentences to death. It is the life of the Spirit which in and through Christ Jesus frees us from the law of sin and death. That ultimate freedom is not only for man, but for all of God's creation, which shall one day be delivered "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (8:21).

What an amazing life the Spirit grants us freedom from the seemingly invincible power of sin, freedom from the oppression of the law, and freedom from the consequences of both, death! Yet this same freedom produces righteousness, fulfills the law, and lives on to glory. What a glorious liberty this is, liberty to be what we were originally created to be human images or reflections of our holy Creator-God!

## **2 Corinthians 3:17**

This verse appears in the section in which Paul refers to the veil of Moses, which symbolized the temporary nature of the law. The problem that Paul had was with Jews who insisted on making the law the permanent guidepost for or spiritual force over all men. What was the cure for this suicidal tendency towards law-mindedness? Paul wrote, "Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (3:16).

And then follows our passage: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Paul isn't identifying the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity, but he is rather indicating that one cannot have the Lord without the Spirit. The two belong together and go together. Our Lord made that so very clear in His solemn words the night of His betrayal: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).

As inseparable as the Lord and the Spirit are, so inseparable are the Spirit and His gift of liberty: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!" What kind of liberty is Paul talking about? His entire discussion had revolved about the law. When He speaks of liberty, he cannot but be speaking of liberty from the law, which he had described as an instrument of death: "The letter killeth!" The law curbs, exposes sin, establishes a rigid rule of law which man cannot follow, and so kills. The concepts of condemnation, coercion, constraint, compulsion, and conformity cannot be separated from law. All this belongs to law essentially and intrinsically, unavoidably and unalterably. So it is that the law has a straitjacket or handcuff effect. It was designed for rebels, for the unwilling. There is a heaviness, an oppression, and a weariness in the law. How can the sinner get out from under this burden? Here is the answer: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!"

What does such liberty imply in a positive sense? What direction does this liberty cause us to take? St. Paul indicates this in the verse following: "But we all with open (unveiled) face beholding (reflecting) as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of God." What a tremendous thought! Paul had referred to the historical incident when the face of Moses shone, after he had been given the law, which glory both of Moses' face and the law was temporary. In contrast all believers, not just one, reflect the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, even as a mirror reflects light. But more! By turning to the Lord and thus being freed or liberated from the curse of the law, we are "metamorphosed," that is, changed into the image or likeness of our Lord. That is a continuing process, "from glory to glory," until it is completed when we are "metamorphosed" from "natural bodies" to "spiritual bodies." All the spiritual energy, which causes us to radiate and reflect the glory of our Lord and become more and more like Him, comes from "the Lord the Spirit."

Note carefully the intimate, inseparable connection between the Lord, the Spirit, and the gift of liberty. But notice also that the gift of the Lord and His Spirit is liberty, not license in the form of lawlessness. This gift of liberty has transforming power. Paul used this same thought and very same word when he wrote to the Romans: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed (metamorphosed) by the renewing of your mind . . ." (Rom. 12:2). Writing to the Galatians he used the simple form of the verb: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).

How does a person who reflects the glory of his Savior and who is being changed into the image of his Lord live? He trusts his Savior-God as his Savior clung to His Father on the cross. He hallows the Name of his Lord by prayer and witnessing. He treasures the Word of his Savior, as the Savior lived by that Word. He submits to human authority, giving "Caesar" his due. He values life, honors the divine institution of marriage, is concerned about the things of others, guards his tongue, and purifies his heart. In brief, he does what the law demanded, but could not compel to be done. He does what he could not do before his Savior and Sanctifier liberated him from invisible but very real chains so that he could make a beginning of freely loving God and his neighbor.

## **"Law"**

What does St. James have in mind when he uses the expression, "the perfect law of liberty?" (James 1:25). Did he make a slip? Impossible, for the Spirit of God was guiding both his mind and his pen. Nonetheless, it would seem as though James joined contradictory terms into a single expression. We associate, and that rightly, coercion and the loss of liberty with the concept "law." It must be that James is not using "law" in the sense of a verbalization of the immutable moral will of God. And so it is, James uses "law" in the sense of a principle, as we speak of the "law" of gravity. Apples keep falling from trees; they don't float away into the

sky. So it becomes a "law" that they fall. So liberty has within itself a "law" that never changes. "Liberty" always connotes lack of restraint, freedom, absence of compulsion, spontaneity. To impress this concept on the mind James coined the expression, "the law of liberty," thereby doubling the emphasis on "liberty."

### **Moral Acts**

Any moral deed must be freely done to have or possess any moral value. Constraint and compulsion destroy liberty and when applied to moral acts destroy their value as moral acts. If a child is compelled to be good by threat of punishment or promise of favors, there is no moral value in its good behavior. If a person obeys the speed laws only when he sees a patrol car in the rearview mirror, there is no moral value in that obedience. On the other side, a rape victim is guilty of neither fornication nor adultery because participation in the act was compelled. So also, only that which is freely thought, spoken, or done according to the will of God is morally good in His sight. Compelled obedience is a contradiction in terms.

### **The Primeval Test**

This is why God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, God created man in His own image, which Scripture defines as the state of perfect holiness and righteousness in the knowledge of God. Putting it otherwise, God created man so that he was intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally in moral tune with his Creator. God created man *posse non peccare* (able not to sin), not *non posse peccare* (unable to sin). If God would have created man unable to sin, He would have created a morally worthless robot. In was in order to determine whether man would render free obedience that God gave the command not to eat. Had man passed that test, he would have been confirmed in his state of moral perfection.

### **The Law Constrains; The Spirit Frees!**

Sin caused the loss of moral freedom; man is now born into moral bondage. Sinning comes naturally for man; free moral acts presuppose a miracle in man. God's law can in no way produce freely done moral deeds; it simply manifests man's complete and total inability to live according to the will of God. So God sends His Spirit to liberate the individual so that he can freely and willingly do that which is morally good before God.

### **Examples**

Such willingness is an amazing achievement, wrought in man through the Spirit. Consider this verse reporting the offering for the temple: "Then the people rejoiced, for they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord." David reacted to this amazing moral achievement by exclaiming in prayer, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" (1 Chron. 29:9, 14). What thrilled the people and amazed David was the working of "the law of liberty" in the hearts of the people. One of the greatest messianic Psalms describes the New Testament believers in these words: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psalm 110:3).

### **Application**

Think of what this means! If you attend Holy Communion because you think you "hafta," lest you be classified as an "inactive member," you need forgiveness for attending. If you give of your time or talent or money for the Lord's work because you are shamed into it, desire honor or praise of men, or feel it's your duty, there is no moral value in what you do! If you pray from a sense of duty, your prayer is tainted! If you remain unstained by sin simply because circumstances prevented you from sinning, your purity has no moral value. We are to "look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein" so that our life, with divine forgiveness, has moral value in the sight of God.

By faith we keep the law. After revealing the impotence of the law to justify the sinner and after extolling faith as the way of justification, Paul concludes with a question, "Do we then make void the law through faith?" He denies any such thought vigorously with a "God forbid!" But then he continues with an astounding thought: "Yea, we establish the law," νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ νόμον ἱστάνομεν. (Rom. 3:31). Faith establishes the law, confirms it, and so fulfills it. The law could not bring into existence the righteousness that it demands. What the law demands but was unable to produce the gospel achieves. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4). Through faith the believer perceives God once more as the Giver of every good gift. Faith beholds God as the highest Treasure, the greatest Good, the Source of every blessing, the very present Help in every trouble, the Refuge and Fortress in all distress, Life in the midst of death, Salvation from condemnation. So it is that faith creates precisely that relationship towards God that the very first and chief commandment demands: that God be first in our lives. All obedience to the commandments flows from the proper relationship to God, the fear and love of God, which faith establishes in the heart.

Faith, working by love, solves moral problems. Think of Abraham, the father of believers. His faith moved him to obey the command to leave his homeland and take up residence in an unknown land. His faith moved him to give Lot the choice of the land, thereby showing loving concern for the welfare of his brother. His faith moved him to risk his life and



the lives of the men of his household and his allies to rescue Lot, thereby showing loving concern for the life and limb of him whom he had every reason to consider as nothing more than an ingrate. His faith moved him to respond to the unreasonable command to sacrifice his son. At times his flesh did overpower his faith, as when he acquiesced to Sarah's solution for her barrenness by taking unto himself her maid and when in fear for his personal safety he exposed the honor of Sarah by passing her off as his sister. By faith Joseph withstood the charms of Potiphar's wife and honored the marriage of his master. By faith Rahab risked her life to hide the spies. So faith solved moral problems centuries before God revealed the guidelines of His immutable moral will in the Ten Words from Sinai. For the will to love is the potential solution of all moral problems.

Faith, which by love fulfills the law, loves the law. How could it be otherwise? How could it not be that the believer loves and delights in the law which is the verbalized revelation of the same law that the Spirit of God has inscribed in his heart. The psalms are replete with such expressions of love for the law, both for the revelation of God's plan of salvation and His moral precepts. The man of God is described as one whose "delight is in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 1:2). The statutes of the Lord are "more to be desired . . . than fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10). "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Ps. 119:103). "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold" (Ps. 119:127). The entire 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a paean of praise for the law of the Lord. So also the epistles contain their hortatory sections which delight the believer and which are the object of his careful study and meditation, for he sees in the exposition and application of the ethical will of his God a verbalization of that will of love that the Spirit has created and so implanted in his own heart.

Faith, which by love fulfills the law, also freely submits to the law. Mr. Christian is freed from the law, but that freedom is not complete unless it is freedom freely to submit to the law! Thus St. Paul circumcised Timothy, but refused to circumcise Titus. In order to defuse the charge of being a law-breaker St. Paul sponsored the purification rites of four Nazarites in the temple (Acts 21:21-26). So also, after systematically and conclusively exposing the weakness of the law in justifying and sanctifying the sinner and after revealing the temporary service of the law in the economy of God, in both his epistles to the Galatians and Romans, Paul feels completely free to use the language of the law to express the nature and direction of the new life of obedience of those who are led by the Spirit. Paul did not make the law a taboo. What he did do was to establish man's new relationship to the law freedom from the law for the purpose of living freely according to the law of love which reflects the unchanging essence of our Savior-God.

Summing it up: **Faith changes** the relationship of the individual to his God from guilty to innocent, from at enmity to at peace; **restores** the trusting relationship of a child; **functions** inseparably with love; **recreates** the individual by establishing the will of God in his will; **makes** God the direct teacher of the Christian; **is** mighty by the power of the indwelling Spirit and Christ the Savior; **reunites** the individual with His God and so restores the image of God; **causes** the individual to walk in light; **frees** the individual from the spiritual power of sin, death, Satan, and the accusing and condemning law, thereby enabling him to serve the God of his salvation freely and willingly "in holiness and righteousness" all the days of his life (Luke 1:75); **moves** him by the power of the Spirit and the imputed righteousness of Christ to keep the law; **works** by love and so **solves** moral problems; **loves** the very law from which it has been freed and so freely **submits** to that law.

## LIFE IN THE SPIRIT AND LIVING THAT LIFE

Scripture teaches that the fall into sin has left mankind utterly and equally captive under sin, so that no one has any spiritual power by nature that is capable of initiating or sustaining spiritual life. Scripture likewise teaches that the Word of God to man in the law was not given either to initiate or to sustain spiritual life but rather to expose man in his sin, to uncover him to the wrath of God, and so to kill him. Scripture likewise teaches that the sole source of spiritual life is the gospel, the history of what God has wrought in sending His Son to earth to rescue mankind from the prison house of his own sin and guilt. We are justified, reconciled, sanctified, and preserved in faith by the power of the Spirit alone, who works all these blessings in us by the power inherent in the gospel of our Savior God's mighty acts in history for our salvation. Through faith the Spirit gives us the righteousness of Christ that serves as a protective shield from the ever accusing and condemning law. For we have been redeemed from the law (Gal. 3:13). There is now no condemnation of the law against us (Rom. 8:1). The power of the law which made sin strong against us has been broken by the victory of our Champion (1 Cor. 15:56-57). The Spirit always and ever directs us to Christ, not to Moses, not to Himself, and not to ourselves, for in Christ we have both the imputed righteousness and the source of strength for the righteousness of life. So it is "that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:29-30).

We are to treasure above all things the new life of faith that the Spirit has created within us. We are to live that life. But when we consider our own faith life, we find that there is a gap between what we are by the power of the Spirit and how

we actually do live, between the gift given us and our performance, between our being and our acting, our willing and our doing. The experience of St. Paul in finding such a performance failure when measuring his performance by his will to perform is the experience of all of us. Our Lord taught us to pray that His Father's will be done among us. Our lives are a struggle to submit our wills to the will of our Savior-God in all things, whether that be taking our reason captive under the Word, walking in the paths of righteousness, or submitting to a cross. The contrast, however, always remains between what a Christian is or has been made by the power of God's grace and his acting or living accordingly. The Spirit of God does not create moral robots. As little as the creation of faith is an act of violence upon the personality of the individual, so little is his subsequent faith-life a matter of coercion or compulsion by the Spirit. The Spirit ever leads; He never drives. He ever leads and enables the Christian to make successive decisions by which the Christian willingly submits his will to the will of his God.

How are these things expressed in Scripture? We find that the Holy Spirit used the indicative to express what the Christian is or has been made by the Spirit's power and some form of the imperative to indicate how the Christian should act according to his new nature. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord told His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). They were not that naturally but had been made lights by Him through the power of the Spirit. Yet they were not made mechanical lights merely to be switched on and left burning. No, they were to act out and so live their new nature. So our Lord added the imperative, "Let your light so shine before men" (Matt. 5:16). So also He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." That's what I've made you; now function accordingly! In this instance the imperative is implied in the threat of being cast out if the individual fails to function as salt (Matt. 5:13). The tension is between what we have, by the grace of God, been made and our calling and responsibility to exercise ourselves in that gift. Faith is a gift of the Spirit, yet we are called upon to believe, as was Jairus: "Be not afraid, only believe!" (Mark 5:36). To His disciples our Lord said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

In that same night of His betrayal our Lord used an example from nature to convey to His disciples what newness had been created in them and what potential they thereby had: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). Faith in Christ cannot but manifest itself in love, which exercises itself in acts of worship of God and service to man. This is not by conscious design, but by inner necessity. It is not contrived, but spontaneous. Faith and love are the inner and outer sides of the same spiritual life. Love is never an afterthought of faith, but rather the moment faith is kindled it spontaneously manifests itself in love that acts. So we see in numerous biblical examples: the woman in Simon's house, Mary of Bethany, Zacchaeus of Jericho, one of the malefactors on the cross, the jailer of Philippi. Luther loved to use illustrations from nature to picture the spontaneous production of works by faith. Fruit trees need neither instruction nor compulsion to bear fruit; they just do!

In "Article IV: Of Good Works" the *Formula of Concord* quotes from Luther's Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (Triglotta, 941) as follows:

Thus faith is a divine work in us, that changes us and regenerates us of God, and puts to death the old Adam, makes us entirely different men in heart, spirit, mind, and all powers, and brings with it the Holy Ghost. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, powerful thing that we have in faith, so that it is impossible for it not to do good without ceasing. Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done; but before the question is asked, it has wrought them, and is always engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works is void of faith, and gropes and looks about after faith and good works, and knows neither what faith nor what good works are, yet babbles and prates with many words concerning faith and good works. [Justifying] faith is a living, bold [firm] trust in God's grace, so certain that a man would die a thousand times for it [rather than suffer this trust to be wrested from him]. And this trust and knowledge of divine grace renders joyful, fearless, and cheerful towards God and all creatures, which [joy and cheerfulness] the Holy Ghost works through faith; and on account of this, man becomes ready and cheerful, without coercion, to do good to every one, to serve every one, and to suffer everything for love and praise to God, who has conferred this grace on him, so that it is impossible to separate works from faith, yea, just as impossible as it is for heat and light to be separated from fire.

However, our Lord did not let the matter rest with a simple positive declaration of the new relationship between Him and His disciples that gave them the potential to bear fruit. Bearing fruit would be completely spontaneous were it not for the fact that there remains within the Christian an obstacle to his acting upon the basis of what he has been made. So the Christian is ever and again called upon to act on the basis of the potential given him; he is responsible for the gift given. Accordingly we find our Lord continuing, after He had spoken of the imagery of the vine, the branch, and the fruit, with a commandment: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). And again: "These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John 15:17). Our Lord called for acts of love in the lives of His own. Translate into deeds the spiritual power given you. Let no one imagine that our Lord turned into a second Moses or a New Lawgiver in these last hours before His passion, for what He commands He gives. But let no one also imagine that he can

with impunity fail to use the gift given, for the Lord who gives had something against the church at Ephesus, "because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4).

We find that the apostles likewise used the indicative to name the divine power active in the Christian and the imperative to indicate the Christians responsibility for making use of that power. So Paul wrote to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The power is given, but it doesn't work mechanically; the will of the Christian is enlisted. So also St. John wrote in his first epistle, "We love the brethren" (3:14). He could have written, "We cannot but love the brethren, for we have been recreated by God to love the brethren." Loving the brethren is a spontaneous, natural attitude of the heart for one who has been taught by the Spirit of God to trust the forgiveness which comes from God's love in Christ Jesus. Yet John also used a form of the imperative, "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). Thus Christians are enjoined to do the very thing that they were recreated to do naturally and spontaneously. Why? Because there is within the Christian that which impedes his doing what comes naturally.

In this connection we do well to remind ourselves that the fall in Paradise was occasioned by the failure to make use of or act on the basis of the image of God in which man was created. When our first parents failed to use their ability not to sin (*posse non peccare*) or their ability to worship God in the obedience of faith, they lost that ability.

The question arises as to the nature of the commands to act on the basis of what we are or have become by the power of the Spirit, that is, to carry out the assignment implied in the gift of the Spirit. In the Scriptures God gives both law and gospel commands. There is a third group that have the content of the law but are made with the creative, impelling power of the gospel. Law commands are demands upon natural man or the Christian, insofar as he is flesh, that he perform moral deeds that he is not capable of performing, except outwardly. Such commands simply demand without supplying the spiritual energy necessary for complying. The ten commandments or the summary thereof, the command to love God and one's neighbor, are such law commands when directed to natural man or the flesh of the Christian. Compliance is impossible since there is no source of energy to comply in the law. However, in gospel commands the creative power of the God of all grace accompanies the command and effects in us precisely what God wills in the command. For example, when the imperative is given, "Repent and believe the gospel," the creative power of God achieves the conversion of the sinner. If this distinction between moral commands that man cannot respond to and moral commands that are accompanied by the creative power of God to effect what is commanded is ignored, the result is synergism that errs in assuming that because God commands, man must be able to respond to that command. A second error that follows from the failure to keep this distinction in mind is the conversion of the gospel into a new law, of Christ from Savior to Lawgiver.

All commands of God, whose aim in accordance with the eternal decree of God before the foundation of the world is to change the relationship between God and the person to whom the command is directed, are not imperatives of the law directed to man's natural ability and strength in spiritual matters, which is in fact nonexistent, but rather commands that contain within themselves the creative will of God to effect what is commanded. When ethical commands to love God and one's neighbor are directed to natural man, they incite rebellion and reveal sin or produce hypocrisy. But when these same commands are directed to persons who have within them that creation of the Holy Spirit, the new man, who unfailingly wills to do the will of God, those commands do not have the intention that the flesh do the impossible, but rather that the new man do what he is capable of doing by the Spirit's power. Thus the same command is law to the flesh, but a gospel-implemented exhortation to the new man. When this is understood, one can perceive the meaning of Paul's words to Timothy: "The law was not made for a righteous man" (1 Tim. 1:9).

This is also the key for understanding all the many ethical imperatives directed to believers. Thus St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Our sanctification is not but a pious wish on the part of God. Behind that will for our sanctification is the eternal decree of our election by our God "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11). We are to understand "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph. 1:19). We are to realize always that it is the will of our God who "worketh all in all" (1 Cor. 12:6). God willed the sanctification of the Thessalonians, as He from eternity wills the sanctification of all believers, of all His elect. Accordingly, God wasn't demanding of the Thessalonians that they do what by nature they were incapable of doing, but that they do by the power of His Spirit what they were empowered to do. Paul continues by spelling out to these believers, who were influenced by the spirit of the times as are all believers, the nature of sanctified living in specific instances, the proper relationship of the male to the female outside of and inside marriage and the curbing of greed. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." When he continues on to brotherly love, what is there to say since the moment they were brought to faith, love of the brethren was created within their hearts. "Ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." The entire encouragement is not on the level of the law, which under penalty of death or promise of life, demands what the sinner cannot produce and so ever accuses and condemns. That is behind, yet always present in the background. How so? Because the Christian has been

created by the Spirit of God to love and is urged to love by commands which carry with them the divine creative energy to love, yet because of his flesh he never fully succeeds in "possessing his vessel in sanctification and honor" or in rooting out innate greed and covetousness. Thus behind the ethical commands, appealing in the power of the Spirit to the new man to put into action by the power of God what he has been created to do, stands the immovable law, ever accusing and condemning and thus driving the Christian back to the protective shield of Christ's righteousness for the reassurance of forgiveness and for renewed strength to try once again to live in righteousness. So we sing: "Be of sin the double cure, Cleanse me from its guilt and power" (TLH 376:1).

The difference between the ethical commands directed to natural man or the flesh of the Christian and ethical commands directed to the regenerate, insofar as he is new man, can be observed in Peter's use of the summary demand of the law, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). That command originally gave the character and name to one particular section of the Torah, the Holiness Code, as found in Leviticus 19 and 20, as well as elsewhere. As the Holiness Code is expounded in individual commandments and statutes, it is accompanied by the threat of death: "that soul shall be cut off from among his people" (Lev. 19:8). The law of retaliation is inseparably connected with the expounding of what it means to be holy unto the Lord, for example: "The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people" (Lev. 20:6).

The use of the same words, the command to be holy, by Peter is a contrast that reveals the difference between law commands and gospel-implemented commands. The same command is given, but in the former instance as a demand under penalty of death for failing to comply. In the case of Peter's use the command is made to those who have been made capable of complying by the creative power of God and the forgiving grace of Christ, who in effect bids His new creations act according to that they have been created to be and who are promised that divine forgiveness will cover their failures along the way. Peter begins by calling the strangers the "elect," the beneficiaries of God's eternal love, which also bestows sanctification. He continues by showing how that eternal decree had become fact and reality in their lives through regeneration and the continuing operation of the power of God. What a future they have looking forward to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1Pet. 1:4). Surely their day to day life should reflect their future glory! "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Pet. 1:14-16). And what follows after this encouragement? The beautiful passage of our being redeemed not "with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1Pet. 1:18-19). The gospel-implementation is always the past, present or future grace of God in Christ Jesus, our Savior. Are we to understand that Peter interrupts this beautiful gospel passage with an interjection of the law to make sure the desired behavior would be forthcoming, as though the law were capable of so assisting the believer? Are we to believe that the scattered strangers needed information from the law and direction for godly living? That ignores the fact that love, which is the fulfillment of the call for holiness, is concreated with faith. What was needed was the encouragement to act in life according to the principle of love to which they were chosen from eternity and called in time. This comes in the form of a gospel-implemented command directed to the Christian, insofar as he is new man, while at the same time remaining a rebuke to the flesh. As a gospel-implemented command it is given to reborn people who are capable of complying with the command and who through the command are stimulated and enabled to act upon the command and so continue in complying. But why is the command necessary? Because, though we have been created anew, made new creatures, given the Spirit and so are led by the Spirit, we are not and will never in this life be wholly new. The flesh is ever active, hindering our acting upon and our acting commensurate with what we are by the power of the Spirit. Therefore the commands are given and with them the spiritual energy to respond with the action requested in the command. The content and form are from the law, the strength and energy and will to comply from the gospel.

We find that our Confessions likewise faithfully reflect what is naturally to be expected from a Christian and what must be according to the grace given. "Article VI: Of New Obedience" of the *Augsburg Confession* (Triglotta, 45) reads:

Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God.

The German original reads:

Auch wird gelehrt, daß **solcher Glaube gute Früchte and gute Werke bringen soll**, und daß man müsse gute Werke tun, allerlei, so Gott geboten hat, um Gottes willen, doch nicht auf solche Werke zu vertrauen, dadurch Gnade vor Gott zu verdienen.

The above development is what is generally called "evangelical admonition." This is a concept which, considered superficially, appears to be a mixing of law and gospel. It is, however, an application of both law and gospel, unmixed with

each retaining its distinctive characteristics, to Mr. Christian, who is and remains both flesh and new man. Evangelical admonition or encouragement is directed to Mr. Christian, the need for such admonition or encouragement being due to the flesh and the response coming from the new man by the power of the gospel. If Mr. Christian were not encumbered with the flesh but were completely renewed, there would be no need of evangelical admonition, which is the evangelical application of the law as the verbalization of the eternal immutable moral will of God.

Article VI of the *Formula of Concord* expresses this ideal, but never real, situation as follows:

And, indeed, if the believing and elect children of God were completely renewed in this life by the indwelling Spirit, so that in their nature and all its powers they were entirely free from sin, they would need no law, and hence no one to drive them either, but they would do of themselves, and altogether voluntarily, without any instruction, admonition, urging or driving of the law, what they are in duty bound to do according to God's will; just as the sun, the moon, and all the constellations of heaven have their regular course of themselves, unobstructed, without admonition, urging, driving, force, or compulsion, according to the order of God which God once appointed for them, yea, just as the holy angels render an entirely voluntary obedience (Triglotta, 963-965).

The content of evangelical admonition is always an expression or application of the call for love Godward and manward, that is, a reflection of the immutable will of God, who revealed it and so verbalized it in the Ten Words, the Decalog, the moral law, the commandment, or however it is named. As such, it invariably finds a favorable response in the Christian according to his new man, for the Christian delights in the law of God after the inner man and has had that law written in his heart by the Spirit of God from the moment of his new birth. The Christian, insofar as he is new man, characteristically meditates upon the law of the Lord, seeking its application to every new situation and relationship in life.

The form of the evangelical admonition is the imperative. The command or exhortation is directed to Mr. Christian, insofar as he is new man, but not because of any deficiency or lack or need on the part of the new man, but always and ever because the flesh stonewalls every such exhortation or admonition and so prevents the new man from acting according to his nature of willing to love in every situation and relationship.

When the immutable will of God is thus brought to bear upon Mr. Christian, providing him with a guide for his life of new obedience, the necessity for such a guide can only arise from the flesh since the new man has no need of a guide, but is by the Spirit's power a guide unto himself. In all cases of applying the call to love to specific situations or relationships, the flesh stonewalls with rationalizations, extenuating circumstances, excuses, and what not. Think of how feverishly active the flesh of Peter must have been, as he frantically tried to rationalize his repeated denials of his Lord in the courtyard of the high priest. So the flesh operates, always trying to foist its own rules for living upon the Christian, always creating its own forms of worship. It is this corporate activity of the flesh, stimulated by Satan himself, that characterizes the Great Antichrist, the Papacy, as foretold in 2 Thess. 2:4. A goodly part of Luther's work was devoted to applying the law of God to matters of worship and morals to clear away the accumulated rubbish of the church's self-chosen worship and self-instituted holy works.

Article VI of the *Formula of Concord* also scores this point:

So, too, this doctrine of the Law is needful for believers, in order that they may not hit upon a holiness and devotion of their own, and under the pretext of the Spirit of God set up a self-chosen worship, without God's Word and command, as it is written Deut. 12, 8. 28. 32: "Ye shall not do . . . every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes," etc., but "observe and hear all these words which I command thee. Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom" (Triglotta, 969).

Despite the fact that the evangelical commands, exhortations, admonitions, and encouragements find an immediate, positive response in the new man and are backed by the creative power of the Holy Spirit, yet the response of Mr. Christian never corresponds to the command. We are urged to love our enemies, be holy, love our wives as our own bodies, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving, seek first the Kingdom of God, and so on and on and on. The new man within instinctively, automatically, spontaneously, joyously responds with a "Yes" to each exhortation. The Spirit backs each such exhortation with another thrust of creative power. But the results never measure up to that which is exhorted. It is always but an imperfect beginning. The flesh without fail frustrates the effort. There remains a gap between the willing and the performance. And so it is that each and every such use of the content and form of the law, though empowered by the gospel, keeps on revealing how far we fall short, with our very best efforts, of the standard of love Godward and manward that the law demands. Thus the accusing and condemning power of the law is ever at work, demonstrating ever and again that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6), and that all flesh, yea "all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people (the very people of God) is grass" (Isa. 40:7). This is the theological or "schoolmaster" use of the law that boxes us in and reveals that there is no escape from our own utter vileness and guilt.

Article VI of the *Formula of Concord* expresses this function of the law in this way:

So, too, the doctrine of the Law, in and with (the exercise of) the good works of believers, is necessary for the reason that otherwise man can easily imagine that his work and life are entirely pure and perfect. But the Law of God prescribes to believers good works in this way, that it shows and indicates at the same time, as in a mirror, that in this life they are still imperfect and impure in us, so that we must say with the beloved Paul, 1 Cor. 4, 4: "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified" (Triglotta, 969).

We are not to think of the several uses of the law as so many pigeonholes into which various Bible passages are to be placed. It is the nature of law any law, be it the "No, no" of a mother to her child or the statute books of the state, or the law of God to restrain and guide, thereby to reveal transgressions, and so either to accuse and condemn or to commend. When we speak of uses of the law, we are speaking of the application of the law to people, whose relationship to the law differs. The first or civic use of the law is God's enforcement arm to maintain outward law and order on earth. It is to be administered through His "left hand," as Luther was wont to put it, that is, through The government. Its use is to curb the lawless, as Paul states in 1 Tim. 1:9-10, also Mr. Christian, insofar as he is flesh. The second use of The law, which is and ever will remain its principal and proper use, is to accuse and condemn relentlessly, mercilessly, always baring the sinner to divine inspection in the light of the holiness of God and so exposing him to the fury of God's wrath. This use of the law applies to the unregenerate and the regenerate also, insofar as he is flesh. The third use applies only to the regenerate, who remain until death of a dual nature, with the flesh ever contending against the new man. The law appears as the divine standard according to which the new man constrains, coerces, and compels the flesh to conform outwardly to the divine norm for worship and morals. As far as the new man is concerned, the law appears as a verbal reflection of his own nature that of love to God and man. The third use or function of the law is not independent of the second, for wherever the divine standard of love is raised in any form or application, it cannot but condemn Mr. Christian for his failure to think, speak, and act according to it. Article VI of the *Formula of Concord* bears witness to this interrelationship of the law in its several uses.

Reducing this to thesis form, the truths involved can be stated in this way:

**The law in all its uses as curb, mirror, and rule applies to the Christian only insofar as he is flesh. Insofar as the Christian is new man, the law in all its uses as curb, mirror, and rule does not apply.**

(To be continued)

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## Book In Review

**F. Dean Lueking: *The Last Long Pastorate A Journey of Grace*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002, paperback, 196 pages.**

This is the interesting account of a pastor trained in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) who served as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest, Illinois for 44 years. During this period of time the congregation left the LCMS to become an independent congregation.

As interesting as the book is, I do not find myself agreeing very often with the author, who is here presenting Grace's history from his viewpoint. What is his viewpoint? In his eyes the conservative confessional leaders in the LCMS are the villains, whereas he and his fellow-liberals or moderates, as they like to call themselves, are the heroes. In chapter after chapter Lueking recounts how he and his congregation made significant changes and are happy about these changes. But when these changes are put to the test of God's Word, they do not pass the test. In almost every case Lueking glories in what has been accomplished, but it seems the faithful Lutheran is forced to say Ichabod the glory has departed.

Lueking is a name-dropper, making mention of important leaders he has known and loved. Among these we find the name of Otto Geiseman, his predecessor as pastor of Grace congregation. Geiseman is praised because of "his blunt opposition to legalistic practices that stifled the gospel, such as those forbidding prayer with other Lutherans, indeed any other Christians except those of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod" (p. 10). Geiseman "encouraged me to join the local ministerial association for broader ecumenical contacts" (p. 10). No attempt is made in this book to discuss what Scripture tells us about false teachers and the need for avoiding them. Sincere confessional Lutherans who want to follow God's Word and avoid false teachers are simply written off as legalists.

Other heroes in Lueking's opinion are Martin Marty, Richard Caemmerer, Arthur Carl Piepkorn, O. P. Kretzmann, John Tietjen, and Jaroslav Pelikan, all of whom are responsible in part for leading the LCMS away from its 1932 *Brief Statement* and into the present unionistic and even syncretistic mess. It seems Lueking favored every "liberal" idea that came along, marching with Martin Luther King, Jr., opposing the efforts of conservative leaders such as Paul Zimmermann and the Preus brothers, favoring the advance of woman suffrage and women's ordination, promoting ecumenism at every turn, protecting false teachers, and at the same time presenting one's self as evangelical rather than legalistic like those other guys.

I was especially interested in Lueking's comments on Ralph Gehrke and Richard Jungkuntz, who were both teachers at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, at the time when I was a student there. Ralph Gehrke was an excellent teacher of Greek and a man who went out of his way to be kind and friendly to his students. But I regret to say that he was also at that time beginning to teach the Bible in a way that undermines our confidence in the inspiration of Holy Scripture. After he left the Wisconsin Synod institution in Watertown, he taught at Concordia College in River Forest, which is located right next to Grace Church. While teaching at Concordia College, Gehrke also conducted a Bible class at Grace Church. The authorities at Concordia College found Gehrke guilty of false teaching, but Lueking defends him and believes he was treated badly. Richard Jungkuntz went the same road as Gehrke, and of course Lueking also defends him.

So, if you want a book that presents Missouri Synod history of the last fifty years from the viewpoint of those who have labored hard to move it away from its confessional and Scriptural base, this is a book for you. But if you find yourself in agreement with Francis Pieper and his brand of Missouriianism, you cannot read this book without being deeply saddened by the changes in the Missouri Synod and the changes in Grace Church of River Forest.

- David Lau

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